IONUȚ CHIRUȚĂ

Triadic Nexus Relationships
in an Age of Populism:
Interactions between Hungary,
Romania and the Hungarian Minority
in Szeklerland

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Author's Contribution

I. The author of the current dissertation was the principal data collector during the fieldwork, analyst and writer of the study, and the one responsible for the review processes with the publishing journals. Prof. Dr Vello Andres Pettai was responsible for providing guidance, critique, and recommendations along the stages of the writing process.

II. The author of the current dissertation was the principal data collector, analyst and writer of the study and the one responsible for the review processes with the publishing journals. Prof. Dr Vello Andres Pettai was responsible for providing guidance, critique, and recommendations along the stages of the writing process.

III. The author of the current dissertation was the principal analyst and writer of Study III and was responsible for the review processes with the publishing journals. Prof. Dr Vello Andres Pettai, Dr Agnieszka Sadecka, and Prof. Dr Richard Mole (members of the FATIGUE project) were responsible for the assistance and recommendations offered during the stages of the writing process. The polling company Transylvania Inquiry conducted the survey in Romania between November and December 2021.

IV. The author of the current dissertation was the principal analyst and writer of Study IV. Prof. Dr Vello Andres Pettai was responsible for the assistance and recommendations offered during the writing of the survey questionnaire and guidance during the later stages of the writing process. The polling company Transylvania Inquiry conducted the survey in Romania in December 2021.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the quest to unpack the many facets and undercurrents of ethnopolitics in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), Rogers Brubaker's *Triadic Nexus* theory (1996) has, perhaps, provided one of the most suitable frameworks to analyse this ever-changing political setting. However, it was not always easy to unearth the shifting bases on which the neighbouring states in CEE engage in these relations. This situation was especially evident in the aftermath of communism. The vacuum left by the collapse of communist authority in some of the CEE and Balkan states was filled by ethnic instability or, worse, interethnic conflict. In many cases, these undercurrents were caused by the relation between neighbouring states and ethnic minorities dispersed from their homeland and relocated in the present by history.

Brubaker's framework (1996) undergirded many academic endeavours in CEE and elsewhere in the world, especially in the ensuing democratisation period (c.f. Fedotov, 2017; Koska, 2012; Krasniqi, 2013; Smith, 2020). It did so by unpacking the layers with which state actors attempted to influence ethnopolitics (Pettai, 2006). The nexus theory aided policymakers and scholars alike in recognising the variations taking place in regional politics (Kuzio, 2001). Soon, this theory also became one of the tools applied in order to understand the issues at play in the Baltic region (Kallas, 2016; Pettai, 2006).

Brubaker's nexus theory encapsulated the unbalanced dynamics between *nationalising states*, *kin-states* and *ethnic minorities*. There are many examples which attest to the theory's versatility and proficiency. From the Caucasus to the former Yugoslavia, to CEE, up to the borderlands of the Baltics and Russia, the triadic model pealed through the layers of dense political and societal issues and revealed the interplays between state politics and minority issues.

Nonetheless, as democratisation moved forward in the region, it also became apparent that most countries would experience fluctuating and indeterminate political processes when levelling the gap between them and Western Europe (Holmes & Krastev, 2020). As history books recount, some countries managed to switch to democracy smoothly, whilst others still encounter difficulties that impede progress (Tismaneanu, 2000; Wolchik & Curry, 2015). Even so, more than two decades since Brubaker's nexus appeared, the mechanism with which the triadic nexus performed may have changed, especially in CEE and the Balkans (Petsinis, 2020).

One important change that the triadic nexus has faced is the advent of populism in the region. With each electoral cycle, and as political parties have matured and changed at the hands of charismatic populist agents, the dynamic with which the elements, *nationalising state*, *external state* and *national minorities* interact has been altered. In this respect, Brubaker's triadic nexus theory deserved re-examination amidst the new circumstances. Previously, scholarly endeavours fleshed out new political currents which changed the dynamic within which the elements of the triadic nexus interacted (Cheskin, 2015; Fedotov, 2017). The literature revealed a burgeoning trend of studies which contributed both to the debate on

ethnopolitics and to the protection of minorities in the wake of European Union (EU) expansion (Csergő et al., 2017; Galbreath & McEvoy, 2010; Ram, 2003; Waterbury, 2008). However, one political current, *populism*, has arguably interwoven new nuances and challenges to the ways triadic politics occur. And this could have implications, particularly where those countries are members of the European Union.

With the expansion of populism in CEE (Ágh, 2016a, 2016b; Stanley, 2017), the nature of the triadic nexus's elements may have altered again. And this has affected the motion between these components. Consequently, several new variations of the triadic nexus were added because of the new shift in regional politics. Societal and political crises became the main driving force behind the change, reflected in the nature of the triadic nexus's elements and their interplay. Among the many emerging variations, several developments were the most visible under the new climate of populism.

For instance, political actors like Fidesz, the main Hungarian party since 2011, redrew the tenets of ethnopolitics (Petsinis, 2020, 2022) by pioneering a new ideology of populist illiberalism (Blokker, 2021; Feischmidt & Majtényi, 2020) that looked to the past in order to change the nation in the present (Palonen, 2018). Political entrepreneurs like Fidesz's Viktor Orbán reimagined the role transborder minorities had in the internal affairs of their country with which they are tied by history, culture and language (Tátrai et al., 2017). Quickly, policies such as extending citizenship to ethnic kin abroad became an asset for countries like Hungary, which wanted to reconnect with transborder minorities (Pogonyi, 2011, 2017b). These minorities would be envisioned as having a distinct role in the long-term political strategy of parties and their charismatic political agents.

Under the guise of populist illiberalism, transborder minorities were intended to have a central role in the polity of some countries like Hungary (Pogonyi, 2017a, 2018), while other minorities, that is, migrants, refugees or Roma, and even LGBTQ people, had their roles mitigated in the polity of CEE states (Barna & Koltai, 2019; Feischmidt & Majtényi, 2020). As a result, the dynamics within the nexus altered, revealing a new variation. One example worth investigating is the triadic nexus between *Hungary, Romania* and *the Hungarian minority in Szekler-land*. Although there are other noteworthy cases to analyse, like the borderland ethnic Hungarians from Vojvodina Serbia which present other dynamics in the realm of ethnopolitics (Petsinis, 2021), this thesis' illustration is one of the most important cases in CEE due to its intricate history, territorial shifts, enclavism, and minority separation.

The history of territorial rearrangements and minority reallocation between Hungary and Romania in the last hundred years would turn the whole issue into a powder keg under contemporary circumstances. However, membership within the European Union rendered the ethnic territorial dispute almost non-existent. Yet, these settings generated a new variation between the nexus elements intermingling in the age of *populist illiberalism*. Simply put, by starting within the external kin-state, populist illiberalism weakened the nationalising state's authority and influence, which ultimately affected the identity and memory politics of the

national minority. In the long term, such undercurrents may render severe consequences in the relations between minority and majority and for future right-wing parties and governments. As a result, this thesis will examine the recent past to understand the political intricacies at the core of Brubaker's nexus. The thesis concentrates its analyses on this period due to two developments, the threads of which were entangled in the fabric of the nexus and changed its interplay.

First, the main and largest right-wing populist party in Hungary, Fidesz, won the 2014 election, due in large part to the successful implementation in 2011 of the citizenship policy (Kovács & Blokker, 2015). This was followed by election wins in 2018 and 2022. Returning to the argument, Fidesz was able to secure more seats in the Hungarian parliament with the help of transborder Hungarians after implementing citizenship policies for more than 600,000 people. Thereafter, the party commenced a complex investment programme in areas inhabited by Hungarians without being regulated by the Romanian authorities under a bilateral treaty.

Second, in Romania, the largest and most successful party, the Social Democratic Party (PSD), elected Liviu Dragnea as its chairman, a person who changed the rhetoric and policymaking of the PSD towards the judiciary and constitutional court, similar to those from Hungary and Poland. In this single-minded process, the PSD downgraded the significance of policymaking in other sectors while honing populist rhetoric against European institutions and underlining the discourses vis-à-vis "the nation" and "the people." Most likely inspired by the effective constitutional and judiciary changeovers from Poland and, especially, Hungary (Kosař et al., 2019; Krygier, 2019), the PSD focused its rhetoric and policymaking from 2017–2019 almost entirely towards altering the judiciary (Chiruta, 2021; Hoxhaj, 2019). The resulting vacuum, coupled with an abandonment of Hungarian areas by the Romanian state, would be filled by Fidesz's investments and influences, whilst disenchanting the Hungarian minority with Romanian policymaking and populist and nationalist vernacular. Subsequently, Fidesz benefited during the 2018 and 2022 parliamentary elections. To this day, Fidesz's unilateral investments in Romania are not regulated by the Romanian authorities, despite many constituting a danger to national security.

In sum, the dissertation's main research question asks ***how has the rise of populist illiberalism modified the triadic nexus in CEE?*** The thesis is organised in the form of three publications and a supplementary research paper, each of which addresses a separate part of the nexus. Moreover, each text in turn looks at specific empirical questions or puzzles.

Study I. *How has Hungary as a kin-state become involved in supporting the collective memory of ethnic Hungarians (and, in particular, lieux de memoire) in order to foster a synthetic reconstruction of a lost homeland?*

Study II. *How did populist illiberal discourse spread into the politics of a nationalising state like Romania, and what effects did this have on the structure of democratic institutions?*

Study III. *How has Romania's Hungarian minority perceived these two new influences, in particular the neo-traditionalist dimension of populist illiberalism?*

Study IV*. How and in what ways have these impacts been felt, especially by a sub-set of the Hungarian minority, the Szekler?*

To unpack these questions, the dissertation claims that all three parts of the nexus, i.e., *the nationalising state* (e.g., Romania), the *kin-state* (Hungary) and the *national minority* (ethnic Hungarians from Romania), have become infused with *populism illiberalism*. Under this new dynamic, the antagonism or the tension that is otherwise characteristic of such nexuses, like those from the Balkans or Caucasus, becomes dissipated or mollified. There can be a coalescing of the three sides around populist illiberalism that does not solve any of the problems for the national minorities. As it turns out, this blending of the three sides, particularly under the mantle of populist illiberalism, may inflate the problems of the national minority in the long term.

In the classic reading of Brubaker's theory (1996), triadic nexuses encompass several dyadic (two-part, paired) axes and political changes within individual nodes. Due to its conceptual complexity, this dissertation project examined only some of these. The four texts that form the substance of the dissertation cover the following themes:

Study I examines the changing kin-support policies of a populist-illiberal kin-state. This study explores, via archival research and ethnographic fieldwork, the many facets of Fidesz's policy in relation to the protection of Hungarian cultural heritage in Romania. The study shows that Fidesz focused on policies that aimed at rehabilitating religious and cultural sites while promoting its ideology and understanding of history. More importantly, Fidesz filled the vacuum left by the Romanian state and invested in Hungarian cultural heritage to associate its image and vision of history with the collective remembrance of the Hungarian minority from Transylvania. The results of these efforts have arguably had implications on the Hungarian minority.

Study II investigates the rise of populist illiberalism in a nationalising state. The study focuses on Romania's largest and most successful party, the Social Democratic Party (PSD). With the help of qualitative content analysis, this study examines via press statements and speeches the nuances adopted by the PSD's populist illiberalism to attack and alter the rule of law in Romania. The study shows a compulsive focus of the PSD to subvert the judiciary via populist, natio-nalist rhetoric and conspiracy narratives that reinforced the idea of a past nation and people. Moreover, the PSD's actions had particular implications for the Hungarian national minority, since they were surprisingly abetted by the ethnic Hungarian minority party UDMR/RDMSZ, which at several points lent the PSD support in parliament. This pact prompted a decline in attention that the Romanian government would pay to Hungarian regions, leaving a void for external actors like Hungary to fill.

Studies III and IV round out this re-examination of the triadic nexus by looking at the Hungarian minority in Romania. Through an independent public opinion survey, the two texts investigate the impact of the two previously described stimuli on the national minority population. Moreover, they do so with a special focus on the Szekler community of Hungarians in the heartland of Romania. The Szekler's relative homogeneity, their role in Hungarian minority consciousness and history, and their proactive political role in Romanian politics arguably make this community important for both the kin-state and the nationalising state. The results reveal that the populist and nationalist shift of the nationalising state (e.g., Romania) caused dissatisfaction for most of the Szekler community, while the added neglect of minority issues in 2015–2020 has been perceived negatively by a majority of the survey respondents. In contrast, Fidesz's neo-traditionalist policies and populist practices and rhetoric in relation to Hungarian cultural heritage and the societal well-being of the Szekler have been perceived as positive. Consequently, the results show that because of Fidesz's unilateral investments in the region, most people are in favour of Fidesz's illiberalism, while at the same time, they would be in favour of replacing Romania's liberal system with Hungary's illiberalism.

Overall, the role of the studies in the dissertation's over-arching structure is to tease out a new variation of Brubaker's triadic nexus and the added value and its innovative aspects. This dissertation contributes to the triadic nexus theory by updating and upgrading it through a conceptual detour inspired by nowadays political changes in CEE. Rather than relying on the traditional understanding of the theory and applicability demonstrated in many studies, this dissertation replaces nationalisms with populism illiberalism, inspired also by Brubaker's writings and conceptualisation of populism (2017, 2020) as a discursive style of politics and policy-driven tool that underlines a direct relationship between a leader (i.e., Orbán) and the people (transborder ethnic Hungarians). The latter are the Szekler, a highly politically organised ethnic group in Romania, whose communities exhibit low-birth rates, tendencies to emigrate abroad. The Szekler receive economic and other material support from the Fidesz-led government in Budapest, which determines, according to several polls, including the one used in this thesis, overwhelmingly pro-Fidesz orientation and high intensity autonomist tendencies.

The socio-commonalities exhibited by the Szekler are similar (language, culture) and yet distinct from other Hungarian groups like those from Vojvodina or Slovakia (c.f. Petsinis, 2021), as the Szekler are mostly located in a territorial enclave, with great historic and mythological archives deeply rooted in the Hungarian cultural heritage; and with a more versatile political elite representing them in most Romanian post-1992 governments. Herein, the purpose is to explore the impact of this new variation on the relational axes of the nexus: external kin-state, nationalising state, and national minority, whereby the mutual antagonism of nationalisms is mollified by populism illiberalism. The resulting conceptual framework provides a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the updated

ethnopolitical processes and sequences generated by the impact of populism il-liberalism in CEE.

Through four qualitative and quantitative studies, this thesis applies this up-dated framework to reveal how the situation in each part of the nexus is affected. By departing from conventional analyses, this dissertation offers a fresh approach that acknowledges and mollifies predominant nationalist tendencies, weakens the balance between the elements, and strengthens the position of the kin-state. In short, the main contribution of this thesis underlines that the iteration of a nexus wherein the encroachment of populism illiberalism emanated by the kin-state, prescribed, and accepted by the national minority elites, and then incorporated by a weak and opportunistic nationalising state disrupts the equilibrium among the elements of the nexus and shape everyday practices and discourses of a national minority. The conceptual framework and results of this thesis underpin the need for revised policy recommendations and updated bilateral agreements between EU member states in the realm of kin-state activism and transborder sponsorships. This updated approach offers expands our understanding of the triadic nexus theory and could serve as a blueprint to apply in the Western Balkans in the European Union's upcoming expansion project.

In the following, the remainder of this introductory chapter will further develop the nexus arguments by anchoring the studies in the existing literature and con-temporary studies. Hence, the four texts constituting the dissertation offer the viewer a piece of the puzzle, the broader image of which is revealed by each contribution. Before this capstone text helps to unpack some of the other aspects of the "nexus under populist illiberalism" that are not covered in the studies, the text briefly introduces the trajectories that led to the change from the classic triadic nexus between 1991–2001 (post-Communist period) to a new variation in 2002–2010 (pre- and post-European Union accession) followed by another advanced by this thesis in 2011–2020. These subsections are needed to under-stand the political factors (i.e., early nationalism) and phases (i.e., EU accession) in order to grasp the variations of the nexus across three periods. In the next section, we briefly sketch the theoretical structure of the notions (i.e., nation, ethnicity, diaspora, etc.) that have generated the nexus and have been exposed to change over time.

1.1 Reimagining Ethnic Communities, Nations and Nationalism following Communism

The downfall of communism and its aftermath resulted in several trying effects for the CEE countries and those in the Balkans, Caucasus and Central Asia. The issues of nation-building, reclaiming of historical territories, transborder ethnic minorities and their protection were revived, particularly at the periphery of CEE (Kolstø, 2016; Kubicek, 2004; Pettai, 2006; Simons & Westerlund, 2016; Tolz, 1998). Similarly, the breakdown of communism generated ideological and societal consequences for many countries in Eastern Europe (Beissinger, 2009). Among

many others, the claim of neighbouring countries to protect and politically repre-sent previously vulnerable communities as ethnic groups or minorities that hold specific demands caused conflict and instability in some CEE and Balkan countries.

By contrast, in other countries, these demands, though initially met with re-pudiation, eventually gave rise to a peaceful coexistence only after the incentives of joining the European Union became visible for all parties involved, i.e., neigh-bouring states and ethnic minorities (Blagojevic, 2010; Bugajski, 1993; Fowkes, 2002). In both situations, Rogers Brubaker (1996) noticed a tripartite dynamic in which the elements mentioned above intermingled, and the results caused many outcomes in one way or the other. Before unfolding Brubaker's observation, which this thesis will elaborate on in the section entitled *Conceptual Framework*, this dissertation proposes first to elaborate the theories of *nationalism*, *nation*, *ethnicity* and specific case studies from CEE, Brubaker's preferred region, to understand the different interplays between neighbouring states and ethnic minorities in the aftermath of communism. The triadic nexus, as observed by Rogers Brubaker, proceeded manifold. To that extent, this thesis asks here what factors made the difference in the above situations in the post-communist CEE?

Historically, the literature argues that "Eastern European societies have expe-rienced a high level of interethnic contact" (Enloe, 1996, p. 198). To a certain extent, the multi-ethnic interactions generated conflicts, and instability in the region, predominantly before World War I and the short period thereafter. How-ever, after World War II and during communism, any hints of interethnic conflicts were stifled (Crowe, 2008). In fact, any emphasis on ethnicity or group distinc-tiveness was either bottled-up or outlawed in most CEE communist states (Bugajski, 2016). Following communism, the return of democracy and pluralism was seen by scholars as "a rebirth of ethnicity and politicised national identity" (Minahan, 2000, p. XV). As it turned out, the "transition" (see Kuzio, 2001) itself proved instead to be a Janus-faced process, in which the renewal emerged in some countries, whereas in others, it was the opposite.

Still, the transition allowed certain national minorities to connect with their external kin-states into what Benedict Anderson termed an "imagined political community" (2006, p. 6). Under this new structure, communities of people, even those separated by borders or redistributed in other nations because of historical and political circumstances, believed they belonged together in the country whose common culture, language and history the communities share. Accordingly, communities that before were fragmented or persecuted by the communist regimes across CEE could ask in the new democratic epoch for political protection and cultural representation from their external kin-state. Though not without con-sequences, the emergence of the triadic nexus and the interplay of its constitutive elements was taking shape.

One conceptual lens that emerged in understanding this new situation drew on the notion of "diasporas" to underscore external protection from the host state's internal political tribulations. As a matter of fact, in that period, the articulation of the "diaspora discourse" was reinforced (Clifford, 1997). In the literature on diasporas, William Safran's definition (1991, pp. 83–84) is perhaps the most

comprehensive. Right after communism collapsed, Safran correctly observed different variations of diasporas in the former communist bloc, particularly in CEE. Thus, Safran proposed to demarcate "diasporas" through a multi-layered classification as:

> "Expatriate minority communities (1) that are dispersed from an original centre to at least two peripheral places; (2) that maintain a 'memory, vision, or myth about their homeland'; (3) that believe they are not – and perhaps cannot be – fully accepted by their host country (4) that see the ancestral home as a place of eventual return when the time is right; (5) that are committed to the maintenance or restoration of this homeland; and (6) whose consciousness and solidarity as a group are 'importantly defined' by this continuing relationship with the homeland."

Such theoretical approaches provided conceptual lenses with which the new democratic societies might understand minorities as integral parts of the host state and as groups linked to neighbouring countries by culture, language and history. At the same time, majority nationalism remained a palpable force – a way to look for a "sociological continuity with the past to affirm the continuity of the nation over time" (Elster, 1991, p. 476). Thus, the first determinant shifted the motion of the elements within the triadic nexus ahead. Before moving onwards with the arguments, this dissertation underscores the *nation* as essential in the architecture of *nationalism*.

In the immediate post-communist epoch, the *nation* was a notion prone to different understandings and often an incentive for interethnic conflicts in CEE. The concept of *nation* "is rather subjective in the nationalism literature", argues Sherill Stroschein (2019, p. 930). Here, two schools of thought define *the nation* according to *primordialist* and *modernist* viewpoints. The "primordialist group" argues that the nation has existed "since time immemorial" (Horowitz, 2002; Shils, 1957), whilst the "modernists" contend that nationalism is a product of modern times alongside nation-states. In this vein, when defining *nationalism* and *nations*, the starting point in modernist literature is Ernest Gellner's famous assertion that "within nationalism's boundaries, the nation and the state should be congruent" (1983). These theoretical camps presented different readings for specific case studies worldwide for some time.

Nevertheless, more recently, these opposing camps were reunited by Walker Connor's interpretation, which argued that a nation is a politicised and mobilised ethnic group rather than a state. The existence of the states was inevitably mixed with that of post-communist nations generating the "nation-state that has come to be applied indiscriminately to all states" (Connor, 1994, p. 96). Building on the above premises, Conversi developed Connor's thesis and argued that "nationalism's origins predate the modern state, while its emotional content remains up to our times" (2002, p. 270). This thesis believes that emotional content played a crucial role in the interethnic conflicts that followed communism. In the void generated by communism, nationalism was adopted by both minorities and majorities to support political claims. Hence, the sudden claims of ethnic minorities

vis-à-vis identity and belonging honed the emotional charge with which ethnic majorities perceived the demands in the new nations without a robust central or regional authority. When this mixture is added to a misunderstanding in relation to the nation's composition, one has an explosive state of affairs, one that is capable of great societal damage and especially hazardous for ethnic minorities. In support of this argument, Stroschein (2017, p. 930) adds that because of this mixing, "nationalism as a political principle may imply dangerous changes to the status quo. […] In a worst case, ethnic cleansing or forced assimilation might be invoked".

Nationalism "played an important role in structuring the way in which the collapse of communism unfolded" (Beissinger, 2009, p. 334). The potency of nationalism strengthened because of the vacuum left by communism and the social change instilled by democracy. Reviewed as "conventional wisdom", ethnic conflicts were thought to likely emerge following the collapse of authoritarianism, as every country was searching for its roots (Brown, 1997, pp. 82–83). Previously, nationalism was understood as having the "appeal of unifying a country behind a common loyalty and focusing emotional aggression against a neighbour" (Bell, 1975, p. 163).

Across the CEE and Balkans, the transition from communism to democracy was peppered with sporadic episodes of interethnic clashes and, in some terrible cases, war and ethnic cleansing (Bell-Fialkoff, 1993; Bennett, 1997). Nowhere did this malign trend become more obvious than in the former Yugoslavia, where ethnic violence was in a continued form enforced upon specific communities of Albanians, Bosnians, Croats and Serbs. Ethnic cleansing showed the vicious consequences of communism in repressing nationalist passions over a long period (Hayden, 2013). Simultaneously, the example of the Yugoslav ethnic war showed what the isolation and avulsion of minorities might mean in the new world order. Thus, "the events in Yugoslavia", argues Kymlicka, "show[ed] the threat to peace from irredentist minorities is a real one" (1997, pp. 236–237).

Yet, this burst of violence was not replicated across CEE. Despite the existence of sporadic ethnic clashes between ethnic majorities and minorities in the early months following communism's demise in Bulgaria (Roudometof, 2002) and Slovakia (Carpenter, 1997; Stein, 2000), interethnic relations began a healing process in multicultural and plural societies (Rex & Guibernau, 1997, p. 205). Equally, across the Baltic region, interethnic violence failed to occur in Latvia (Ginkel, 2002; Karklins, 1994) or Estonia (Vetik, 1993), the countries with the largest Russian minorities. For instance, Estonia showed that a peaceful transition to democracy could be achieved if the identity and integration of minorities are considered (Raun, 2009) and, above all, if minorities are co-opted into the state's institutions and the societal structure (Pettai & Hallik, 2002).

Returning to the volatile milieu of Eastern Europe, in Romania, the country with the largest numbers of Roma (Crowe, 2008) and Hungarian minorities in CEE (Ram, 2008, p. 181), the violent transition from communism to democracy (Antohi & Tismaneanu, 2000) was tarnished by an ethnic clash in March 1990, three months after the Revolution that overthrew Nicolae Ceaușescu. The lack of

central authority led to the Târgu Mureș/Marosvásárhely tensions, which resulted in eight people dead and over 300 injured (Stroschein 2012). Though the bases that played an important role in this conflict were tied to Ceaușescu's desire to fragment minorities in order to create a "homogeneous nation" (Tismăneanu, 2000), these transient confrontations resulted in the opposite. In this respect, "ethnic politics have figured prominently in the political dynamics of Romania […] with an increased tolerance from the ethnic majority" (McIntosh et al., 1995, p. 941). Against the backdrop experienced in Yugoslavia, the violent Revolution and 1990 ethnic clashes resulted in the "emergence of political pluralism" (Tismăneanu, 1993). After being the "first country in the post-communist Europe where inter-ethnic differences led to violent clashes" (Gallagher, 1996, p. 80), Romania, in less than two decades, morphed from being the laggard in terms of minority protection and rights to being the leader in the region (Ram, 2008, pp. 180–194).

1.2 The Accession Period – a New Variation for the Triadic Nexus in CEE

The political development of the early 2000s and European Union (EU) accession between the 2004 and 2007 period reshaped transnational relations based on ethnicity among most countries in CEE. The prospects of entry into the European bloc changed the dynamics and nuances with which nationalism, ethnopolitics and transnational relations were studied throughout the Yugoslav wars. Scholars argue that the accession process changed the structure of the nexus from being triadic to a quadratic nexus (Pettai, 2006); or, as some hinted, that the accession invalidated the types of nationalisms required under the nexus (Beissinger, 2009; Gagnon et al., 2011). This dissertation agrees with the former criticism to a certain extent and disputes the latter based on those scholars who studied nexuses before the EU enlargement and who argued about "the shifting nature of the nexus" (see Kemp, 2006, p. 122). These scholars also noted the need not to confine the dynamics of nexuses simply to nationalisms or antagonisms and to investigate the interrelationships between nationalising state, kin-state and national minority. There are more nuances and contextual frameworks which, to some surprise, may change the nexus by generating other dynamics between the elements. This argument will be developed later in the Triadic or Quadratic Nexus section.

Meanwhile, as it stands in the literature, the transition of the then-unprotected ethnic communities residing in other states and from thence into protected national minority status was, in most cases, due to the objectives of EU member-ship (Liebich, 2002; Ram, 2003; Stroschein, 2012). As an alternative to the Yugoslavia events in 1991–2001, which solidified Brubaker's triadic nexus theory, an alternative, albeit not less risky, with the potential to disturb the Union and generate diverging lines (see Sjursen, 2002), was proposed by the European community to prevent a domino effect in Eastern Europe. Some hinted that in this manner nationalism might dwindle or die (Keating, 2009).

Yet such hopes notwithstanding, the EU's eastward expansion, first in 2004 and then in 2007, signalled the reinvention and reinvigoration of nationalism (Fox & Vermeersch, 2010). While perhaps less conflictual and more palatable for policy-making (including accepting the implementation of minority protection and of minority claim-making, the prospect remained that "a state with a titular majority population may have an interest in persons of the same ethnicity living abroad […], but the question is how" (Kemp, 2006, p. 119).

To achieve EU membership, CEE countries, whose pasts were tainted by conflicts, territorial redistribution and imperialism, had to agree on the "minority condition", meaning "the interaction between multi-level actors, perceptions, interests, differentiated rewards and sanctions, temporal factors and different degrees of institutional or policy compliance" (Hughes et al., 2005, pp. 3–4). In other words, the triadic nexus had changed, and the dynamic between the axes of the elements expanded under the framework of international law and oversight from international bodies like the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) or Council of Europe (CoE).

To a large extent, this successful project was also attributed and supported by those kin-states who transitioned earlier to the EU than the home states of the ethnic minorities, whose rights the kin-state upheld. Accordingly, the literature on ethnopolitics and ethnic minorities highlights the most successful model, i.e., Hungary and the Hungarian minorities from the neighbouring countries (Csergo & Goldgeier, 2001, 2004). In the early 2000s, Hungary had approximately three million ethnic minorities scattered in five neighbouring countries, i.e., Croatia, Serbia, Slovakia, Romania and Ukraine. Out of this quintet, the cases of Romania and Slovakia, and later Croatia, are the most numerous in ethnic communities and most successful, as their trajectory to the EU was endorsed by Hungary, provided that the rights of minorities were respected.

The prospect of joining the EU and the subsequent processes that consolidated the trust between Hungary and neighbouring countries refashioned the dynamic in which the triadic elements interacted. Under this new framework, the neighbouring states had to cooperate in the sphere of minority rights and protection. The new configuration permitted the external state to support transborder minorities politically, economically and culturally. And the home state, in turn, had to tolerate these practices, provided that bilateral agreements were signed beforehand, which regulated financing and facilitated non-discrimination in multicultural micro-communities encapsulating the state's kin and other ethnicities. Consequently, the ensuing democratisation period and, especially, the EU's enlargement proved beneficial in CEE for interstate relations and minority rights, and above all, it avoided interethnic conflicts and bloodshed. Several factors contributed to this progress before and during the 2004 and 2007 accession waves.

First, the "Europeanisation of foreign policy" acted as a catalyst when changing the transnational relations at the periphery of the EU (Denca, 2009). Moreover, the early internalisation of EU norms diffused security concerns related to minority rights protection and established good neighbourly relations between member-states and candidate-states (Butler, 2007; Ram, 2003). As an illustration,

several examples of countries from CEE chose between the European path and the traditional *national* project (Csergo & Goldgeier, 2001, p. 76). First and foremost is the external state of Hungary, an earlier EU member in 2004, and the home state of Romania, an earlier candidate member. Both are connected in the nexus by the Hungarian national minority. To qualify for EU membership, Romania signed the *Treaty on Understanding, Cooperation and Good Neighbourliness* in 1996 with Hungary, in which the latter relinquished any territorial demands, whereas Romania promised to uphold the Hungarian minority's rights (Nagy, 1997). This treaty led the countries to establish good neighbourly relations and facilitated traction towards EU accession for Romania in 2007. In return, Hungary was able to engage directly with the Hungarian communities in Romania at the cultural, educational, citizenship and even political level.

As recalled earlier in this dissertation, at the opposite pole is the trajectory of the former Yugoslavia, specifically Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia, which opted for a traditional national project which ultimately collapsed and generated bloodshed (Wachtel, 1998). By analysing the two different examples closely, one can identify that under the EU's norms, on the one hand, the protection of minorities was ensured, and the interstate relations were peaceful and economically productive. Concurrently, the role of external states in the affairs of transborder minorities was permitted under the treaties proposed by the European Commission and endorsed by international bodies. In this framework, kin-states could share the financial burden of home states, up to a certain extent, when investing in areas predominantly inhabited by ethnic minorities with which they shared a common culture, history and language.

On the other hand, under the EU's norms, the relation between the home states and external states at the periphery of CEE "became highly competitive […] by asserting control over administrative institutions and institutions of cultural reproduction" (Csergő & Goldgeier 2013, p. 89). Unexpectedly, the traditional understanding of the *nation* in CEE as something "cutting across the boundaries of state and citizenship" (Brubaker et al., 2018, p. 14) was reimagined and accepted under the notion of the *ethnocultural nation*. Therein, ethnic groups, facilitated by European integration, could pursue their national ambitions, and the external state could interrelate with its kin through what Csergő and Goldgeier (2001, 2004) have called *virtual integration*. Though the constitutive elements of the nexus preserved nationalism as a bargaining tool and as an identity marker, the means with which these interacted along the axes was starting to lose its antagonistic salience, instead relying more on competing and even negotiated stances that were ultimately beneficial for democracy in the region.

Although this dynamic was not representative and applicable to all countries, for those few cases where the post-imperial character following the collapse of communism was navigable the nexus transitioned from being conflictual to competitive and collaborative within the bloc. To some extent, this does beg the question of how the nexus could evolve more in the post-integration process when the redistribution of EU funds and government debt are dependent on the independence of institutions and debt benchmarks, which is likely to create diverging

blocs within the EU. This dissertation attempts to reply under the new variation of Brubaker's nexus, which for many scholars, lost its salience in the later stages of European Union integration, by relying on the traditional theories of nationalism to explore modern developments in the region. This dissertation agrees that this examination is still possible in some cases. However, in the instance of the present case study, a new variation of Brubaker's nexus ought to be considered.

Hence, amid the body of literature that proposed new theoretical avenues to study the fertile milieu of nationalism in CEE (c.f. Connor, 1993; Hutchinson & Smith, 1994, 1996), heretofore EU enlargement, Rogers Brubaker's "triadic nexus theory" (1996) was and still is, perhaps, one of the most exhaustive tools to analyse the transnational relations between *home states*, *external states* and *minorities*, especially at the periphery of the CEE, even in the context of EU enlargement and integration in Eastern Europe. Though the nationalisms Brubaker observed early in the 1990s changed their primordialist ontology, their property became more accommodating and capable of association with other political leanings in the EU's post-integration epoch. Thus, in the following, the capstone will highlight the overarching theory of this thesis, i.e., *the triadic nexus*. And it will develop the arguments vis-à-vis why this theory is suitable for analysing the selected case of this thesis, i.e., *Hungary, Romania* and *the Hungarian minority in Szeklerland*.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Central Concept – Triadic Nexus

Since Rogers Brubaker first published the triadic nexus theory in a collection of essays (1995), the theory has received a great deal of interest in scholarly debates. A year after Brubaker further developed his nexus theory and it was published in the book *Nationalism Reframed* (1996). Overall, Brubaker's ideas about national minorities, nationalising states and external national homelands have been influential in political and minority studies in the post-communist CEE (CEE), "len[ding] itself to numerous empirical applications" (Pettai, 2006, p. 127). In the epoch when the reconfiguration of the political space from CEE's multi-ethnic settings was moving back to the nation-state, the potential conflictual national question, argues Brubaker, has been "reconfigured along putatively national lines [which] has only reframed the national question" (1996, pp. 3–4). At its core, the national question in CEE was how the new states underscored mutually antagonistic elements or nationalisms "which has been both the cause and effect of the nationalisation of political spaces" (Brubaker, 1996, p. 4). Upon analysing these characteristics in the new settings of the CEE, Brubaker describes this post-communist milieu as "loosely integrated, polyethnic, polyreligious, and polylinguistic" (1996, p. 3). The heterogeneity of this setting and the socio-political nuances of this milieu have fostered the nation-building process of states to move along the lines of ethnic nation-states (Brubaker, 1996, p. 3).

The resulting tensions honed three types of nationalisms, i.e., *nationalising states*, *national minorities* and *external homelands (**Figure 1)*. Brubaker contended within this dynamic that the relation between these elements underscored a specific ethnopolitical configuration named *triadic nexus* (Brubaker, 1996, p. 4). Herein, Brubaker "conceptualise[d] these liaisons in a simple triangular shape, where individual states are positioned simultaneously alongside their ethnic minorities as well as the homeland state of the minority" (Pettai, 2006, p. 126).

Figure 1. The Triadic Nexus
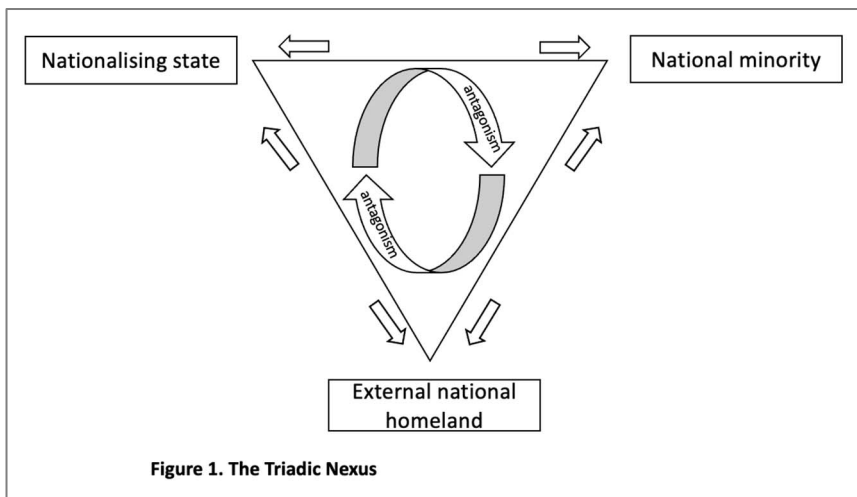
The self-identification of minorities can be comprehended as the interplay of two categories of analysis (nodes): the newly nationalising state in which the minorities reside (home state) and the "external homeland" with which minorities share common ground in terms of ethnicity, culture, history, linguistics and, possibly, legal citizenship (Brubaker, 1996, pp. 4–6). The emergence of the triadic nexus "lent itself to numerous empirical applications […] between Estonia/Latvia, Russian minorities and Russia, […] but also the nexus between Slovakia/Romania, Hungarian minorities and Hungary" (Pettai, 2006, p. 127). Petsinis (2016) sees the model "as being of high relevance […] over minority rights in post-Communist Europe". This dissertation will take a closer look at the triadic configuration, starting with the first element, i.e., *the nationalising state*.

When communism collapsed, the newly independent states in CEE, and especially those in Eastern Europe, looked to the past for mythological continuity in an attempt to synthesise the country's composition in "ethnocultural rather than political-territorial terms" (Brubaker, 2011, p. 1786). In their quest to cement the ethnocultural foundation of the states from the ex-communist bloc, the newly independent "nation-states" overlooked, in some cases, the agency of numerous minorities from CEE and their association with the state's political structure, focusing instead on atavistic nation-building processes. The consequences of these developments, spearheaded by a revival of nationalism, led to the crystallisation of nationalist discourses and warranted the implementation of nationalist policies to the detriment of many minorities. Nationalism is seen by Brubaker (1996) as a "heterogeneous set of 'nation' oriented idioms, practices, and possibilities that are continuously available or endemic in modern cultural and political life" (p. 10). Elsewhere, Brubaker (2011, p. 1786) reviews this nation-building process commenced by the newly-independent nation-states from the ex-communist bloc through five motives:

> (1) the idea that the state contains a 'core nation' or nationality, understood in ethnocultural terms and distinguished from the citizenry or permanent resident population of the state as a whole; (2) a claim to ownership or primacy: the state is understood as the state of and for the core nation; (3) the claim that the core nation is in a weak or unhealthy condition; (4) the claim that state action is needed to strengthen the core nation, to promote its language, cultural flourishing, demographic robustness, economic welfare or political hegemony; and (5) the claim that such action is remedial or compensatory, needed to redress previous discrimination or oppression suffered by the core nation.

This set of practices and acquired discourses made Brubaker define the new nation-states as *nationalising states* and reveal the first element of the nexus (2011, p. 1786). Brubaker defined the nationalising state as something that is "ethnically heterogeneous yet conceived as a nation-state, whose dominant elites promote the language, culture, demographic position, economic flourishing, or political hegemony" (1996, p. 57). It is in this setting perceived by Brubaker that the elites of the emerging nationalising state "aim at favouring their majority group out of a desire to solidify their nation-statehood […] ultimately this preferential

behaviour sets in motion a reaction from the ethnic minority as well as from the latter's kin-state, which in turn spurs the triadic relationship" (Pettai, 2006, pp. 126–127).

Yet, the nationalising state's elite favouring could be interpreted in many ways. Not only does favouring entail aiding majority groups but elite-favoured projects also ensue, which bypass both majority and minority interests. Without their participation or because it lacks the minority's interest in the process, this dynamic spurs a new variation of the triadic relationship, facilitating a reaction from the minority kin-state.

The second element of the triad is *national minorities*, which comes with a threefold package of characteristics. Thus, for Brubaker, the national minority "is not simply a group that is given by the facts of ethnic demography. It is a dynamic political stance, […] with three characteristics that state (1) the public claim to membership of an ethnocultural nation different from the numerically or politically dominant nation" (1996, p. 60). The second characteristic of Brubaker's national minority is "the demand for state recognition of this distinct ethnocultural nationality, and (3) the assertion, based on this ethnocultural nationality, of certain collective cultural or political rights" (1996, p. 60). Sandwiched between two stronger elements, but residing in a new independent state, far from the borders of the one with which the minority shares the language, culture and history, the national minority element has, in Brubaker's conceptualisation, its distinct nationalism, with which a surfeit of demands and claims are usually made. Ranging from autonomy, cultural and administrative demands to state recognition of the minority's distinct cultural and historic characteristics, these claims are raised by the minority's elites "which designate a political stance" (Brubaker, 1996, p. 5). Sometimes, the demands and claims of the minority are in line with that of the kin-state.

However, this is not encountered in all cases. Brubaker himself states that "although national minority and homeland nationalisms both define themselves in opposition to the 'nationalising' nationalisms of the state in which the minorities live, they are not necessarily harmoniously aligned" (1996, p. 6). Thus, it can be interpreted from Brubaker's writing and applied to clear cases around the CEE, such as the Hungarian Szeklers from Romania, that there are categories of national minorities who have reactionary nationalisms against the nationalising state processes. And, despite this, national minorities do not align entirely with the policies of their kin-state because of their distinct identity, and in many cases they would rather use their political clout for political means in the sphere of the nationalising state. Yet what the writing of Brubaker did not mention is a dynamic whereby the mutually antagonistic elements of "nationalising state" and "kin-state" are no longer competing; instead, they compromise in the age of populist illiberalism, as the former halts the control and regulations of external influences to focus on specific internal problems, whereas the latter fills the vacuum left. In this dissertation, Studies III and IV investigate how the minority reacts when caught between the above-mentioned dynamic.

The external national homeland embodies the final element of the triadic nexus. The external states, according to Brubaker, engage with actions that "closely

monitor the situation of their co-ethnics in the new states, vigorously protest against alleged violations of their rights, and assert the right, even the obligation, to defend their interests" (Brubaker, 1996, p. 57). In the classic reading of Brubaker's theory, the nationalism of the external state is heightened whenever this perceives that the rights and identity of the national minority residing in the neighbouring state are threatened by the nationalisms and actions of the home state. Usually, the agents of external states who step up are "political spokesmen [who] assert the right – obligation – to protect the interests of their ethnonational kinfolk residing in other states" (Smith, 2002, p. 5). Though mentioned briefly earlier, the nationalisms of the minority and external state "are not necessarily harmonious because of geo-political and national political interests" (Brubaker, 1996, p. 6). Sometimes, the national minority's elites strive to preserve independence from the kin-state and negotiate power with the nationalising state without subscribing too much to the external homeland's policymaking and discourses.

However, one aspect of the nexus that Brubaker does not consider is the dynamic when the nationalising state is weak and lacks a degree of opposition and the means to challenge external influences within its own space. Instead, it vacates its place and abandons its national regulations in relation to the external state's actions. Having a weak and non-antagonistic home state that cannot counteract the kin-state's actions might weaken the incongruences between the minority and external state, as the former cannot also choose from what the home state can provide. Hence, the kin-state aligns its nationalism with filling the gap left by the home state to connect with the national minority and extend its political claims. Within these settings, a national minority is no longer interdependent; rather, it is dependent on the external homeland's actions. "A state becomes an external 'homeland'", argues Brubaker, "when cultural or political elites construe certain residents and citizens of other states as co-nationals, as fellow members of a single transborder nation" (1996, p. 5). In this dissertation, Study I investigates the means of the external state to fill the vacuum left with nationalisms that generate a harmonious relationship between the national minority and kin-state and bypass the home state's regulations.

The relations between the elements and their positionality are key factors for the given nature of the nexus (See Figure 2). Thus, when looking at the relation between the three elements – nationalising states, national minorities and external national homelands – Brubaker rightfully recognised the problem posed by the static nature of the three elements when perceived as such. However, Brubaker argued that "these are not fixed entities but variably configured and continuously contested political fields" (1996, p. 60). To reinforce his argument, Brubaker followed Pierre Bourdieu when examining ethnonational groups and differentiated the nature of the elements as "not [being] a fixed entity or a unitary group but rather in terms of the field of differentiated and competitive positions or stances" (1996, p. 61).

Figure 2. The Triadic Nexus relational dynamic
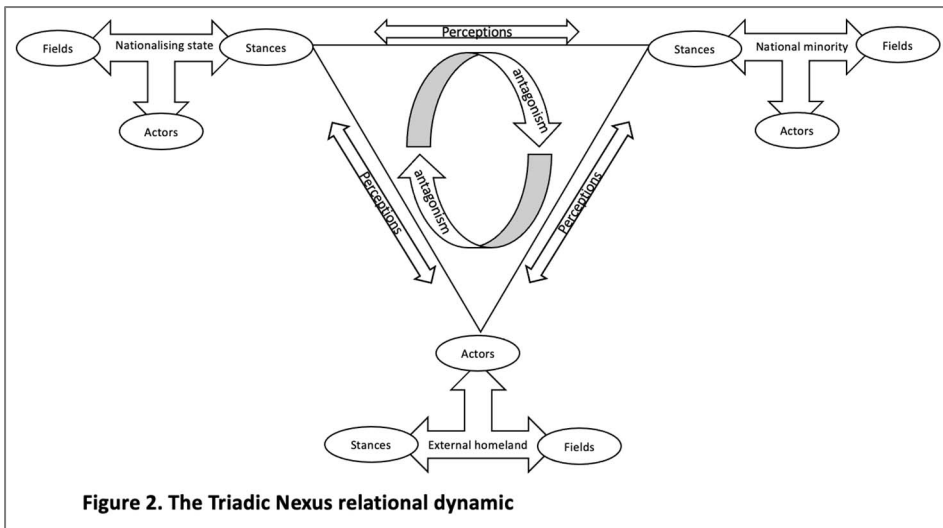
The idea of "stances" is important in the readings of Brubaker, as it denotes the agency and nature of those who seek to represent an element such as "national minority". However, this is not always valid, as Pettai rightfully argues when examining the cases of Estonia, Russian minorities and Russia. Pettai argues that "in both perceptions and stances, the point is the same for all players in the model" (2006, p. 132). Yet, from the readings, one can discern a focus on national minorities and agents claiming to represent the national minority. These vary from "different organisations, parties, movements, or individual political entrepreneurs […] each seeking to monopolise the legitimate representation of the group" (Brubaker, 1996, p. 61). The competing nature of the agency of those attempting to "represent" the national minority, with the claims of the external state on the territory of the nationalising state, configure the interplay of the nexus as opposing.

The predominant understanding of the triadic nexus assumes a degree of antagonism and tension at the least between the following two interactive axes of the "triangle", i.e., a) nationalising state and national minority; b) nationalising state and kin-state. In the traditional reading of the nexus, the nationalising state's nationalism "arises in direct opposition to and in dynamic interaction with nationalising nationalisms" (Brubaker, 1996, p. 5). Oppositely, the external state's nationalism "claim(s) that their rights and responsibilities vis-à-vis ethnonational kin transcend the boundaries of territory and citizenship" (Brubaker, 1996, p. 5). The national minority, with its claims and agency, is caught at the intersection of these stances. Yet the nationalising and external states do not necessarily need to voice their demands and claims, as "it suffices if the fields or actors in the fields are perceived as such by the other elements in the nexus" (Kallas, 2016, p. 12).

Hence, one can imagine that each element of the nexus is itself contoured by the relational subparts, that is, actors, fields and stances, whose insight and the dynamic of other elements encourages the dynamic. To this, Brubaker argues that

this dynamic "is reciprocal interfiled monitoring [which] involves selective attention, interpretation, and representation" (1996, p. 68). When looking at the interpretative process between the elements, Brubaker added another layer in the dynamic of the fields, i.e., contestation, which in turn may lead to antagonism among actors. More precisely, in the words of Brubaker, "such struggles among competing representation of an external field may be closely linked to struggles among competing stances within the given field" (1996, p. 68). Within Brubaker's triadic framework, the means that define the struggles, or the antagonism between the relational elements, are under the auspices of perceptions and representations. Depending on the positions and attitudes of a specific field, the perception and representation move to one stage or another.

The intricacies and versatility between the relational elements "pose a true challenge for an analyst to develop a comprehensive case-based analysis of the nexus at any specific time [because] it is difficult to account for all the factors that will shape the relations within the fields as well as between the fields along the axes" (Kallas, 2016, p. 13). Such developments have materialised and even multiplied in the post-democratisation epoch and period of European Union membership.

When developing the multi-dimensional relation between the elements and dynamics among the axes, Brubaker expected that his nexus would be hard at predicting future "nationalising stances, kinds of minority self-understanding and homeland politics" (1996, p. 76). One of the situations that the nexus did not explore was the dynamic in which populist illiberalism capsizes the mutual antagonism and the competing stances between the elements and instead permeates one or more of the three parties. How are the individual parts of the nexus – and their interrelationships – affected by one or another part of the nexus being more populist and illiberal? This is one of the questions posed in this dissertation.

Before moving onwards with the arguments, a small stop is, at present, recommended in order to develop one assessment of Brubaker's nexus. As already indicated above, Brubaker indicated the foundation and dynamics of the nexus were largely inspired by the events unfolding in the former Yugoslavia and some parts of the ex-Soviet space. The conflictual nature and stances between the elements of the nexus dictated the outcome of their interplay – a fact that may have popularised the utility of the nexus under a surfeit of studies solely under the auspices of antagonism. Having analysed the developments in the Baltics in the aftermath of communism between the new states, Russia and the Russian minorities, Pettai argues for a "further modification of the model, where actors should be understood as a) having subjective perceptions of each other and b) having diverse opinions within each pole" (2006, p. 132). Like Brubaker, the plethora of studies that investigated the nexus considered only its triadic form, circumventing or omitting the importance of yet another element that quickly was recognised by new scholarship under a quadratic nexus (Smith, 2002; Tesser, 2003). In the following section, this dissertation raises an important question in relation to the nexus's geometry, dynamics and relationships: is it triadic or quadratic?

2.1.1 Critique of the Concept: Triadic or Quadratic?

Since the publication of *Nationalism Reframed* (1996), Brubaker's conceptualisation has received an equal amount of praise and criticism. A surfeit of scholars have made use of Brubaker's conceptualisation in different contexts and for different case studies, revealing a distinct level of intricacies and relational dynamics constituted in history and shaped by the present's political circumstances (see, for example, Fowkes, 2002; Ingram, 2001; Ishiyama et al., 1998; King, 2001; King & Melvin, 1999; Motyl, 1998). Still, an almost equal number of scholars underlined a plethora of criticism. Ranging from Brubaker's dedicated interest vis-à-vis CEE's nation-building processes and distinct conflictual nature (Kuzio, 2001; Smith, 2002), to the reification of the "nation" and homogeneity of ethnic groups (Orr, 1998), to the exclusion of Western industrial democracies as a challenging paradigm to CEE's volatility and ethnic historicity (Safran, 1999), the nexus has inspired scholarly debates since its publication. Yet, as the world and political spaces reconfigured in the aftermath of communism, the nexus dynamics were observed as lacking an additional element that gradually began leaving its mark on the new socio-political order in CEE.

As democratisation and adherence to the market economy gradually increased in CEE and the ex-Soviet bloc, the international community was perceived by scholarship as the fourth additional element of the nexus (Smith, 2002; Tesser, 2003). Pettai observed that "in the case of triadic relationships from the inter-war period, the influence of organisations such as the League of Nations was minimal; in the post-Cold War context the role of bodies such as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Council of Europe as well as the European Union was destined to be much greater" (2006, p. 127). In the triadic nexus literature, different authors have shown that the nexus can also be quadratic (Smith, 2002) or have a pyramidal distribution (Pettai, 2006) (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. The Quadratic Nexus
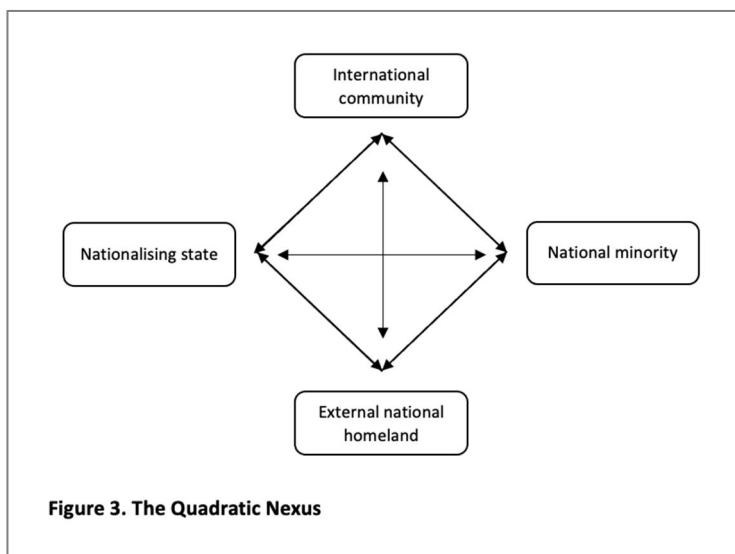
Within this model, international actors can alleviate the triadic tension by working with all the three main sides. However, an important aspect of this new dynamic must be added. As indicated in section *1.2, The Democratisation Period,* in some parts of CEE, nation-building processes fluctuated between the preservation of traditional courses like in the former Yugoslav space and European path models like Slovakia or Romania (Csergő, 2002). In the case of the European path, several effects are generated by the fourth element. Most notably, scholarship underlined the importance of the "Europeanisation of foreign policy" (Denca, 2009), Europeanisation of law (F. Snyder, 2000), European Union enlargement (Liebich, 2002) and the permeating theme of "Europeanisation" (Batt & Wolczuk, 2002) when bypassing the characteristic volatility of the triadic nexus, while changing the boundaries of collective identities (Spohn & Triandafyllidou, 2004). Surely, the effects of the fourth element have cast their span and influence vis-à-vis the question of national minorities.

In fact, a burgeoning strand of studies have examined the effects generated by the European Union, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe on the issues of minorities and policymaking in CEE (Dimova, 2006; Gal, 2000; Lantschner & Medda-Windischer, 2001; Pentas-suglia, 2001; Zielonka, 2003), Yugoslavia (Packer, 1999), in the Baltics (Petsinis, 2016; Pettai & Kallas, 2008) and the special case of Hungary and Romania (Csergő & Goldgeier, 2013; Ram, 2008; Skovgaard, 2007). Looking at case studies in Eastern Europe, Kelley (2010, p. 2) argues that "ethnic politics in Eastern Europe in the 1990s cannot be explained without examining the unique role of international institutions as domestic policy actors". Elsewhere in the eastern region, studies that previously examined the dynamics of the nexus in the Baltics argue that "a consensus exists that the international community played a formative role in the regulation of the relational stances and perceptions in the nexus, more strongly so in the period prior to EU enlargement in 2004" (Kallas, 2016, p. 15). Likewise, though different, such developments were mirrored best by the examples of Hungary, Slovakia and Romania in CEE, where most ethnic Hungarians reside. Therein, the role played by international institutions in the questions of minorities between these states is significant.

When looking at the above cases through the lenses of the triadic nexus, Kemp (2006, p. 123) argued that the international community "is not a player, so one should not amend Brubaker's theory to speak of a quadratic nexus. Rather, it provides a framework, standards and potential mediation in cases when the actors have exhausted domestic and bilateral means of resolving their differences". The new role attributed to the international community has been documented, especially in Lantschner and Medda-Windischer's (2001) study on Eastern and Southern Europe's minorities. In light of this, analyses that considered the role of the international community in the sphere of the Baltics content that "the international community becomes a practical category that does not alter the conceptual framework of the nexus but needs to be taken into consideration while analysing various dimensions of the nexus and their interplay in a specific cases study" (Kallas, 2016, p. 15).

When reflecting on the impact of the additional element or framework, further critique of Brubaker's work has been raised by Pettai (2006) about the new dynamics of the model. Pettai argues that the new model is "deriving generalised hypotheses about how the axes work becomes almost impossible to the extent that there is no longer any reality in the model, just subjectivity and multiple contestations" (2006, p. 133). Pettai's critique is echoed in Kallas's dissertation (2016, p. 16), in which she states that because of these new complicated dynamics, Brubaker's nexus "should remain a conceptual, rather than a theoretical construct".

Brubaker's triadic nexus has received criticism on the classifications applied to ethnicity and nation, the concept of nationalising state and the role of minorities under the new framework provided by the international community. For example, Orr (1998, p. 1139) argues that because within the triadic nexus configuration "nationness" and "ethnicity" are synonymous, ethnic groups are frequently taken as homogeneous entities. Csergo (2008, p. 393) also disagrees with this mixing and argues for the nation and ethnic groups to be socially constructed.

Kuzio (2001) criticises Brubaker's notion of a "nationalising state" based on the sole premise of case studies within CEE, disregarding similar processes that occurred in Western Europe a century earlier. To this, Smith (2002, p. 8) echoes his criticism in relation to Brubaker's "long-standing western stereotype which portrays the 'East' as less modern, more tribal and predisposed to ethnic violence". With this, history is reduced to conflicts between nation-states and ethnic groups generated by political demands. Such views are contested, for example, in the case of interwar Poland (Batt & Wolczuk, 2002; Wolczuk, 2000). While Brubaker did not focus on specific cases within CEE, "he developed a historical and comparative perspective on national questions in CEE looking at different fields of various triadic configurations" (Kallas, 2016, p. 16).

Even so, scholars criticised Brubaker's focus on the applicability of the nexus in CEE without bearing in mind the democratisation of the east and the return of these countries to market reform (Safran, 1999). Moreover, others have criticised the lack of references to right or left-wing politics within the nexus dynamics (Orr, 1998). This is an important critique because the dynamics between the elements, even under the influence of the international community, might suffer, as one, two or even all three elements might change under right- or left-wing politics in how they interact within the framework.

Though Brubaker's work did not focus on specific triadic nexuses in CEE, his work mostly examined the dynamics posed by national questions in the early years following the collapse of communism and paved the way for other studies to investigate similar multi-dimensional relations of the nexus across different cases studies. In the words of Kallas (2016, p. 16): "Brubaker's analytical frame proved to be appealing to scholars studying minority rights, nation-building and kin-state relations in Central Eastern Europe". Though several studies (discussed in the next section) added new nuances in relation to the development of the nexus, not many looked through the dynamics within the nexus following the infiltration of populist illiberalism. From an intuitive and theoretical point of view, the answer to whether the above infiltration might change the dynamics between the

elements might be negative, and nevertheless, on closer inspection, the answer seems to be more complex than that. Let us briefly cover this question from three perspectives before layering examples of studies that investigated ethnopolitical situations in CEE, which involved the largest minority, i.e., ethnic Hungarians.

The infusion of populist illiberalism, which has been central in European politics within the last decade, may be fertile ground for the external nationalising state to rethink the claims it may make in the name of a national minority and convince the minority's elites of its purposes "to construe all as fellow members of a single transborder nation" (Brubaker, 1996, p. 5) under the guise of what scholars, who closely monitored the developments of the nexus in the case of Hungarian minorities from CEE, have called "virtual nationalism" (Csergo & Goldgeier, 2001, 2004). Under this variable configuration, it might be difficult for the above institutions to navigate the nexus if the infusion of populist illiberalism drives most elements to act differently than their theoretical presumed nationalist nature. The once-assumed territorial demands, minority claims and representation, which generated the antagonism in the post-communist and early democratisation period – in the classic understanding of Brubaker's nexus – are now superseded. Nowadays, the national minority is politically represented in the polity of the home state. In turn, this allows the external state to represent the national minority and acquire its support through different means under the guise of populist illiberalism.

This dissertation will investigate this variable configuration, in which the mutual antagonism between the elements is dispersed due to the shifting stances against the influential settings of the European Union. This dissertation suggests that the external state perceives the home state's antagonism against the EU and moves along the axes to fill its position while construing the relational fields with the national minority's elites through a plethora of actions. As a result, nationalism's once interlocking features that merged the relational nexuses are now replaced by the more flexible and malleable interconnected relational stances generated by populist illiberalism.

While confronting the settings of the EU, the home state vacates its place and weakens its position within the nexus, which is ultimately filled by the kin-state. This combination will not be looked at explicitly in the dissertation, leaving room for other studies to do so in the future. The consequences of this *force majeure* within the axes of the nexus may force the national minority to forsake its contesting stance when facing the kin-state influences. A strong home state enables a strong national minority with its claims to contest both the influences of elements and negotiate its position. Whether national minorities like the Hungarians from across CEE can be influenced by the altering stances and weak position of their home state under populist illiberalism is a question that scholarly debates have not fully examined. This is one of the endeavours assumed in this dissertation. Still, what scholarship has implied more recently is the degree external states like Hungary have changed ethnopolitics under the guise of populist

illiberalism (Petsinis, 2020; Waterbury, 2021). This outcome may have repercussions on the configuration of the nexus. This variation, alongside other regional developments spearheaded by Hungary's kin-state actions, is examined below.

2.2 Populism – A Relational Dynamic that Causes a New Variation within the Nexus

In this Triadic Nexus, the interrelations between the elements change, particularly when the home state and the kin-state are enveloped in a phase of populist politics against liberal democracy. This nemesis is not necessarily undemocratic; it has always existed within its structures (Arditi, 2007; Holmes & Krastev, 2020). This antagonist component drifted around politics by "criticising democracy on any moral grounds, whilst failing to distinguish between personal and institutional problems" (Popper, 1971, p. 135). This sort of critical analysis of democracy's glitches elevated the political platforms of parties and leaders across the last decade, even in ethnopolitics, particularly in CEE (Bieber, 2018; Jenne, 2018).

Differently from the normative argument endorsed by most scholars of populism in relation to the nefarious nature of populism within liberal democracy (see Moffitt, 2020, p. 31), there are some scholars who argue differently. For example, some consider that populism "signals an underlying problem with our democratic system, but cannot itself provide the solution for this problem" (Rummens, 2017, p. 564). The reason behind this Janus-faced assertion is that scholars believe that the intrinsic features of populism, i.e., *illiberalism, anti-elitist, anti-pluralism* and *authoritarianism*, are in antinomy with the leanings of liberal democracy (Galston, 2018; Levitsky & Loxton, 2012; Müller, 2015; Riedel, 2017; Rummens, 2017). While there is much to consider when analysing the relationship between liberal democracy and populism, academics disagree on casting populism solely as a nefarious whole (Blokker, 2021). Instead, some assume that despite populism having myriad adverse variations, it can also be "*corrective*" to democracy (Kaltwasser, 2012); or, as others have contended, to be "a cure for democracy's tribulations" (Mouffe, 2018). Regardless of these theoretical considerations, during the last decade, right-wing populism assumed the helm of many countries throughout Europe and consolidated an influential bloc, mainly in Central and Eastern Europe (Enyedi, 2020; Gherghina et al., 2017; Pirro, 2015; Stanley, 2017; Suteu, 2019). Populist politicians and parties won their campaigns through a mixture of polarising messages, frequently stressing a strong relation between the people and politicians (Espejo, 2017; Mudde, 2000; Urbinati, 2019) and a collapse of Western culture (Inglehart & Norris, 2016, pp. 3–7).

More recently, neo-traditionalism has been used to look into populist practices (Kubik, 2020a; Mach et al., 2020). Here, the incorporation of neo-traditionalism into populism adds a further twist to the phenomenon, one that is capable of being internalised by "the people" as this blend seeks to establish a symbiosis between history, memory and tradition to encourage a backwards-looking gaze when envisioning a future proposed by a charismatic agent. Neo-traditionalism studies

define the phenomenon as "an individual or collective strategy which emphasises a return to what is claimed to be 'tradition' after a period of disruption" (Mach et al., 2020, p 5).

Although for decades the first scholars who maintained an interest in the phenomena disagreed in regard to populism's genesis and its subsequent permutations (Ionescu & Gellner, 1969; Canovan, 1981), others have seen in it a vagueness and ability to mutate in different climates (Laclau, 2005; Mouffe, 2018). Since then, academics have mainly studied populism in Europe and the Americas, and seldom in Asia, through the prism of scholarly approaches that range from the *ideational approach* (Mudde, 2004; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017; Müller, 2016) to the *strategic approach* (Jansen, 2011; Weyland, 2001, 2017) and the *discursive-performative approach* (Laclau, 2005; Mouffe, 2018). Let us briefly explore each.

Ideational scholars compared contemporary events and concluded that populism could not act independently; thereby, it needs to host different ideologies as ideational structures (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). This, in turn, made it difficult in the past for political scientists, who, in recent years, were not able to find any axiomatic definition of populism (Mudde, 2017, p.28). Those who adopt the ideational approach "agree that populism is a substantive message that should be distinguished from related but different phenomena like 'organisation' or 'leadership'" (Rooduijn, 2019, p. 3). Most scholars agree that this phenomenon is "about ideas in general, and ideas about 'the people' and the 'the elite' in particular" (Mudde, 2017, p. 29). One earlier attempt that managed to see populism through clearer lenses was proposed by Peter Wiles in the seminal volume *Populism: Its Meanings and National Characteristics* (Wiles in Ionescu and Gellner, 1969, pp. 160–180). In his contribution, Wiles captured the delineations of populism as a loose ideology that gives rise to derision, hostility and disruption in societies (p. 167). Recent developments honed the role of populism as a disruptive element and an incentive for a cultural backlash (Inglehart & Norris, 2016). Scholars would agree that the set of ideas that spoke about the antinomy between "the people" vs "the elite" over a malign economic system that favours the elite contributed to their success (Best et al., 2017; Bogaards, 2017; Gusterson, 2017; Runciman, 2018). Others see it more sharply. Ivan Krastev (2007, pp. 61–62) argues the following:

> "The heart of the conflict is rather the clash between the liberal rationalism embodied by European Union institutions and the populist revolt against the unaccountability of the elites. Liberal elites fear that modern societies are becoming ungovernable. Populists fear that modern elites have become totally unaccountable. Both fears are legitimate."

It is worth mentioning also that populism gravitates around certain notions, which strengthen its political platform and reach across different social strata of contemporary society, even in transborder cases. Actually, and as some scholars agree (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017), populism encompasses key concepts that

whirl around its ideological definition. These include *the people*, *the elite* and *the general will.* Accordingly, ideational scholars proposed the most widely known definition of populism in literature (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 5).

> "A thin-centred 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 general will of the people."

This definition has abetted scholarly endeavours from the Americas and Western Europe (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008; Hawkins & Kaltwasser, 2017; Rooduijn, 2019) that seek to understand party politics and their subsequent incorporation or combination of ideologies to diverse political platforms. The *thin ideology* is referential in the ideational approach. Its mechanism is, in the words of Michael Freeden, the significant element that "maps the political and social worlds for us" (2003, p. 2). The *thinning* requires the addition of "guest" ideologies, such as nationalism and conservatism, to achieve its political goals, upgrade its status to a fuller set of principles and policies, and ultimately to a *thickening* process (Stanley, 2017, p. 142). The encompassment of this "guest" ideology offers an antagonistic, mono-dimensional and ill-conceived solution to unresolved past issues rather than "a broad menu of solutions to major socio-political issues" (Freeden, 2003, p. 96). Even so, critics of the ideational approach disagree with its "thinning" component as it is "hard to imagine what a 'pure' populism would look like, as it needs to cohabit with other ideologies to make sense" (Moffitt, 2020, p. 23).

In this light, scholars of the strategic approach propose to look at populism "not as a thing or object to be studied but as a mode of political practice" (Jansen, 2011, p. 75). Likewise, Kurt Weyland goes further in his analysis of populism and suggests that "[populist movements, parties, and agents] are notorious for not espousing a clear, systematic, and comprehensive worldview; they avoid embracing a specific, well-defined ideology" (2017, p. 52). The purpose of the agents or political parties is to "pursue and sustain power" (2017, p. 50). As this approach claims that "populism rests on personalistic leadership" (2017, p. 56), its applicability has been previously restricted to the personalistic climate of South American political agents and milieus where media is instrumentalised in drawing political support; or where state institutions lack autonomous oversight powers. Moreover, the conceptualisation of neo-traditionalism, therefore, admits in advance the degree of the political strategy employed. One could consider neo-traditionalism as "ideologised outlines which reproduce tradition in a purposive manner as a selective version/vision of the past" (Mach et al., 2020, p. 5). Under the guise of reinstating tradition, populists propose and collectively apply specific political worldviews.

In this regard, studies showed the utility of employing the strategic approach in Eastern Europe (Chiruta, 2020), where populist leaders, according to the literature, "can appear to be directly in touch with their followers" (Moffitt, 2020,

p. 27), either via media, social media or protests. Nevertheless, critics of this definition have contended that the latter is too loose, which can equally be applied to other organisations that share the same features as political parties, i.e., charismatic leadership, etc. (Hawkins & Kaltwasser, 2017; Moffitt, 2020, p. 29).

Lastly, the discursive, performative approach, mainly influenced by the works of Gramsci on hegemony (2011) and Laclau and Mouffe (2005; 2001), see discourses as the foundation of populism, whereby its ideas, imagery and meaning about what identity might mean is the very substance that shows how the struggle is steered in political milieus. In this regard, the versatility of such a definition is not restricted to specific political environments. Instead, its applicability is widely relevant. Taking a cue from the Laclauian approach, Moffitt (2016, p. 38) argued that populism should be considered as a "political style" in which:

> "the repertoires of embodied, symbolically mediated performances made to audiences that are used to create and navigate the fields of power that compromise the political comprised of an appeal to 'the people' versus 'the elite'; 'bad manners'; and the performance of crisis, breakdown and threat".

Consequently, many studies have successfully explored the versatility of the discursive-performative approach in various cases from Greece (Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014), the United States (Bonikowski & Gidron, 2016), Germany (Volk, 2020), Georgia (Cole, 2020), Poland (Melito, 2021), the United Kingdom (Bossetta, 2017), Romania (Chiruta, 2021), Australia (Sengul, 2019) and Hungary, among many others (Palonen, 2018). In light of this, Moffitt argues that "unlike ideational and strategic approaches, which tend to universalise regional subtypes of populism as representative of the phenomenon in toto, the discursive-performative approach is able to take a truly global set of cases into account" (2020, p. 31).

Among the many benefits of employing populism through the lenses provided by the discursive-performative approach is its ability to highlight the socio-cultural elements of populism, which is most interesting in a cross-directional study. Hence, this study subscribes to the discursive and performative approach to avoid the ambiguity given by the notion of a "thin-centred ideology", as the nature of this dissertation's object of analysis lies at the intersection of different case studies from cultures whose ontological properties bear a "family resemblance to one another" (Brubaker, 2017, p. 361). Moreover, the case studies selected in this dissertation share ideological and discursive similarities, but the means of employing them vary in scope, purpose and meaning, with powerful effects for all the parties involved, especially in a triadic nexus.

Consequently, populism is accepted in this dissertation as a *repertoire of discursive and stylistic features* whose employability differs from one case to another. It is determined by the discursive practices of political actors and parties (Brubaker, 2017; Moffitt, 2016), who anchor its meaning and struggle against power in the representative culture of specific milieus (De Cleen & Stavrakakis, 2020) to shape the imagination of the people (Laclau, 2005).

Therefore, by focusing on discourse and style, an approach endorsed by Brubaker, too, this dissertation can cast light on the intricacies and power dynamics within the framework of the nexus and "capture the discursive, rhetorical, and stylistic commonalities [and differences] that cut across substantially quite different forms of politics" (Brubaker, 2020, p. 49). Such a definition can become a point of departure when analysing the discursive-performative repertoires, commonalities and implications within the nexus of *Romania*, *Hungary* and the *Hungarian national minority from Szeklerland*, where *nationalism* is interconnected with *populism* via similar vernaculars for different purposes. Such a conceptualisation avoids the ambiguity of conflated concepts such as "national populism" (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018), underlines populism and nationalism as different categories of analysis and, especially, revives at regional level the dialogue about the "re-politicisation of depoliticised domains of life [...] centred around the claim to speak and act in the name of the people" (Brubaker, 2017, pp. 361–365) within the context of the European Union.

For example, the recent populist surge in the region spearheaded by Poland and, especially, Hungary (Ágh, 2016a, 2018; Buzogány & Varga, 2021) under the axiom "we are representing the people" correspondingly included the transborder ethnic Hungarians from Romania (Chiruta, 2022). After acquiring citizenship for more than 600,000 ethnic Hungarians from Romania alone in 2011–2018 (Pogonyi, 2018), the Hungarian government employed these dual citizenship holders as vehicles of ideological dissemination and political influence in the Carpathian Basin, refilled the depleted domestic workforce in Hungary because of high emigration, and used these to reject the European Union's migrant imposed-quotas and cast these as enemies (Tátrai et al., 2017). By employing a rather minimal definition of populism in this dissertation, "it can capture the specificity of populism and nationalism and allows one to shed light on these empirical ambiguities and multi-dimensionalities [...] it can analyse intricate connections" (De Cleen & Stavrakakis 2020, pp. 317–320). This thesis uses frequently the combination populism illiberalism, in particular of the PSD in Romania and Fidesz in Hungary. This thesis uses the conceptualisation of Jan Kubik vis-à-vis the notion of illiberalism elaborated in the PopRebel and Fatigue manifesto (2020b), whereby civil liberties lack in specific societies, where respective societies are not open and the exercise of real power by a government elected via democratic processes, albeit with a corrupted electoral process, is not scrutinised by no oversight power (i.e., Constitutional Court, Parliament oversight committees, opposition, independent media). This selection is justified by the illiberalism that emerged from populism in CEE spearheaded by Fidesz in Hungary and PiS from Poland. These are examples of parties whose agents and their illiberal practices affected democratic institutions (i.e., attacks on the rule of law institutions, media, authoritarian tendencies, ultra-conservative values, etc). These parties intermingled populist discourses (i.e., anti-minorities, anti-elites) to convince large swaths of populations to vote for their platform and support their illiberal amendments to democratic institutions and processes to avoid societal crises; reproductions that have been copied by the PSD in Romania.

By examining the operationalisation of discourses and practices proposed for analysis in the four qualitative and quantitative studies, this dissertation can frame the specifics of populist practices and discourses at regional level, as well as the trajectory of policies, discourses, and practices across the nexus elements, with long-term effects for the field of ethnopolitics. Hence, such a framework could improve our understanding in relation to the different and similar cultural dimensions of populism along the axes of the nexus.

3. THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE DISSERTATION

This section will lay out the research design in Subsection 3.1 as will the key findings of the four texts presented in 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4. Before outlining the contributions, this dissertation showcases three facts that help to justify the case of Romania/Hungary as a particularly strong instance of altered triadic relations. Structurally, this dissertation considered this sequence helpful and logical for the reader to navigate. Henceforth, the reader can understand the foundations of this study, the empirical discussion and its contributions. However, now, this dissertation returns to the discussion of the three background reasons that helped the research design.

In 2014, Viktor Orbán's Fidesz won a supermajority in the Hungarian parliament mostly because of the dual citizenship policy, which granted Fidesz more than 200,000 votes in Romania. Between 2014–2018, Fidesz's kin-state activism invested more than 300 million euros in Transylvania in ethnic businesses, real-estate projects, scholarships and media acquisitions without having heretofore concluded a respective agreement with the Romanian state (Akos, 2020). Meanwhile, neighbouring parties, like those from Czechia, Poland, Serbia and Slovenia adopted Fidesz's rhetoric, conspiracy narratives and illiberal strategies that altered the independence of the judicial courts, media and civil society. With the same speed, the image of Orbán as a strongman, charismatic politician, anti-elite wrestler and defender of conservative values, Christendom and European history filled newspapers and many academic papers and books (Lendvai, 2017; Palonen, 2018). While his image dissipated even further, he was accepted by considerably more people and was replicated by other regional strongmen like Aleksandar Vučić, the president of Serbia.

In 2014, 2018 and, as noted during the writing of this dissertation, in 2022, too, Fidesz each time, garnered more than 95% of the transborder vote from Transylvania. Two facts can be determined here. During three electoral processes, the transborder vote swayed the margins of Viktor Orbán's party even more in Hungary. And the illiberal politics and economic influence of Fidesz and Orbán augmented more in Transylvania from 2015 onwards, unchecked and unchallenged by the Romanian governments. Yet, when looking at the second reason, the puzzle of this research design becomes even more interesting to examine. And in this light, the triadic nexus moves slowly to another variation and uncovers the second reason.

Second, as the populist wave reached further regional shores, similar developments happened in Romania. In 2015, the nominally Social Democrat party, the largest and most successful party, surprisingly elected Liviu Dragnea, a strongman with a criminal record. After successfully bypassing several crises in 2015 and safeguarding his party's image, Dragnea instrumentalised the populist discourse to win the 2016 elections by a landslide, 45%. After having secured an ultra-majority in parliament, Dragnea's PSD also received support from the Democratic Alliance Hungarians in Romania (UDMR/RDMSZ) to commence a revision of the judiciary in Romania, the "everlasting problem of Romanian politics"

(Gallagher, 2015). Like the actions of PiS from Poland and Fidesz from Hungary, the PSD sought to amend the judiciary and constitutional order in Romania in 2017–2019. As it turned out, Orbán "praised Romania's leaders for being reliable allies in the fight against […] Western liberals" (Enyedi, 2020, pp. 367–368). As the PSD's actions fostered a conflict with several European institutions, the tools used by the PSD to amend the judiciary mingled discursive institutionalism with populist rhetoric and performances that highlighted the "elites", "the people", and crystalised an organic concept of the "nation".

The consequences of these procedures are manifold, yet some could be speculated to have more weight. For instance, abroad, the European Commission threatened to apply the European Unions' Article 7, which would suspend the voting rights of Romania in the European Parliament and postpone Romania's adherence to the Schengen area even longer for violating the rule of law. Further, Romania registered in 2014–2020, predominantly in 2017, a lower absorption of EU funds, i.e., 31 billion euros, than in 2007–2013, i.e., 33.92 billion euros. Overall, this was the lowest in the European Union (Lucian, 2021).

Domestically, due to the PSD's actions, Romania saw large street demonstrations, the aim of which was violently repressed by law enforcement on 10 August 2018 (Adi & Lilleker, 2017; Chiruta, 2020; Gubernat & Rammelt, 2021). Coincidently, in 2018, Romania had the highest migration in its previous nine years, according to the National Institute for Statistics, with 239,000 Romanians leaving the country for longer than twelve months – a rising trend compared to previous years[1]. In comparison to 2017, migration increased from 219,327 to 238,926. Between 2015 and 2019, 855,175 Romanians left the country temporarily. When asked in 2017 about their trust in the government, 77% specified their distrust, according to a Eurobarometer poll[2]. Were this low trust expressed nationally, one should thus consider that the same situation would be equally revealed amongst the ethnic Hungarians, albeit with one caveat. Unlike Romanians, who may be forced by societal and political constraints to emigrate, Hungarians can have someone to turn to for support in the likeness of the Hungarian government. This status quo sets the stage for the third reason.

In 2018, a poll that surveyed the Hungarian national minority's beliefs about democracy and the future of Romania revealed that most Hungarians disapproved of the trajectory of both[3]. The same feeling consolidated in time. When questioned

[1] The statistics that encompass the migration of Romanians in the European Union can be viewed at the following link provided by the National Institute for Statistics in Romania, Institutul Național de Statistică (insse.ro). Link accessed 2.9.2022.

[2] The Eurobarometer poll PARLIAMETER 2017, A STRONGER VOICE, CITIZENS' OPINIONS ABOUT THE PARLIAMENT AND THE EU ordered by the European Commission and underwent by CSOP between 5 and 12 November 2017, can be accessed here ro-report-citizens-views-on-ep-and-eu-201710.pdf (europa.eu). Link accessed 4.9.2022.

[3] The survey summary ordered by the ethnic Hungarian party UDMR/RDMSZ on the level of satisfaction among the Hungarians from Transylvania can be accessed here Híradó (hirado.hu). Link accessed 5.9.2022.

about government trust in 2020, the Hungarian national minority from Szekler-land's Covasna/Kovaszna revealed a 12% level of trust in the government, whereas 92% trusted Hungary's Viktor Orbán. In 2021, another poll conducted by Bálványos Intézet (a think tank for sociological research) discovered that just 10% considered Romania their homeland, while for 52% it was important to be Hungarian citizens. 49% of respondents indicated Romanian politics was not important, while 94% identified with Viktor Orbán and 83% would vote for Fidesz in the next elections[4].

In 2022, another poll conducted by the SoDiSo research group in January, before the parliamentary elections in Hungary, revealed that the support of the Transylvanian Hungarians for Fidesz and Viktor Orbán remained the same as in 2018, at 90%[5]. In 2022, 280,000 ethnic Hungarians (80,000 more than in 2018) registered to vote out of 600,000 ethnic Hungarians with dual citizenship. Many inferences can be drawn from this; however, several might be particularly notice-able. Since 1992, the UDMR/RDMSZ has been part of or supported most govern-ment coalitions and even supported the PSD's attacks on the judiciary; it has re-ceived countless ministerial portfolios and state funds, albeit its autonomy claims have been rejected each time. Despite having an ethnic party as part of countless governmental coalitions, the level of trust in home state's institutions is extremely low, whilst the kin-state's agency and the main political agent is high. Paradoxi-cally, the development of the region is also very low.

Looking closely, one can discern that the elements of this known empirical case attest to the shifting nature of the nexus argued first in a study by Kemp on the same nexus (2006, p. 122). This time, the axes between the elements denote a striking variation under populist illiberalism with several permutations. Further-more, these lack the traditional understanding that the elements ought to have a mutual antagonism to hone their nationalisms in the nexus. Thus, this dissertation presents in the research design the shifting nature of the nexus elements under the auspices of *populism* and *illiberalism*.

3.1 The Research Design of the Dissertation

The starting point of the research design argues about a variation whereby popu-list illiberalism impacted the rapport between the nationalising state and kin-state and affected Szekler's identity politics. Having argued this, the interplay among

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[4]   The results of the poll conducted by Bálványos Intézet called National identity and relations with Hungary, among Hungarians from Transylvania – 2021/ Nemzeti identitás és Magyarors-zághoz való viszony az erdélyi magyarok körében 2021 in July 2021 can be accessed here Magyar identitás és Magyarországgal való viszony az erdélyi magyarok körében 2021 (foter.ro) and here Egyet találhat, ki a legnépszerűbb magyar politikus ma Erdélyben! – Főtér (foter.ro). Links accessed 6.9.2022.

[5]   The summary of the survey conducted by SoDiSo Research at the behest of the Eurotrans Foundation can be accessed here hirado.hu. Link accessed 6.9.2022.

the axes of the nexus envisioned for this research is best represented in **Figure 4**. Here, the mutual antagonism perceived along the axes is mollified under populism illiberalism generating space for new ethnopolitical processes and permutations.

Figure 4. The Triadic Nexus relational dynamic in the age of Populism
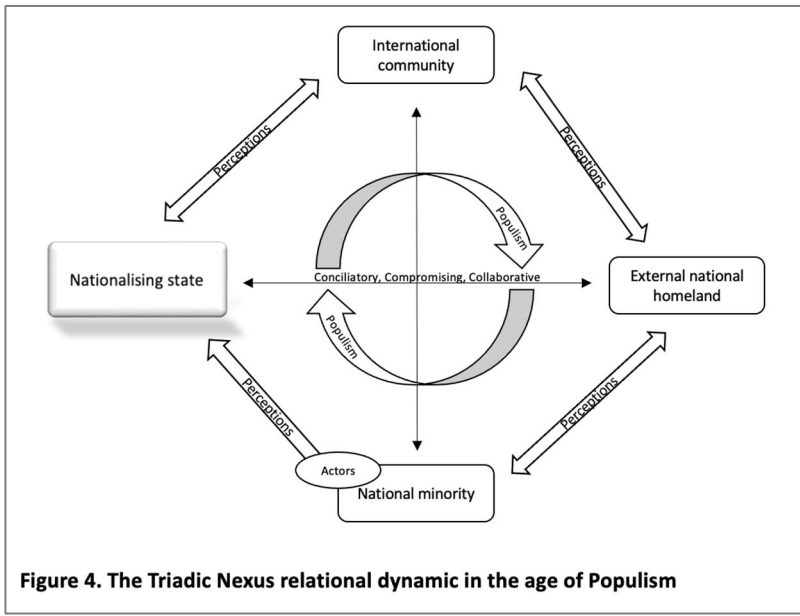
Therefore, the four studies assembled and pinned under Brubaker's nexus theory contend that under populist illiberalism, the traditionally antagonistic elements of home and kin-state no longer compete but rather liaise and compromise politically. Such actions have consequences. First, to the long-term detriment of minority-majority relations, the kin-state deprives the minority of its natural societal and political milieu and incorporates them into its domestic settings. Second, the further alienation of the minority by the kin-state actions and idleness of the home state may constitute a future salient platform for existing right-wing parties like the Alliance for the Union of Romania (AUR) – who, on several occasions, tested the waters with anti-Hungarian narratives – if societal and cultural cleavages are expanded.

Given this thesis's research question – *in what ways has the triadic nexus in CEE been modified by the rise of populist illiberalism?* – there are seven permutations assumed in the research design of this thesis, whereby one can have a sense of how much and which part of the triadic nexus is affected by populist illiberalism. These permutations are illustrated in the table below:

	Nationalizing state	National minority	External kin-state
Table 1. Case characterization (research design)			
Permutation 1			X
Permutation 2		X	
Permutation 3	X		
Permutation 4		X	X
Permutation 5	X	X	
Permutation 6	X		X
Permutation 7	X	X	X

X=element is populist illiberal

Table 1 reveals that in the case of this dissertation, the case of Romania (natio-nalising state), Hungarian minority (national minority) and Hungary (kin-state) is best represented under **Permutation 6**, *which impacted the Hungarian minority the most. Under this characterisation, the literature that underlines Hungary's trajectory towards incorporating a populist platform in 2010 is well known. By 2011, when the dual citizenship policy was adopted and enforced in the Hun-garian parliament, Fidesz was overtly populist, creating the first imbalance in the nexus. Fidesz maintained this mantra until the 2014 elections, which was the main catalyst when securing the most votes domestically and among the diaspora.

In 2014–2016, at the height of the migration crisis, Fidesz evolved towards a populist illiberal platform due to a growing conflict with the European Union on issues related to the independence of the judiciary, Constitutional Court and shared migrant quota. After 2016, Fidesz crystalised its populist illiberal rhetoric and practices and became the foremost political actor in the region, which inspired like-minded parties. One of the interesting developments that resulted from the gradual growth of Fidesz regionally was reflected in the politics of ethnic parties representing the Hungarian minority. Though these political developments are mere background information, they offer the reader supplemental information to comprehend how the nexus gradually changed following the transition of the kin-state to populism illiberalism and the gradual sway of minority elites in Romania under its wing. They also help better comprehend and connect the dots in the discussions on the empirical results in **Sections 3.2**, **3.3** and **3.4**.

Previously, this dissertation mentioned the name of the ethnic Hungarian party UDMR/RDMSZ as an important player in the interrelation between the larger two elements of the nexus. It was argued that so long as UDMR/RDMSZ main-tained an autonomous role in the nexus, its negotiating stance improved, provided that the home state preserved its balancing attitude by overseeing and safe-guarding its duty to even up the practices of the kin-state on its territory. How-ever, altering the UDMR/RDMSZ political form generated the second imbalance in the nexus, which eventually impacted the minority element later on. Therefore, until 2011, when its chairman was Béla Markó, the party remained autonomous from Hungary's main political forces and the Romanian government. However,

after Hunor Kelemen took over as chairman, the party gradually changed its pro-European perception, discourses and actions. In due course, it relinquished the party's clear liberal doctrine, transitioning to a party that contains several micro ideologies that are hard to pinpoint on the political ladder. Nevertheless, several episodes hint towards UDMR/RDMSZ's sway under Fidesz's ideology and political mantra, further expanding the second imbalance in the nexus.

As an illustration, in 2015, at the height of the migration crisis in Southern Europe, Hunor thought that the Romanian authorities need not have a sentimental approach in relation to Hungary's decision to build a wall to stop migrants. Also, in 2015, news outlets from Romania and Hungary revealed that UDMR and Fidesz signed an agreement whereby UDMR was to receive funds through a foundation called Eurotrans/*Eurotrans Alapítvány* to assist Hungary to *re-naturalise* ethnic Hungarians becoming Hungarian citizens (Felseghi, 2018). From 2015 onwards, the media reported that Hungarian funds for Transylvania grew significantly while being controlled by NGOs associated with the Hungarian government and the Hungarian Church from Transylvania, whereas funds for the Hungarian media in Romania were controlled by UDMR's NGOs (Zoltán, 2017). By 2022, two months before the elections in Hungary, the last independent Hungarian media in Romania was bought by shareholders affiliated with the Hungarian government (Trans-index, 2022).

In 2017 and 2018, UDMR was, and still is to this day, a supporter of amending the judiciary and retaining the oversight agency called the Special Section, despite an indication to the contrary from the Venice Commission. During this time, UDMR benefited in terms of image and political clout from Fidesz's investments and funds given to Hungarian communities in Transylvania (Pantazi, 2020). In 2017, UDMR voted in the Lower Chamber of the parliament to support the Refe-rendum for the definition of the family in the Romanian constitution, endorsed by the PSD. In 2018, Hunor urged the Hungarian community to go to the polls and vote as per their conscience, despite civic association pleading for a nation-wide boycott. UDMR maintained a neutral stance during the election.

Since 2018, when the European Union and Commission took several actions against Fidesz's practices against gender studies and homophobic policies, UDMR sided with Orbán's party. In 2021, UDMR pleaded with the Hungarian community from Romania to vote in the anti-LGBTQ referendum proposed by Fidesz. Finally, in 2022, UDMR proposed an amendment to the Romanian Child Protection Law, similar to the action of the Hungarian government in 2021, to ban the discussion of homosexuality and gender identity in public spaces in Romania (Radu, 2022). After Fidesz won the election in 2022, Hunor stated that UDMR would strengthen its relations with Orbán's Fidesz (G4Media.ro, 2022).

In some respects, one can notice a sequence between the established Hungarian populism illiberalism and its permutations after 2014 for the minority elites, which, ultimately, impacted the national minority subsequently, according to the findings of the survey employed in this dissertation. And yet, questions should be addres-sed about the role of the home state within this framework. From a conceptual point of view, in this picture, the presence of the home state is now missing, as Fidesz

just started expanding its influence abroad following the 2014 electoral success. And if we recall, only in 2015, the PSD elected Liviu Dragnea as its chairman, despite having a criminal record, following the PSD's defeat in the presidential elections. Shortly after Dragnea's elections, the PSD built and thereafter ran on a populist platform in 2016 and emerged as an illiberal actor in 2017–2019 while intensifying its conflict with the EU institution on the independence of the judiciary and the rule of law. These are recurrent themes of Fidesz. Unlike the Hungarian hegemonic party, in the fullness of time, the PSD downgraded its mantra following a series of crises and electoral defeats: *a)* in 2020, Liviu Dragnea was imprisoned; *b)* in 2020, PSD acquired the lowermost results in the EU parliament elections following Dragnea's attacks on the judiciary, media and civil society; *c)* the conflict with the EU institutions, which are held in high regard amongst Romanians, inflicted great political damage domestically on the PSD and among the family of the Party of European Socialists (PES).

Furthermore, after underlining several pieces of background information and suggesting that under **Permutation 6** the Hungarian minority from Romania were impacted by the kin-state and home-state transition to populism illiberalism, this thesis moves on to present the summaries of the empirical research, as reflected in the findings of the four studies attached herein. Thus, this thesis hopes to establish more clearly how **Permutation 6** impacted the Hungarian minority under populism illiberalism in time, as evidenced by the findings of the independent survey employed for this study. The findings of these four studies encompassing the multi-nuanced methodological processes of this dissertation are developed in the next sections. These segments are intended to showcase the sequence of the main elements along the axes of the nexus, *Hungary, Romania* and *the Hungarian minority in Szeklerland* influenced by *populism illiberalism*.

3.2 Study I: Hungary the Kin-State – Using Memory as a Populist Illiberal Catalyst

Study I focused on the actions and practices of the kin-state (i.e. Hungary and Fidesz) in Romania, specifically in the case of churches and other memory sites from Szeklerland. As the actions of the Hungarian kin-state (e.g., extending citizenship) are well-covered in the literature (Pogonyi, 2011, 2018), but the dimension of memory is not, this dissertation considered Study I as an opportunity to fill the gap in the literature with an explorative approach to the kin-state mnemonic practices. This study contributes to the reader's understanding in relation to kin-state actions to support transborder and kin-cultural milieus by infusing its ideology and understanding of history into the process.

Theoretically, this paper intermingled the works of Svetlana Boym (2001) on *restorative nostalgia* and Pierre Nora (1986) on *lieux de memoire* from the school of sociology with Myra Waterbury's work on *kin-state activism* (2010). These concepts were used to understand how the collective memory of specific communities can, on the one hand, foster the remembrance of a lost period, territory and golden

age, while, on the other hand, interpret the consequences of infusion with mnemonic and ideological narratives by political actors in transborder settings. Taking a cue from Nora's writings, the community reflected in this study is the Szekler, and the remembrance stimulated by the practices of the kin-state is that of the Greater Hungary, that is, the lieux de memoire underlined by Fidesz.

Methodologically, this study incorporated *archive research* with *ethnography* and *participatory observation*. First, this study relied on empirical data from the Bethlen Gábor Foundation to investigate Hungarian church funding in Romania (the rest of Transylvania and Szeklerland) to compare it with other communities from Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine. Second, the paper relied on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Szeklerland in October-December 2020 to understand how Fidesz's funds for Hungarian churches and the cultural heritage infused Fidesz's sense of history and ideology. This study asked the question: *How does the Hungarian kin-state (alongside all their other issue areas – education, culture, etc.) get involved in supporting ethnic kin's lieux de memoire to foster a synthetic reconstruction of the lost homeland?* Study I investigated the axis of kin-state and national minority through the prism of memory studies and Hungarian cultural heritage.

Based on the concepts and methods employed, three goals were attributed in this study. First, this endeavour wished to understand how Fidesz's policies have gradually changed the mnemonic narratives in the Hungarian communities from Romania. Second, this paper strived to comprehend how restorative nostalgia is included in spaces that narrate the space and time of the lieux de memoire, i.e., Greater Hungary. Third, this study sought to interpret how the mnemonic policies employed by the kin-state can generate mnemonic polarisation.

The incorporation of concepts taken from the school of sociology and the multivaried approach of methods have successfully outlined several important findings. These aim to contribute to memory studies, kin-state activism and everyday nationalism in CEE. Overall, this study shows the kin-state's unimpeded and unchecked range of activities on the territory of the home state, which, according to the survey results, cemented its hegemony among the ethnic Hungarians. The former's multi-faceted actions and spending consolidate an important electoral pool outside of Hungary's borders by pulling the minority in its grasp. In the following, let us discover what may have prompted the nationalising state not to challenge or match the kin-state's support on its territory in the otherwise traditional design of the nexus, which is fuelled by mutual antagonism.

3.3 Study II: Romania the Nationalising State – Transitioning to Populism Illiberalism and Abandoning its Ethnopolitical Place

Study II looked at Romania's tilt towards populism illiberalism discourse and actions during the Social Democrat Party's (PSD) change of leadership and governments in 2015–2019. This study sheds light on the illiberal dynamics of political parties and agents, whereby, in this thesis's case, the nationalising state of Romania blended *discursive institutionalism* with *populist discourse* to amend the judiciary and the rule of law while challenging European institutions. The results reveal the evolution and rise of populist tropes in the performance of the main home state party, i.e., the PSD.

Theoretically, this paper blends the growing theory of *populism as a political style* (Moffitt, 2016) with *discursive institutionalism* (Schmidt, 2008) to understand how discourse can change institutions and democratic procedures, which populist actors, especially from CEE, employed more acutely. Methodologically, this paper employed *qualitative content analysis* on 625 discourses of the PSD in 2015–2019 to examine the populist political style's effects on democratic institutions in Romania. Study II focused on empirical data, most specifically, political speeches and press statements of the PSD retrieved from their official YouTube page and analysed via content analysis to determine the blending of the elements of the populist discourse (*people*, *elites*, *crises*, and *bad manners*) with discursive institutionalist actions (e.g., normative acts, legislations).

The research question of this study asks *how populist political discourse affects the structure of democratic institutions?*

Overall, this study showed that, unlike other populists, the PSD's discourse did not incorporate anti-minority rhetoric or espouse xenophobic traits. Yet, one can acknowledge from Study II that the PSD crystalised the "the people" and "the nation" in juxtaposition with the foreign element and conspiracy theories (e.g., EU institutions, Soros). It did so to insist obsessively on changing the rule of law institutions, thereby generating a gap in Romanian society regarding political representation, credibility, instability and lack of predictability, which, inevitably, was filled by others.

3.4 The Szekler: A Homogeneous Community caught between a Frail Home State and an Influential Kin-State

Because of the richness of the method employed for the third element of the nexus, an *independent survey*, this section is spread into two parts: Studies III and IV. The former and the latter examined the last element of the nexus, i.e., the *national minority*, and its views vis-à-vis the practices of the kin-state and the tilt of the nationalising state towards populist discourse. These pieces add new knowledge by showcasing measured considerations in relation to Szekler's understanding of

the political processes and practices adopted by the kin-state and nationalising state in 2015–2020.

The empirical data of Studies III and IV relied on a representative sample of 617 ethnic Hungarians (18–60+) from both rural and urban areas of the Szekler-land region (Harghita, Covasna, and Mures). The responses were collected in December 2021 using a CATI-type survey conducted by a professional company that ethnic Hungarians operate from Romania. The survey contained fifty questions and sixty-six variables as part of a more extensive multi-topic study. The questionnaire was designed in English and then translated into Hungarian by native speakers to ensure consistency.

The survey was used to determine the respondents' views towards Hungary's kin-state actions and practices vis-à-vis Hungarian cultural heritage and the tilt of Romania towards populist discourse as suggested under **Permutation 6**. The Szekler were selected for investigation for two reasons. First, from the point of view of the Hungarian kin-state. The Szekler are a homogeneous community located in the heartland of Romania, with a rich history and tradition in the Hungarian consciousness and enclosed in a territorial enclave, which makes this community and its geographic position an easy target for its kin-state. There are several features which make this minority special and are revealed by their answers in the survey employed in the dissertation. For example, the Szekler, when asked how different they were from other Hungarian communities in Romania, 30.6% stated that they are completely different, 42% somewhat different and 15.6 not different. When asked about the characteristics of their communities and region, Szekler stated that the most important feature is the historical background (21.6%), the concentration of Hungarian people in the region as the second most important (18.6%) and the ability of the community to resist assimilation over the last 100 years as the third most important marker (22.5%). All these traits make this community very appealing for a powerful populist illiberal and regional actor like Fidesz to target.

Second, from the point of view of the nationalising state. The Szekler are the largest electoral body of the UDMR/RDMSZ, which for the last 32 years has been present or supported most Romanian governments. Because of its geographics position as an enclave, Romanian parties seldom venture, if not at all, to campaign in the region, leaving a monopoly for the UDMR/RDMSZ and its ally Fidesz. During national elections in Romania, this electoral pool usually swings to centre-right parties and presidential candidates, decreasing the margin of the PSD. Although the PSD is viewed negatively in Szeklerland and sometimes, as revealed during the fieldwork, is associated with the communist regime, the Hungarian political elites of the UDMR/RDMSZ have been staunch allies of the PSD throughout the years.

Study III – Fidesz's Neo-Traditionalism Pull in Transylvania

Study III is presented as part of the general portfolio of published work, as it deals with *populist illiberalism,* the centrifugal force proposed here that affects the dynamics between the axes of the elements of the nexus. However, before moving onwards, the reader should understand that it was originally written in a slightly different context, which is why it contains references to the concept known as *neo-traditionalism*. The latter is not part of the main framework of the dissertation but of the *FATIGUE* project, in which the author participated as an early-stage researcher. Nonetheless, conceptual associations can be drawn between neo-traditionalism and populist literature, thus offering new interpretative nuances.

Returning to the concept, populist literature revealed salient connections with *neo-traditionalism,* especially in view of Fidesz's actions. Study III includes a part of the survey that constitutes the third pillar of the dissertation. Nonetheless, most of the important findings, which are highlighted more thoroughly, can be read in Study IV. Going back to the theoretical framework of Study III, this paper accepts the concept of *neo-traditionalism* through the prism of its conceptualisation from the unpublished manifestos of *FATIGUE* and its sister-project *POPREBEL* (Kubik, 2020a; Mach et al., 2020), while injecting the definitions of *kin-state activism* (Waterbury, 2010) and *diaspora studies* (Gamlen, 2018). Broadly speaking, the *neo-traditionalism* studies incorporated in this paper advanced a framework which investigated the tools right-wing populist players like Fidesz intersect in cultural and economic policies to mobilise electorates.

Although these lenses are largely applied to Fidesz's domestic actions, this paper contends that the same practices are employed in the diaspora. Essentially, *neo-traditionalism* is seen as a toolbox for political mobilisation. It incorporates several political strategies that encompass cultural and economic suppliers being delivered by the kin-state to ethnic kin in return for political participation. The fact that Fidesz won the last three elections (2014, 2018, 2022) with more than 95% among the ethnic Hungarians from Romania may attest to this study's salience of interpreting Fidesz's actions through the lenses of neo-traditionalism. Conceptually, Study III asks *how Romania's Hungarian minority perceives neo-traditionalist cultural and economic suppliers.*

Overall, populist strategies converge policy implementation around the dynamics of neo-traditionalism, ensuring that there is a demand for this amongst the ethnic kin who experience a sort of crisis in the country they reside. This paper showed that neo-traditionalist proponents offer unique opportunities for populist parties, even in transborder settings, to emerge as hegemonic political actors.

Study IV – Measuring Szekler's Perception within the Triadic Nexus

Unlike Study III, which focused on the views concerning the practices of the kin-state through the lenses *of neo-traditionalism*, Study IV adopted an all-around approach by investigating Szekler's views towards the actions of the kin-state and nationalising state. Regarding the conceptual framework, Study IV intersected the definitions of *populism* theorised as a mode of political practice (Jansen, 2011; Weyland, 2017) and *nationalism* (Bieber, 2018, 2020). Additionally, this paper took on board the important work of Myra Waterbury on Hungarian *kin-state activism* (Waterbury, 2010)

The design of this survey separated the two stimuli into groupings for which specific questions were added.

First, in the case of the **kin-state**, Study IV encompassed Szekler's views on the kin-state practices and ideology. Thus, the results convey the views of Szekler on kin-state policies, and then it moves onwards to the elements of kin-state influence and, finally, to how the Szekler view the ideology exported and espoused by the kin-state actor. Second, Study IV present the findings of the survey vis-à-vis the **nationalising state**. Thus, Study IV reveals the views of minority Hungarians in relation to the state of affairs in Romania, its policies and actions towards ethnic Hungarians, settings of populist rhetoric and attitudes towards the nationalising state's populist rhetoric.

Overall, Study IV produced two main findings, under which a range of secondary results are listed. The first main finding suggests that the growing apathy and disinterest in domestic policies facilitated an opportunity for the kin-state to intervene and cement its policies. While Szeklers feel disillusioned with the conditions in Romania, they have grown closer to Fidesz's illiberalism because of projects that supported Hungarian cultural heritage. The economic component had the greatest impact, while, to a reduced, yet nonetheless notable degree, the cultural element also had an impact. The majority of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the home state's politics in 2015–2019, despite having the ethnic Hungarian party UDMR/RDMSZ as a supporter or member of most coalitions. The second main finding of this research indicated that because of Fidesz's increased political and economic foothold in Transylvania, people adhere to the illiberal model proposed by Viktor Orbán. The results showed an interesting dynamic whereby Hungarians in Romania embrace discourse regarding sovereignty and nation-state. The success and popularity of Orbán's kin-state policy should be interpreted in the context of the abandonment of Hungarian areas by the Romanian state.

SUMMARY

The transition, entry and integration processes into the European Union appeased the honed nationalisms of many countries from CEE that emerged in the dis-ordered period following communism. Unlike the fractious conditions in the Balkans, in which ethnopolitics and territorial claims became centrifugal forces for interethnic and interstate conflict, one case has been the model in ethno-politics, minority integration and peaceful coexistence. Praised by many scholars and policymakers, the case of *Hungary, Romania* and the *Hungarian minority in Szeklerland* from Romania has offered an encouraging alternative to other conf-lictual cases in Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. And it paved the way for scholarly endeavours to advance and strengthen minority rights, promote identity and culture, and the partaking of minorities in the politics of modern democratic states.

Since Romania transitioned and acquired full membership to the European Union, many studies over the past two decades have provided important infor-mation and stimulated serious discussions about what neighbouring states who host minorities could do to protect and promote their rights and identities. Many published studies describe the progress of the ethnic Hungarian minority from Romania and the processes to inspire this development.

At the core of this rich literature stood many theories and conceptual frame-works that provided different nuances to different phenomena involving the agen-cies of these three actors. Yet none has provided a more holistic approach than Rogers Brubaker's Triadic Nexus (Brubaker, 1995, 1996). Although the adherence to the European bloc diminished the nationalisms of states and made others question the salience of this model in the new democratic epoch, this dissertation demonstrates through an updated analysis the consistency of Brubaker's model to adapt to new political climates, and not lose its structural relevance in the pro-cess. The mono-dimensional lenses with which the critics of the nexus looked at triadic or quadratic configurations rendered only by nationalisms and mutual antagonisms as centrifugal forces weakened the theory's adaptability and con-cealed findings that could otherwise prove extremely useful in terms of European policymaking.

This dissertation takes a conceptual detour from the traditional understanding of the theory and its effort to update it; it replaces nationalisms with populism illiberalism to discover how the new variation affects the relational axes of the nexus *nationalising state, external kin-state and national minority*. This con-ceptual framework provides three portraits of the situation in each part of the nexus and applies them to reveal the ethnopolitical processes and sequences gene-rated by the impact of populist illiberalism. By adopting this conceptual frame-work and operationalising it in three studies, this dissertation departs from the conventional analysis, which focused on the standard antagonisms, to an approach where the predominant tendencies were mollified, the balance between the elements weakened and the position of the kin-state strengthened.

Study I starts with an examination of kin-state activism, and of a thematic area rarely covered in the literature, i.e. collective memory and cultural heritage. It investigates Hungarian policies to boost this aspect of ethnic Hungarian consciousness among Hungarians in Romania. While these policies also aim to slow demographic erosion, assimilation and cultural and identity degradation, they also help to transfer the kin-state's populist and illiberal viewpoints and further consolidate an electoral pool in territorial enclaves. The study's findings add new knowledge to the literature of kin-state activism in relation to the unique modus operandi of Hungary's Fidesz to impact culture and memory studies, with its populist discourses and own conception of a historic "divided nationhood" that must be restored for the future. The findings of this study contribute to the debate on kin-state practices and nation-building. Its contribution reveals the length to which kin-states like Hungary go, financially and ideologically, to protect the historic and golden age "nation", even in foreign policy, which, surprisingly, is unimpeded and unregulated by a nationalising state that deals with its domestic issues by veering towards populism.

In Study II, attention shifts to how populist illiberalism infiltrates the nationalising state and the effects this has on democratic institutions and on the structure of nationalism, its politics and rhetoric. The research profiles the rise to power and fall of the Social Democrat Party in Romania between 2015 and 2020 and analyses through a coding of public statements increased populist pressure on rule of law and other democratic institutions in the country. The study's findings contribute to the literature on populism and discursive institutionalism by revealing the logic of communication employed by populist actors to undermine the judiciary and the impending consequences of these practices. Further, the findings enrich our understanding in relation to how the gradual sequence with which populist discourse is integrated into the agency of the populist actor are comparable to the ones employed by similar, yet more experienced, agents.

Studies III and IV bring under the spotlight reactions and attitudes among the Hungarian national minority in Romania, and in particular the Szekler community. They do this by drawing on an original public opinion survey conducted in 2021 that sought to gauge how minority respondents were perceiving the dual impact of kin-state and nationalising-state populist illiberalism. The findings contribute to the literature on ethnopolitics with new empirical material from an important case in CEE's field of ethnicities. Most significantly, the results of this study demonstrate that by gradually developing its policies and implementing a wide range of practices, Fidesz's kin-state activism in relation to Hungarian cultural heritage and the societal well-being of the Szekler have been perceived as positive and replaced the need for a home state in a balanced triadic nexus.

Secondarily, these outcomes show that the gradual infiltration of populist illiberalism in the nationalising state, which zealously focused on altering democratic institutions and winning struggles against European institutions, fractured the relationship with the national minority to the point that most Hungarians felt disillusioned with the nationalising state's practices and neglect. Consequently, the results show that because of Fidesz's unilateral investments in the region, most

people are in favour of Fidesz's illiberalism, while at the same time, they would be in favour of replacing Romania's liberal system with Hungary's illiberalism.

Overall, this dissertation presents a new variation of triadic configurations. More precisely, due to the mollified permutations exhorted by populist illiberalism over the aggrandising nationalising state, the kin-state expands its ideological influence over the national minority. This variation of the triadic nexuses offers the reader a sequence in which the infiltration of populist illiberalism from the kin-state, national minority elites and the nationalising state is breaking the balance between the elements which shape the everyday practices of a national minority. Under this new variation, the antagonism or the tension that is otherwise characteristic of such nexuses becomes dissipated or mollified. Antagonism – not to be understood in the conflictual sense – is argued here as a source of balance, of status quo, and checks and balances. By replacing mutual antagonism with a coalescing stance rendered by the populist illiberalism pushed by a powerful kin-state, not only does it worsen the position of the home state in the nexus, most importantly it weakens the position of the national minorities to constitute a strong, yet autonomous player, in the interstate politics of the two larger elements. Likewise, the coalescing nature of populist illiberalism does not solve any of the problems for the national minorities. This triadic blending, particularly under the mantle of populist illiberalism, may inflate the problems of the national minority in both the short and long term.

Nevertheless, the purpose of this dissertation is not to end with a low-spirited forecast. Rather, its aim should be to determine what could be done to improve this variation. And this could be grasped within the framework of several reflection points that are best mirrored by the survey results employed here. The dissertation reiterates the argument that a well-balanced nexus in the EU facilitates greater harmony and empowers the lesser element, i.e., the national minority, if populist illiberalism is not replicated among the elements. Hence, when asked about their views concerning the future in the survey, Szekler stated that the most important for them is to have greater administrative autonomy (42.3%), followed thereafter by economic development (28.4%). At the lowest point is integration into Romanian society, where on average just 5.5% were in favour. These views cannot be addressed and improved if the home state succumbs to the populist illiberalism of the kin-state and weakens its position in the nexus.

Therefore, a well-balanced nexus, where the status quo of the elements is not diluted by neither populist illiberalism nor nationalism but instead strengthened by integrated EU legislation may facilitate a collaborative and sharing distribution of finances and political representation that are beneficial for the minority. In this new light, this status quo may allow honest debates about what administrative autonomy means and how it could be accomplished, and how diversity could empower Romanian society in the future without causing fear and anxiety. In return, a well-balanced nexus may improve the future sense of well-being in its homeland of a national minority with a fascinating history and rich culture.

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SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Kolmikneksus populismiajastul: Ungari, Rumeenia ja Seekelimaa ungari vähemuse vahelised suhted

Mitmete Kesk- ja Ida-Euroopa (KIE) riikide jaoks, kus kommunismi lagunemisele järgnenud ebastabiilsuse perioodil teravnes rahvusluse küsimus, olid Euroopa Liidu liitumisega kaasnenud muudatused ning integratsiooniprotsess pingeid vähendavad. Erinevalt Balkanimaade killustavatest tingimustest, kus etnopoliitika ja territoriaalsed nõudmised toimisid kesktõukeliselt, rahvuste- ja riikidevahelisi konflikte süvendavalt, on üks KIE juhtum eeskujuks etnopoliitika, vähemuste integreerimise ja rahumeelse kooseksisteerimise osas. Paljude teadlaste ja poliitikakujundajate poolt kiidetud *Ungari, Rumeenia* ja Rumeenia *Szeklerimaa ungari vähemuse* juhtum on pakkunud tervitatavat alternatiivi teistele konfliktsetele piirkondadele Euroopas, Kaukaasias ja Kesk-Aasias. See juhtum on olnud ka aluseks mitmetele teaduslikele uurimustele, mille eesmärgiks on tugevdada vähemuste õigusi, edendada nende identiteeti ja kultuuri ning vähemuste osalust kaasaja demokraatlike riikide poliitilises elus.

Rumeenia siirdest ja Euroopa Liiduga liitumisest saadik on paljud uurimused viimase kahe kümnendi jooksul pakkunud sisendit ning stimuleerinud arutelu sellest, mida vähemusgruppidega riigid saavad teha, kaitsmaks ja edendamaks nende õigusi ja identiteeti. Erinevad avaldatud uurimused kirjeldavad Rumeenia ungari vähemuse progressi ja neid arenguid mõjutavaid protsesse.

Selle rikkaliku kirjanduse keskmes on erinevad teooriad ja kontseptuaalsed raamistikud, mis pakuvad nüansseeritud käsitlusi nende kolme toimija – *Ungari, Rumeenia* ja *Rumeenia Szeklerimaa ungari vähemuse* – erinevatest tahkudest. Kuid mitte ükski varasematest uurimustest ei paku nii terviklikku käsitlust kui Rogers Brubakeri kolmikneksuse mudel (Brubaker 1995, 1996). Kuigi Euroopa suuna järgimine vähendas rahvusluse mõju KIE riikides, tekitades mõnelgi pool küsimusi selle mudeli asjakohasusest uuel demokraatlikkuse ajastul, näitab käesolev väitekiri ajakohastatud analüüsi kaudu Brubakeri mudeli jätkuvat kasulikkust ka uuele poliitilisele kliimale kohandatult, ilma et mudeli struktuurne tähtsus seeläbi kannataks. Ühedimensioonilised käsitlused, millega neksuse mudeli kriitikud analüüsisid kolmik- või nelikkonfiguratsioone, omistades seejuures kesktõukelist jõudu vaid rahvuslusele ja vastastikusele antagonismile, nõrgendasid teooria kohaldatavust ning moonutasid leide, mis võinuks pakkuda kasulikku sisendit Euroopa poliitikakujundajatele.

See doktoritöö pakub kontseptuaalset alternatiivi kolmikneksuse teooria traditsioonilistele käsitlustele ning ajakohastamise püüdlustele. Võttes kolmikneksuse analüüsimise aluseks rahvusluse asemel populistliku illiberalismi, on võimalik näha, kuidas see variatsioon mõjutab neksuse osaliste ehk *rahvustava riigi*, *välise ajaloolise kodumaa* ja *rahvusvähemuse* omavahelist suhestumist. Selle kontseptuaalse raamistiku abil luuakse ülevaade olukorrast igas neksuse osas ning kasutatakse neid, hindamaks populistliku illiberalismi mõju etnopoliitilistele protsessidele. Säärase kontseptuaalse raamistiku kasutamine kolmes uurimuses eristab käesolevat doktoritööd varasematest analüüsidest, mis keskendusid lihtsustatud

antagonismile, esindades selle asemel lähenemist, kus domineerivad tendentsid leevenesid, elementidevaheline tasakaal nõrgenes ja välise kodumaa positsioon tugevnes.

Uurimus I keskendub välise kodumaa aktivismile ning teemale, mida varasemas kirjanduses harva käsitletakse: kollektiivsele mälule ja kultuurilisele pärandile. Uurin Ungari poliitikaid, mille eesmärgiks on edendada Rumeenias elavate etniliste ungarlaste sellesuunalist teadlikkust. Kuigi nende poliitikate eesmärgiks on pidurdada Rumeenias elavate ungarlaste demograafilist langust, assimileerumist ning kultuuri ja identiteedi lagunemist, aitavad need samas kaasa välise kodumaa populistlike ning illiberaalsete vaadete levikule, konsolideerides territoriaalsete enklaavide valijaskonna Ungari võimupartei teenistusse. Selle uurimuse järeldused panustavad välise kodumaa aktivismi uurimisse, tõstes esile Ungari Fideszi partei iseäralikku teguviisi kultuuri ja mälu-uuringute mõjutamisel läbi populistlike diskursuste ja ajaloolise „jagatud rahvuse" kontseptsiooni, mis tuleb tulevikus taasühendada. Panustan seega debattidesse välise kodumaa praktikatest ja riigiloomest, paljastades kui kaugele on väline kodumaa nagu Ungari valmis minema nii rahaliselt kui ideoloogiliselt, kaitsmaks ajaloolist nägemust kuldajastu „riigist" ka läbi välispoliitiliste meetmete, mille rakendamist uus ehk rahvustav kodumaa üllataval kombel ei takista ega reguleeri, lahendades selle asemel siseprobleeme populismi kaldumisega.

Uurimuse II fookuses on, kuidas populistlik illiberalism imbub rahvustavasse riiki ja populismi leviku mõju demokraatlikele institutsioonidele ning riigi struktuurile, selle poliitikale ja retoorikale. Selles uurimuses profileerin Rumeenia sotsiaaldemokraatliku partei (PSD) võimuperioodi aastatel 2015 kuni 2020 ning analüüsin avalike sõnumite kodeerimise kaudu sel ajal suurenenud populistlikku survet õigusriiklusele ning teistele demokraatlikele institutsioonidele PSD poolt. Uurimusega panustan populismi ja diskursiivse institutsionalismi teemalisse kirjandusse, tuues välja kommunikatiivse loogika, mida populistid kasutavad kohtusüsteemi õõnestamiseks, aga ka nende praktikate tagajärjed. Lisaks rikastavad uurimuse järeldused meie arusaama sellest, kuidas populistliku diskursuse järkjärguline integreerimine populistliku toimija tegevustesse on võrreldav taktikatega, mida kasutavad sarnased, kuid kogenumad agendid.

Uurimused III ja IV keskenduvad Rumeenia ungari rahvusvähemuse reaktsioonidele ja hoiakutele nii Ungari kui Rumeenia populistlike taktikate suhtes, iseäranis szeklerite kogukonnas. Uurimused toetuvad algupärasele avaliku arvamuse küsitlusele, mille viisin läbi 2021. aastal ja mille eesmärgiks oli hinnata, kuidas vähemusrahvuse esindajad tajuvad välise kodumaa ja rahvustava riigi populistliku illiberalismi kaksikmõju. Nende uurimuste järeldused täiendavad etnopoliitika alast kirjandust uue empiirilise materjaliga ühe KIE regiooni seisukohast olulise juhtumi osas. Iseäranis olulisena näitavad need uurimused, et poliitikate järkjärgulise edasiarendamise ja laiendamise tulemusel on Fideszi-poolsesse välise kodumaa aktivismi, mis keskendub ungari kultuurilisele pärandile ja szeklerite ühiskondlikule heaolule, suhtutud positiivselt ja see on ungari vähemuste jaoks asendanud vajaduse koduriigi järele, mis oleks omane tasakaalustatud kolmikneksusele.

Täiendavalt näitavad need tulemused, et populistliku illiberalismi järkjärguline levik rahvustavas riigis, eesmärgiga muuta demokraatlikke institutsioone ja

saavutada võite vaidlustes Euroopa institutsioonidega, õõnestasid suhteid rahvus-vähemustega sellisel määral, et enamik ungarlasi pettusid rahvustava riigi prakti-kates ja hoolimatuses. Uurimuste tulemused näitavad, et nende arengute ning Fideszi-poolsete unilateraalsete investeeringute tulemusena selles regioonis toetab enamik inimesi Fideszi illiberalismi, ning nad toetaksid ka Rumeenia liberaalse süsteemi asendamist Ungari stiilis illiberalismiga.

Doktoritöö tervikuna esitleb uut variatsiooni kolmikneksusest. Täpsemalt, pehmendatud permutatsioonid populistlikust illiberalismist, mis rakenduvad süvenevalt rahvustavas riigis, võimaldavad hõimuriigil laiendada oma ideoloogi-list mõju rahvusvähemuse üle. Selle variatsiooniga kolmikneksustest pakun luge-jale välja arengute järjestuse, milles populistliku illiberalismi sisseimbumine väli-selt kodumaalt, rahvusvähemuse eliidi ja rahvustava riigi poolt murrab tasakaalu nende elementide vahel, mis kujundavad rahvusvähemuste igapäevast tegevust. Selle uue variatsiooni puhul vastandumine või pinge, mis on sellistele neksustele iseomane, hajub või leeveneb. Vastandumist – mis ei viita tingimata konfliktile – käsitlen siinkohal tasakaalu, *status quo*, allikana. Asendades vastastikuse antago-nismi ühendava hoiakuga, mida loob tugeva välise kodumaa poolt propageeritav populistlik illiberalism, halveneb rahvustava kodumaa positsioon neksuses, kuid veelgi olulisemana nõrgendab see vähemuse võimalusi olla kahe riigi vahelises poliitikas tugevaks, kuid siiski autonoomseks toimijaks. Samamoodi ei lahenda populistliku illiberalismi ühendav mõju sisuliselt ühtegi rahvusvähemuse prob-leemi. Seesugune triaadi kokku sulandumine, iseäranis populistliku illiberalismi egiidi all, võib hoopis rahvusvähemuse probleeme süvendada, seda nii lühemas kui pikemas perspektiivis.

Selle doktoritöö eesmärgiks ei ole siiski kurvatoonliste ennustuste tegemine, vaid pigem arutlus, mida teha nende arengute parandamiseks. Selle eesmärgi nimel tasub tähelepanu pöörata mõningatele refleksiooniteemadele, mis tulenevad autori poolt läbi viidud uuringu tulemustest. Rõhutan doktoritöös seisukohta, et Euroopa Liidu kontekstis soodustab hästi tasakaalus neksus harmooniat ning võimustab niinimetatud nõrgemat elementi, see tähendab rahvusvähemust, juhul kui popu-listlik illiberalism ei levi kõikide toimijate hulgas. Uurimuses väljendasid szek-lerid tulevikuperspektiivide osas seisukohti, et kõige olulisem on nende jaoks suurem administratiivne autonoomia (42,3%), millele järgnes majanduslik areng (28,4%). Vähim tähtis on nende seisukohast lõimumine Rumeenia ühiskonnaga, mida pidas oluliseks vaid 5,5% vastanutest. Neid vaateid ei saa adresseerida ja muuta, kui rahvustav riik vannub alla välise kodumaa populistlikule illiberalismile, nõrgestades seeläbi oma positsiooni neksuses. Seega, hästi tasakaalus neksus, kus elementidevaheline *status quo* ei ole nõrgendatud ei populistliku illiberalismi ega rahvusluse poolt, vaid selle asemel tugevdatud integreeriva Euroopa Liidu seadus-andluse läbi, võib lihtsustada rahaliste vahendite ja poliitilise esindatuse koos-tööle suunatud jagamist, mis on kasulik vähemusele. Selles valguses võimaldab *status quo* avatud debatte administratiivse autonoomia sisu ja saavutamise võima-luste üle, aga ka teemal, kuidas mitmekesisus võib Rumeenia ühiskonda tulevikus hirmu ja ärevuse tekitamise asemel võimustada. Hästi tasakaalustatud neksus võib parandada pika ajalooga ja rikkaliku kultuuriga vähemusrahvuse heaolu-tunnet ja tulevikuperspektiivi koduriigis.

PUBLICATIONS

CURRICULUM VITAE

Name: Ionut-Valentin Chiruta
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Education and work experience:
1. University of Tartu, Ph.D. *Candidate in Political Science*
2. Universitetet i Oslo, 2017, *M.A. in Media Studies*
3. Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, 2013, *B.A. in Communication and Public Relations*

Work experience:

1. *Researcher, University of Helsinki (2021–ongoing)*
   a. I was a researcher in the Now-Time Us-Space (NTUS) international project responsible for investigating political mobilization and identification in Romania.
   b. I was a seminar chair and course designer for the "Ukraine Lecture course in 2022: The Russian invasion in the core of Europe".
   c. I was part of a special issue entitled "Performing Control of the Covid-19 crisis." I published an article investigating the media discourses generated by the COVID-19 crisis about the Roma minority from Romania.
   d. I participated as an NTUS researcher in approximately ten international conferences and dedicated workshops.

2. *Visiting Researcher, Universitetet i Oslo (2021–2022)*
   a. I was a Dora Plus researcher at the Department of Sociology and Human Geography, where I analysed public survey designs on ethnic minorities for academic studies.
   b. I gave two talks during webinars on the influence of populism and illiberalism in the affairs of minorities and right-wing mobilisation strategies in C.E.E.
   c. I gave a lecture entitled 'Far-right in Romania' for the C-REX/International Centre for Countering Terrorism's Global Perspectives on the Far-Right webinar series.
   d. I gave a seminar talk on the Romanian far-right and wrote a blog post for the Centre for Research on Extremism – C-REX.

3. *Marie Skłodowska-Curie Research Fellow Project Fatigue (2018–2021)*
   a. I was part of a European Commission-funded project investigating populism and illiberalism in Central and Eastern Europe.
   b. I was responsible for investigating the Hungarian and Romanian political and minority cases.
   c. I wrote a book chapter that investigates Fidesz's actions through the prism of the neo-traditionalist framework in Transylvania.

d. Based on my research, I wrote a policy recommendation to limit the spending of kin-states in neighbouring states and advocated for the necessity of mandating bilateral agreements between member states to regulate spending and investments.

e. As an Early-Stage Researcher, I published four double-peer-reviewed papers in international journals.

f. I wrote six blog posts about Romania's state of affairs and politics for different media outlets.

g. I participated at four research summer schools.

4. *Junior Research Fellow, Johann Skytte Institute of Political Studies (2018–2021)*
   a. I assisted in teaching Migration and Challenges of Human Resources and Comparative Ethnopolitics courses.
   b. I conducted content analysis, gave talks during workshops and webinars, and participated in more than thirty international conferences, workshops and summer schools.

5. *Visiting Researcher, Institute for the Study of National Minority Issues in Romania (September – December 2020)*
   a. I liaised with a team of national and ethnic minorities specialists from Cluj and conducted ethnographic research in Romania, where I investigated the effects of Hungarian politics and practices in October and December 2020.

6. *Visiting Researcher, Corvinus University of Budapest (2019–2020)*
   a. I conducted research at the Department of Global Economy on ethnic and minority studies.
   b. I participated in the [COST] Action CA16111 Trainee invitation to the Training school – International Ethnic and Immigrant Minorities' Survey Data Network in Budapest.

7. *Research Project Intern, Minority Rights Group (October 2019 – February 2020*
   a. I was a research intern for five months at the project Fair. E.U. responsible for monitoring the situation of migrants in Southern Europe.
   b. I have written three blog posts on the rights of migrants in the Balkans and C.E.E.
   c. I also was part of the team that updated the directory of the Minority Rights Group's website from Scandinavia (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden), the Baltic region (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), and Romania.

Research and development activities:
Comparative politics, memory studies, populism, nationalism, minority studies, extremism

Teaching:
1. Teaching Assistant – P2EC.00.210 Migration and Challenges of Human Resources, University of Tartu 2018/2019
2. Teaching Assistant – SHRG.02.023 Comparative Ethnopolitics, University of Tartu 2018/2019

List of publications:
1. Chiruta, I. (2022). Multifaced Hungarian Kin-State Activism in Szeklerland: Rebuilding the Last 'Nation' Through Restorative Nostalgia and Lieux de Mémoire. *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe (JEMIE),* 21(1), 69–110. https://doi.org/10.53779/LLCW3331.
2. Chiruta, I. (2021). Challenging the rule of law in Romania: the metamorphosis of political discourse towards populism. *Problems of Post-Communism Journal*, https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2021.1958690.
3. Chiruta, I. (2021). The Representation of Roma in the Romanian Media during Covid-19: Performing Control through Discursive-Performative Repertoires. *Front. Polit. Sci*. 3:663874. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2021.663874.
4. Chiruta, I. (2020). Using the Past in Populist Communicational Strategies: How the Memory of Securitate is Instrumentalised in Romanian Politics? *Populism*, 3(2), 223–256. https://doi.org/10.1163/25888072-BJA10013.

Other research publications
1. Chiruta, I. (Manuscript – to be submitted soon to a journal). Populism, nationalism, and kin-state activism: Measuring Szekler's perception within the Triadic Nexus.
2. Chiruta, I (Forthcoming – Summer 2023). Fidesz's neo-traditionalist pull factor: the Transylvanian Hungarian minority. Accepted for publication as a chapter in the book Populism in Central and Eastern Europe: Resistance to Illiberalism, edited by Richard Mole and Jan Kubik. UCL Press.
3. Chiruta, I. (2022). "NIHIL SINE DEO" IN FAR-RIGHT PROTESTS: Ceremonial Revolutions during Anti-Vaccine Protests in Romania. *Ethnologia Polona*, 43. https://doi.org/10.23858/ethp.2022.43.3045
4. Re-enacting the nation in a 'Now-Time-Us-Space' right-wing paradigm – The case of the Hungarian Szekler (Under work). *Helsinki University Press*.

Conference Papers
1. "*Spatial and temporal constitution of myths: how memory, history and the past entangle in Romania and Serbia,*" presented at the BASEES General Conference (8–10 April 2022), Cambridge, the United Kingdom.
2. "*Right-wing mobilization strategies and diaspora politics: the rise and support of A.U.R. in Romania,*" presented at the HEPP3 Annual Conference (14–17 June 2022), University of Helsinki, Finland.
3. "*Nihil Sine Deo in Far-Right Protests – Ceremonial Revolutions During Anti-Vaccine Protests in Romania,*" presented at the HEPP3 Annual Conference (14–17 June 2022), University of Helsinki, Finland.

4. "*Ethicizing Covid-19: How media coverage and Facebook echo chambers developed ethno-nationalist narratives against Roma in Romania*," presented at the ECPR General Conference – August 26, 2020 (online).

Scholarships
1. Marie Skłodowska-Curie Innovative Training Network (H2020-MSCA-ITN-2017). Issued by European Commission • September 2018
2. Dora Plus Scholarship Action (T1.2) Issued by Education and Youth Authority Board – Estonian Ministry of Education and Research • August 2021
3. Kone Foundation Grant Nr. 201904639. Issued by Kone Foundation and the University of Helsinki • September 2021

ELULOOKIRJELDUS

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Hariduskäik:
1. Tartu Ülikool (Eesti), 2023, *PhD kandidaat politoloogias*
2. Oslo Ülikool (Norra), 2017, *magistrikraad meediauuringutes*
3. Alexandru Ioan Cuza Ülikool (Rumeenia), 2013, *bakalaureusekraad kommunikatsiooni ja avalike suhete erialal*

Töökogemus:

1. ***Teadur, Helsinki Ülikool (Soome, 2021–praeguseni)***
   a. Teadur Now-Time Us-Space (NTUS) rahvusvahelises projektis, vastutav uurija teemal poliitiline mobilisatsioon ja identifitseerimise Rumeenias.
   b. Seminaride juhataja ja kursusedisainer kursusel "Ukraine Lecture course in 2022: The Russian invasion in the core of Europe".
   c. Osaline eriväljaandes "Performing Control of the Covid-19 crisis" artikliga COVID-19 kriisiga seotud meediadiskursustest Roma vähemuste suhtes Rumeenias.
   d. NTUSi teadurina osaline ligikaudu kümnel rahvusvahelisel konverentsil ja teemakohasel seminaril.

2. ***Külalisteadur, Oslo Ülikool (Norra, 2021–2022)***
   a. Teadur sotsioloogia ja inimgeograafia osakonnas, fookusega avalike uuringute disaini analüüsimisel etniliste vähemuste uurimiseks akadeemilises kontekstis.
   b. Ettekandja kahel veebiseminaril teemal populismi ja illiberalismi mõju vähemustele ja parempoolsete mobilisatsioonistrateegiad Kesk- ja Ida-Euroopas.
   c. Loeng "Far-right in Romania" C-REX/International Centre for Countering Terrorism veebiseminaride sarjas "Global Perspectives on the Far-Right".
   d. Seminariettekanne Rumeenia paremäärmuslusest ja blogipostitus Centre for Research on Extremism – C-REX.

3. ***Marie Skłodowska-Curie nooremteadur projektis FATIGUE (2018–2021)***
   a. Osaline Euroopa Komisjoni rahastatud projektist, mis uurib populismi ja illiberalismi Kesk- ja Ida-Euroopas.
   b. Vastutav Ungari ja Rumeenia poliitikate ja vähemuste uurimise eest.
   c. Raamatupeatüki autor – Ungari Fidesz'i partei tegevus Transilvaanias läbi uustraditsioonilisuse prisma.
   d. Uurimistööl põhineva poliitikasoovituse autor, mis soovitas piirata rahvuslike kodumaade kulutusi naaberriikides ja propageeris kahepoolsete lepingute sõlmimist Euroopa Liidu riikide vahel reguleerimaks kulutusi ja investeeringuid.

e. Nooremteadurina nelja eelretsenseeritud teadusartikli avaldamine rahvus-vahelistes ajakirjades.
f. Kuue blogipostituse autor Rumeenia arengute ja poliitika teemal, erine-vatele meediaväljaannetele.
g. Osalemine neljas suvekoolis.

4. *Nooremteadur, Johann Skytte poliitikauuringute instituut, Tartu Ülikool (Eesti, 2018–2021)*
   a. Õppeassistent kursustel "Migration and Challenges of Human Resources" ja "Comparative Ethnopolitics".
   b. Kontentanalüüsi tegemine, ettekanded (veebi-)seminaridel, osalemine enam kui 30 rahvusvahelisel konverentsil, teadusseminaril ja suvekoolis.

5. *Külalisteadur, Institute for the Study of National Minority Issues in Romania (Rumeenia, september – detsember 2020)*
   a. Koostöö rahvusluse ja etniliste vähemuste teema spetsialistidega Cluj'is, etnograafiline välitöö Rumeenias uurimaks Ungari poliitikate ja tegevuste mõju 2020. aasta oktoobris ja detsembris.

6. *Külalisteadur, Budapesti Corvinuse Ülikool (Ungari, 2019–2020)*
   a. Uurimistöö läbiviimine maailmamajanduse osakonnas etniliste ja vähe-musuuringute vallas.
   b. Osaline projektis [COST] Action CA16111 Trainee invitation to the Training school – International Ethnic and Immigrant Minorities' Survey Data Network in Budapest.

7. *Uurimisprojekti praktikant, Minority Rights Group (oktoober 2019 – veeb-ruar 2020*
   a. Uurimistöö fookusega praktikant projektis Fair. E.U., vastutav migrantide olukorra monitooringu eest Lõuna-Euroopas.
   b. Kolme blogipostituse autor migrantide õigustest Balkanil ja Kesk- ja Ida-Euroopas.
   c. Osaline *Minority Rights Group*'i veebilehe uuendamisel Skandinaavia, Balti regiooni ja Rumeenia teemadel.

Uurimissuunad:
Võrdlev poliitika, mälu-uuringud, populism, natsionalism, vähemuste uuringud, ekstremism

Õpetamiskogemus:
1. Õppeassistent – P2EC.00.210 Migration and Challenges of Human Resources, Johan Skytte poliitikauuringute instituut, Tartu Ülikool, 2018/2019
2. Õppeassistent – SHRG.02.023 Comparative Ethnopolitics, Johan Skytte poliitikauuringute instituut, Tartu Ülikool, 2018/2019

Publikatsioonid rahvusvahelistes ajakirjades:

1. Chiruta, I. (2022). Multifaced Hungarian Kin-State Activism in Szeklerland: Rebuilding the Last 'Nation' Through Restorative Nostalgia and Lieux de Mémoire. *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe (JEMIE),* 21(1), 69–110. https://doi.org/10.53779/LLCW3331.
2. Chiruta, I. (2021). Challenging the rule of law in Romania: the metamorphosis of political discourse towards populism. *Problems of Post-Communism Journal*, https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2021.1958690.
3. Chiruta, I. (2021). The Representation of Roma in the Romanian Media during Covid-19: Performing Control through Discursive-Performative Repertoires. *Front. Polit. Sci*. 3:663874. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2021.663874.
4. Chiruta, I. (2020). Using the Past in Populist Communicational Strategies: How the Memory of Securitate is Instrumentalised in Romanian Politics? *Populism*, 3(2), 223–256. https://doi.org/10.1163/25888072-BJA10013.

Muud publikatsioonid:

1. Chiruta, I (Forthcoming – Summer 2023). Fidesz's neo-traditionalist pull factor: the Transylvanian Hungarian minority. Accepted for publication as a chapter in the book Populism in Central and Eastern Europe: Resistance to Illiberalism, edited by Richard Mole and Jan Kubik. UCL Press.
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4. Re-enacting the nation in a 'Now-Time-Us-Space' right-wing paradigm – The case of the Hungarian Szekler (Under work). *Helsinki University Press*.

Konverentsiettekanded:

1. "*Spatial and temporal constitution of myths: how memory, history and the past entangle in Romania and Serbia*," presented at the BASEES General Conference (8–10 April 2022), Cambridge, the United Kingdom.
2. "*Right-wing mobilization strategies and diaspora politics: the rise and support of A.U.R. in Romania*," presented at the HEPP3 Annual Conference (14–17 June 2022), University of Helsinki, Finland.
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4. "*Ethicizing Covid-19: How media coverage and Facebook echo chambers developed ethno-nationalist narratives against Roma in Romania*," presented at the ECPR General Conference – August 26, 2020 (online).

Stipendiumid

1. Marie Skłodowska-Curie Innovative Training Network (H2020-MSCA-ITN-2017). Issued by European Commission • September 2018
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