

*Andrea L.P. Pirro**

Populist Radical Right Parties in Central and Eastern Europe: The Different Context and Issues of the Prophets of the Patria

The recent electoral performances of the Bulgarian Ataka, Hungarian Jobbik, and the Slovak National Party seem to confirm the pervasive appeal of the populist radical right in Central and Eastern Europe. Unlike their Western counterparts, these parties do not stem from a 'silent counter-revolution'. Populist radical right parties in the region retain features *sui generis*, partly in relation to their historical legacies and the idiosyncrasies of the post-communist context. After distinguishing between pre-communist, communist and post-communist issues, this article discerns commonalities and differences in the ideology of the three parties by a content analysis of the party literatures. The analysis shows that populist radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe are fairly 'like minded', yet they do not constitute an entirely homogeneous group. While a minimum combination of ideological features reveals that only clericalism and opposition to ethnic minorities are shared by all three parties, a maximum combination would extend this to irredentism, anti-corruption and Euroscepticism.

THE LITERATURE ON THE RADICAL RIGHT HAS MULTIPLIED OVER THE span of the last two decades, generally concentrating on the fortunes of the 'usual suspects' in Western Europe while developments in former communist countries have been often overlooked. This article specifically focuses on populist radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe;¹ it does so by examining how their context is different compared to that in Western Europe and by analysing the distinctive framing of their ideology within the broader European setting.

* Andrea L.P. Pirro is a PhD candidate in Comparative and European Politics at the Centre for the Study of Political Change (CIRCaP), University of Siena. Contact email: andrea.pirro@unisi.it.

From the mid-2000s, populist radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe came to prominence as rather successful contestants in their respective political arenas. Although the achievements of these parties demonstrate the pervasive appeal of the populist radical right across the whole continent, they generally question the opportunity to draw similarities between Western and Central-Eastern Europe. On the whole, these results encourage the analysis of populist radical right politics beyond traditional West European borders.

Research into the populist radical right in Western Europe has emphasized the role of specific structural and sociocultural factors in the performance of parties such as the French National Front (Front National – FN) or the Austrian Freedom Party (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs – FPÖ). Among the most prominent hypotheses for the emergence of populist radical right parties, Ignazi's argument (1992, 2000) that it is a reaction to Inglehart's 'silent revolution' (1971, 1977) appears difficult to translate to the Central and East European scenario. Moreover, the ascription of populist radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe to the 'third wave' of right-wing extremism (that is, the phase of 'unemployment and xenophobia' (von Beyme 1988: 6)) may appear inadequate since the scope of this classification is excessively narrow in its applicability. The populist radical right in Central and Eastern Europe seems to retain features *sui generis*, introducing a juxtaposition of old and new politics; as a result, the historical legacies and idiosyncrasies of the post-communist context are likely to play a prominent role in shaping these parties' ideology.

Despite a nationalist and populist trend in the region, very little empirical work has appeared on the subject. This article seeks to fill this gap by analysing the supply of populist radical right politics in Central and Eastern Europe through the lens of historical legacies and contextual idiosyncrasies. In the first section, the article refers to the state of the art and the different background of populist radical right parties on the two sides of the former Iron Curtain. The second section focuses on the framing of the populist radical right ideology in Central and Eastern Europe and differentiates between pre-communist, communist and post-communist issues. The third section presents a comparative analysis of the issues fostered by three populist radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe – namely, the Political Party Attack (Politicheska Partiya Ataka – Ataka) in Bulgaria, the

Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom – Jobbik) in Hungary and the Slovak National Party (Slovenská Národná Strana – SNS) in Slovakia. After examining commonalities and differences in the parties' issues, the article advances a minimum and maximum combination of ideological features for the populist radical right in these countries.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: A MATTER OF CONTEXT

The ground for discussion is set by the identification of a populist radical right party family that shares ideological and structural features *across* Europe. However, different regional contexts produce different variants of the populist radical right ideology in Western and Central-Eastern Europe.

At the ideological level, populist radical right parties demonstrate some similarities across Europe, displaying a combination of nativism, authoritarianism and populism. Nativism holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group and that non-native elements (persons and ideas) are threatening to the homogeneous nation state. Authoritarianism refers to the belief in a strictly ordered society. Populism considers society to be divided into two homogeneous and antagonistic camps (that is, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite'), arguing that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* of the people (Mudde 2007).

At the structural level, these are partisan organizations that straddle 'the conceptual space between "party" and "movement"' (Gunther and Diamond 2003: 188). In spite of its hostility to parties and the establishment, the populist radical right participates in elections and tries to win public office; yet, populist radical right parties resemble social movements in that they try to mobilize public support and offer interpretative frames for particular issues (Minkenberg 2002: 338). In other words, what brings them together 'is the way that they organize, their broad anti-institutional ideology and their location on the far right of the ideological spectrum' (Taggart 2000: 86).

Despite these commonalities, the context and the issues of these parties are different in Western and Central-Eastern Europe. The emergence of populist radical right politics in Western Europe is largely associated with the sociocultural changes of '1968'

(Ignazi 1992; Kitschelt with McGann 1995; Minkenberg 2000). This view became prevalent for at least two reasons: first, populist radical right parties that appeared after this watershed shed the fascist rhetoric and anti-system attitudes of their predecessors; second, the parties' platforms emphasized new issues, such as security and immigration (Ignazi 1996). According to Ignazi (1992), the cultural shift described by Inglehart (1971, 1977) had favoured not only the emergence of a 'silent revolution' of the new left² but also a 'silent counter-revolution' of the populist radical right. In other words, 'they represent two sides of the same coin: the New Politics is the "New" Protest of the left while the New Populism is the "New" Protest of the right' (Taggart 1996: 1–2). Central and Eastern Europe does not lend itself to similar explanations and the marginality of new politics in the region is perhaps an example of this.

Another hypothesis links the performance of populist radical right parties in Western Europe to a phase of 'unemployment and xenophobia' (von Beyme 1988). In other words, the populist radical right parties would profit from defending the economic rights of the native people; this is generally achieved 'by limiting the rights of immigrants and asylum-seekers, who are perceived as direct competitors both in the workplace and in access to social services and housing' (Arzheimer and Carter 2006: 421). Post-communist countries are not (yet) subject to immigration and the performance of the populist radical right should be read through a different lens.

In general terms, espousing the view that the populist radical right mobilizes 'in times of accelerated social and cultural change' (Minkenberg 2002: 339) proves valuable for a number of reasons. First, it provides room to extricate the phenomenon from a series of explanations that do not hold for Central and Eastern Europe. Second, it still positions the emergence of these parties in an appropriate sociocultural context. Indeed, the populist radical right emphasizes nativism and authoritarianism – two aspects that place a specific vision of society at the core of its ideology. Third, it draws attention to aspects of change with their own characteristics. Whereas the populist radical right in Western Europe reacted to the revolution of 1968, the populist radical right in Central and Eastern Europe stems from the transformations of 1989. In other words, the collapse of the communist bloc seems to have annulled traditional demarcations and projected Central and Eastern Europe into a crisis of values and authority.

Above all, the rise of the populist radical right in Central and Eastern Europe is linked to a far-reaching process of sociocultural, political and economic change with high or very high costs attached to it. At the regional level, this process prompted the formation of new cleavages centred on citizenship, ethnicity, divisions between Church and state, resource distribution, and so forth (Kitschelt 1992; Williams 1999: 43–4). This ultimately reflects in the framing of the populist radical right ideology in Central and Eastern Europe, which appears indebted to the historical legacies and the idiosyncrasies of the post-communist context.

In post-communist politics, legacies offer the primary framework for the analysis of the populist radical right, for they represent ‘the structural, cultural, and institutional starting points of ex-communist countries at the outset of the transition’ (Pop-Eleches 2007: 910). On the one hand, the transformation process has led to ‘the resurgence of neo-romantic, populist, anti-modern forces in the region . . . In all these societies, movements and parties have emerged that romanticize the past [and] idealize authoritarian traditions’ (Tismaneanu 1998: 3). On the other hand, it has been noted that Central and Eastern Europe could be affected by a ‘post-communist syndrome’; public expectations were high after the revolutions of 1989, yet many promises made since then have been left unfulfilled (Williams 1999: 32–3). As a result, populist radical right parties in the region tap into high discontent and address the dilemmas of the post-communist transformation.

Post-communist nationalism is a multifaceted political and ideological phenomenon that draws on different experiences. The analysis of populist radical right politics in Central and Eastern Europe usually distinguishes between a ‘return to Europe’ and a ‘return of history’. When the accent is put on the increasing resemblance between Central-Eastern and Western European politics, the populist radical right becomes part of a broader process of ‘return to Europe’. From this viewpoint, populist radical right parties in post-communist countries would be in the process of ‘catching up’ with their Western counterparts, especially in relation to the ideological core of nativism, authoritarianism and populism shared by populist radical right parties across Europe. When analogies are drawn between the populist radical right and interwar fascism (in terms of a return of the pre-communist, ultranationalist or fascist past), the role of legacies points to a ‘return of history’ (Minkenberg 2010: 13).

Populist radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe are deemed a phenomenon *sui generis* that sits somewhere between these lines of thought. Growing disillusionment favoured the rise of populist radical right parties whose ideology drew inspiration from a pre-communist and communist past as much as from the challenges of the post-communist environment.

FRAMING THE POPULIST RADICAL RIGHT IDEOLOGY IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

This section provides a framework for the analysis of the issues of the populist radical right in Central and Eastern Europe. This framework, drawn up on the basis of theoretical and substantive knowledge, should help place these parties' ideology into context. Populist radical right parties in the region are expected to hark back to a pre-communist past and to deal with post-communist issues. Previous research has already distinguished between pre-communist, communist and post-communist extreme right parties on the basis of their origin or tradition (Mudde 2000); yet, clear-cut distinctions have become blurred over the course of the past two decades and these categories now tend to overlap. Instead, it seems more useful to reason in terms of a single (populist radical right) party family fostering a range of pre-communist, communist and post-communist issues, depending on the specific national contexts.

The issues fostered by populist radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe, as formulated in this section, come across as a distinctive variant of the populist radical right ideology. These parties are expected to deal with issues such as clericalism and irredentism (pre-communist issues) and 'social national' economics, as well as ethnic minorities, corruption and the EU (post-communist issues). The framework advanced here and the related set of ideological features was brought together on the basis of the historical (pre-communist and communist) legacies and the current socio-cultural, political and economic challenges faced by these countries.

The pre-communist past of these countries often coincides with ultranationalist or fascist experiences that emphasized national unity, both spiritual and territorial. The interpenetration of Church and state is readily visible in the Slovak case with the clerical dictatorship of Tiso during the Second World War;³ however, other

authoritarian movements such as the Arrow Cross Party (Nyilaskeresztes Párt) in Hungary or Bulgarian fascist groups also appealed to Christian and traditional values. In addition, nationalist movements in the interwar period maintained a revisionist and aggressive foreign policy aimed at regaining the territories lost in the Balkan or First World Wars (see, for example, Frusetta and Glont 2009; Ramet 1999a: country chapters). If post-communist nationalism is actually an expression of an historical cleavage (Tismaneanu 1998), both clericalism and irredentism should help reinvigorate backward-looking ideologies and long-repressed national values.

The collapse of the communist bloc also had several implications. First and foremost, the legacy of state socialism set the initial conditions of party competition, especially as far as economic and redistributive issues were concerned. Indeed, three types of communist rule (that is, bureaucratic-authoritarian, national-accommodative and patrimonial (Kitschelt et al. 1999)) were identified as influential factors in shaping the fortunes of the populist radical right (Bustikova and Kitschelt 2009). Although the analysis of the relationship between legacies and the electoral performance of these parties goes beyond the scope of this study, anti-modern forces such as populist radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe are reasonably expected to foster anti-market and social-protectionist views.

In the post-communist context, the potential for the mobilization of the populist radical right is further defined by current political questions. Minority issues, corruption and the EU appear to be very important to Central and Eastern European publics, and the populist radical right is expected to supply this demand in light of its nativist, authoritarian and populist profile (for an overview of the demand side in Central and Eastern Europe, see Pew Research Center 2009). Populist radical right parties focus on sources of identity such as the ethnic community, they are anti-establishment and thus anti-corruption by definition⁴ and they champion anti-Western orientations.⁵ In this regard, the EU could be interpreted as both the most proximate Western enemy and a threat to (recently regained) national independence.

As a result, pre-communist issues are defined as those that draw on the political culture and ideas of the pre-communist period; the ideas at the core of these issues often compare with those of the authoritarian movements of interwar Central and Eastern Europe.

Communist issues draw ideological inspiration from the communist period; these issues often combine the nativist aspects of populist radical right ideology with nostalgia for the communist past. Post-communist issues are rooted in the post-communist period and mainly focus on current political issues.⁶

Pre-Communist Issues

As far as pre-communist issues are concerned, clericalism and irredentism will come across as the most distinctive features of the populist radical right in Central and Eastern Europe. These issues had received scant or no attention in the agenda of similar parties in Western Europe but were already present in the discourse of populist radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe.⁷ Clericalism and irredentism qualify as pre-communist issues essentially for two reasons: the Christian traditions of these countries predate communist rule; and irredentism (actual or potential) in the Central and East European space surfaces with the pan-nationalist movements and territorial claims after the First World War. Ultimately, each pre-communist issue creates a break with the communist past.

Clericalism, as advocated by these parties, goes beyond a mere emphasis on Christian values and calls for a greater interpenetration of Church and state. Some authors have already identified religion as a mobilizing factor for the populist radical right (Hockenos 1993; Ramet 1999b: 14). Above all, Ramet (1999b: 14) described radical rightists as those who ‘often defend their intolerance by appealing to traditions or to sacred texts, painting themselves as the defenders of “traditional values” ... against the alleged hordes of liberal progressives and other “sinners”’. Then, referring to radical rightists as the ‘prophets of the patria’ would emphasize in equal measure the importance given to nativism and clericalism to break with the communist past of these countries (and revive their pre-communist past). While the combination of nativism and (Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox) Christianity generally tends to reinforce the ‘us versus them’ contraposition fostered by the populist radical right, the articulation of principled policies and the interchange between Church and state demonstrates a feature peculiar to the Central and East European space.

Irredentism is generally seen as part of the ethno-nationalist discourse of interwar authoritarian movements. As a result of the treaties signed at the end of the First World War, a number of state

borders were redrawn and national territories disrupted. Thus, the nationalist organizations of these countries advanced claims on neighbouring countries on the grounds of ethnic and historical affiliation. The irredentist discourse has been revamped in a modern fashion and today is largely associated with the rights of national minorities abroad; this notwithstanding, irredentism should qualify as an issue in its own right in light of its specific treatment in the parties' literature.

A caveat is in order here. After 1989, and before our period of analysis, only the Hungarian Justice and Life Party (Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja – MIÉP) retained an outright irredentist discourse (Karsai 1999); this issue was mostly articulated in relation to Hungarian minorities living abroad. This prompts a distinction between forms of actual irredentism and irredentism '*ex negativo*', which is defined here as the threat of territorial claims by neighbouring countries. While the Hungarian Justice and Life Party drew on actual irredentism, the Slovak National Party turned attention to irredentism *ex negativo* in its rhetoric (Cibulka 1999: 125–9). Parties can also be expected to sit somewhere in between the two extremes and to draw on both facets of the issue, according to their national idiosyncrasies.

Communist Issues

Approaching communist issues is not an easy task. Considering that the political debate in Central and Eastern Europe is often framed in terms of creating a distance from communism (see, for example, Pop-Eleches and Tucker 2010), almost every populist radical right party in the region might be expected to comply with this tenet. As a result, communist issues *sensu stricto* or issues displaying nostalgia for the communist past should be absent from the agenda of populist radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe.⁸

This notwithstanding, populist radical right parties in the region can be expected to support state protectionism and leftist economic ideas, mostly in reaction to an unprecedented process of privatization (Mudde 2007: 129). This is in line with Kitschelt (1992), who hypothesized that a link between authoritarian and anti-market politics would evolve in Central and Eastern Europe. This opens up a number of scenarios: first, populist radical right parties in the region will tend to play down the neoliberal content of the economic programmes of their Western counterparts (see, for example, Betz 1994; Kitschelt with

McGann 1995); second, fostering 'social national' economics will serve to oppose the process of massive privatization carried out by the 'anti-national' (that is, former communist) elites. Ultimately, this rhetoric should allow populist radical right parties to present themselves as defenders of the 'transition losers' (as opposed to the 'modernization losers' of the West), for anti-modern forces are assumed to capitalize on the discontent caused by the retrenchment of the welfare state (Bustikova and Kitschelt 2009: 460).

Although social national economics may appear indebted to the legacy of state socialism, the opportunity to define this issue as communist *sensu lato* is contentious. Indeed, the leftist imprint of the socioeconomic agenda of these parties should not leave out of consideration the sense of political rupture from the communist past and former communist elites attached to it. As a case in point, anti-communism is shared almost without exception across parties of the right in Central and Eastern Europe and, at the present time, best demonstrated through their anti-corruption agenda (see below). Bearing this in mind, social national economics does not qualify as a post-communist issue either, for modernizing political forces in post-communist countries point towards market liberalization.

Post-Communist Issues

Post-communist issues such as ethnic minorities, corruption and the EU look at the current social, political and economic scenario and refer to topics that were absent from the political debate before 1989. As much as these issues could resemble (part of) the agenda of the populist radical right parties of the West (in terms of a 'return to Europe'), they are nevertheless shaped by the idiosyncrasies of the post-communist context.

First, unlike Western Europe and despite their EU membership, countries such as Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia are not (yet) destinations for immigrants. Hence, the enemy for the populist radical right in post-communist countries remains generally 'within the state and outside the nation' (Mudde 2007), taking the form of indigenous ethnic minorities. The emergence (or comeback) of populist radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe is often related to issues about minorities – that is, the variant of nativism in post-communist countries. Especially throughout the 2000s, demand for nativism was on the rise (Political Capital 2010); the populist radical

right, as defender of the (ethnic) nation, is expected to respond with an array of solutions to minority issues in the region.

Second, the issue of corruption in post-communist countries serves two functions: on the one hand, it would be the principal vehicle for populism by framing the political world in dualist terms (Taggart 2000: 113) – that is, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’ (Mudde 2004: 543); on the other hand, this article argues that corruption qualifies as a post-communist issue because it advocates a rupture from the communist past. In general terms, the parties of the (centre and radical) right have advocated ‘lustration procedures intended to screen those holding high public office for past collaboration with communist security apparatus . . . Centre-left opponents are thus viewed as continuing communist ideology in an attenuated form, ensuring the dominance of elites drawn from *nomenklatura* structures, or themselves personifying links with the communist past’ (Hanley 2004: 17–18). In practice, the anti-communist profile of these parties should find consistent ideological sustenance in the supply of an anti-corruption agenda; in fact, addressing the issue of corruption in these countries is likely to put the mismanagements of the former communist elite at the heart of the populist radical right discourse. After the collapse of the communist bloc, former political elites retained or regained much of their influence through communist successor parties (Pop-Eleches 1998; Tismaneanu 1996), and the populist radical right is expected to claim that these parties are responsible for acts of cronyism and corruption in the privatization of national assets.

Third, accession to the EU demonstrated a critical juncture for post-communist countries. To be sure, once committed to accession, the mechanisms of EU conditionality substantially prevented national policy making (and populist radical right parties) from hampering reform (Vachudova 2008). Yet, it was believed that the populist radical right could benefit from the ‘inflated expectations concerning EU membership and fatigue from long-lasting austerity measures’ (Smilov and Krastev 2008: 9), mostly due to their Eurosceptic agendas.

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE ISSUES OF THE POPULIST RADICAL RIGHT IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

This section applies the framework outlined above to the analysis of the issues of the Bulgarian Ataka, Hungarian Jobbik and the Slovak

National Party. Until now, populist radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe and their issues have remained largely unexplored. The limited literature available has either focused on the radical right during the 1990s (Minkenberg 2002; Mudde 2000; Ramet 1999a) or explored the dimension of racist extremism in the region (Mudde 2005). The little attention received is probably justified by these parties in Central and Eastern Europe achieving only moderate success, or by the fact that, up until recently, the populist radical right in Central and Eastern Europe appeared relegated to social movement and subcultural milieus (see, for example, Hockenos 1993; Minkenberg 2008). This pattern has changed substantially in the past few years: populist radical right parties appeared where there was previously none (Bulgaria); they rejuvenated the platform of other radical right parties (Hungary) and regained strength after erratic performances (Slovakia).

These parties frame the populist radical right ideology according to the idiosyncrasies of their context; their ideology is articulated over a range of issues, which were identified in a set of pre-communist and post-communist issues. In order to detect similarities between populist radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe, this section specifically analyses the issues of these parties in a comparative fashion, across time.

Ataka, Jobbik and the Slovak National Party are believed to represent the state of the populist radical right in Central and Eastern Europe at the present time; there are various criteria for selecting these parties. First, the context of these parties is taken into account. This article aspired to include parties from countries with different communist legacies (that is, patrimonial in Bulgaria, national-consensus in Hungary and bureaucratic in Slovakia), each potentially conducive to different pathways to transformation (Kitschelt et al. 1999). Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia also embody three distinct nation types – respectively, cultural, ethnic and in flux – depending on the main axis of conflict developed in the process of state formation (Beichelt and Minkenberg 2002). Despite the presence of particular legacies and conditions within the Central and East European space, this work seeks to demonstrate that these parties could be fairly ‘like minded’.⁹

Second, there are chronological reasons for circumscribing the period of analysis of this article to the mid-2000s onwards. The first and perhaps most obvious is that two of the three cases

(Ataka and Jobbik) are recent additions to their respective political arenas; Ataka contested its first elections in 2005 and Jobbik in 2006. The third party, the Slovak National Party, re-emerged as a unitary political force only in 2006; internal disputes within the party had led to a split in 2001. The second reason is offered by the electoral dynamics of post-communist elections. Three election generations are identified in Central and Eastern Europe: first-generation or founding elections, which are defined as the first competitive elections since the Second World War; second-generation elections, held during the 'normal years', in which voters disaffected with the status quo could opt for untried mainstream alternatives; and third-generation elections, which occur after two different ideological camps have had significant turns at governing (Pop-Eleches 2010: 233). Ataka, Jobbik and the Slovak National Party emerged (or re-emerged) during third-generation elections, enjoying interesting electoral results (Table 1).

The method employed for the study of the issues of the populist radical right in Central and Eastern Europe is qualitative content analysis. This method is highly effective for the explorative purposes of this work and allows us to retain detailed information on the issues analysed. Data primarily consist of the electoral party programmes of Ataka (2005a, 2005b),¹⁰ Jobbik (2006, 2010a) and the Slovak National Party (SNS 2006, 2010), since party programmes are 'considered to represent and express the policy collectively adopted by the party' (Borg 1966: 97). In order to overcome the potential pitfalls related to the 'unspoken' portion of party ideology (Mudde 1995: 208), official media with internal orientation (mostly party websites¹¹) are also analysed. Finally, when party programmes contain only indications of the issue being examined, the analysis is also integrated with party leaders' statements.¹²

The analysis aims to ascertain the presence and salience¹³ of each issue for Ataka, Jobbik and the Slovak National Party. The ultimate goal is to figure out what minimum and maximum combination of issues makes up the populist radical right ideology in Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia. When a certain issue is present and salient, it is deemed a core feature of party ideology; conversely, the presence of the issue only in the party literature indicates that the feature is not core; the presence of the issue outside the party programme would also disqualify the feature from being core.¹⁴ Finally, a feature is considered absent if it is absent from the party literature or if

Table 1*Electoral Results of Parliamentary Populist Radical Right Parties by Country (per cent)*

Country	Party	2005–6	2009–10
Bulgaria	Political Party Attack (Ataka)	8.1	9.4
Hungary	Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik)	2.2	16.7
Slovakia	Slovak National Party	11.7	5.1

Note. Ataka contested elections in 2005 and 2009; Jobbik and the Slovak National Party in 2006 and 2010. In 2006, Jobbik ran as part of the Hungarian Party for Justice and Life–Jobbik – The Third Way ticket. *Source.* Parties and Elections database, www.parties-and-elections.eu.

there is substantial divergence in the formulation of the issues, as framed in the previous section.

Clericalism

Clericalism is the first pre-communist issue analysed. Ataka's party leader Siderov, a theology graduate (Dikov 2009), inspires the Orthodox Christian principles of the party platform. Ataka, as a Bulgarian patriotic party, aspires to unite the nation under the common creed of Christianity. In its 'Programmatic Scheme' (Ataka 2005b), the party advocates the return of confiscated properties to the Church, the endorsement of Orthodox Christianity as state religion and a formal coordination between Church and state on all public issues.

Jobbik translates the Christian conservative background of its founding members into the party platform. Jobbik (2010b) defines itself as 'a principled, conservative and radically patriotic Christian party' which recognizes Hungary as a country based on Christian moral values (Jobbik 2006, 2010a). In comparative terms, Christian appeals displayed an almost fundamentalist slant in 2006; while the supply of Christian-oriented policies did not vary much in 2010, many of its formulations were toned down.

Three basic ideals recur throughout the Slovak National Party programmes: national, Christian and social principles. The party formally considers believers and non-believers to be the same; however, Christian morals inspire the social policies of the Slovak National Party, and the party regards 'the requirement for the separation of Church and State as a historical and legal nonsense in the Central European space' (SNS 2006: 42). The Christian principles outlined in 2006 remained unchanged in the 2010 electoral programme.

The role of religion and the intertwining of Church and state feature prominently in the discourse of the populist radical right in these countries. Bearing in mind the populist radical right's appeal to traditional values, this may not surprise. The regional scope of this phenomenon generally demonstrates that half a century of communist rule had failed to neutralize the appeal of Christian-oriented policies; in return, these policies create a cohesive factor for the native (Christian) people, exacerbating their difference from the 'alien' (non-Christian) part of the population. In light of the presence and salience of this issue in party literatures, clericalism qualifies as a core feature for all three parties.

Irredentism

The second pre-communist feature of the populist radical right ideology in these countries is irredentism, which is appraised here as a concept with actual and *ex negativo* dimensions. In its two programmatic documents, Ataka does not refer to external homelands. However, a number of statements delivered through official media channels and from Siderov show that the party frequently returns to forms of both *ex negativo* and actual irredentism. Partly in connection to minority issues, Ataka has repeatedly denounced a Turkish irredentist threat in Bulgaria (irredentism *ex negativo*). Especially in areas with a strong Turkish minority or under the control of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (Dviženie za Prava i Svobodi – DPS), such as the Kardzhali province, the party alleges that separatist forces might seek to break off from the rest of the country (see, for example, Novinite 2010). The party seems to draw also on the other facet of the issue. Historically, most of the territorial disputes that are the subject of Bulgarian (actual) irredentism concern the Macedonian question (Bell 1999: 243–9); the view that the Macedonian population and territory belong to the Bulgarian nation is also espoused by Siderov (Dikov 2009). More recently, some Romanian claims on Bulgarian territory (Ataka 2012a) have stimulated the irredentist rhetoric of the party; in response to these claims, the party envisaged a potential backlash in Northern Dobrudja, a Romanian region historically inhabited by ethnic Bulgarians (Ataka 2012b).

Drawing on one of the themes of the Hungarian Justice and Life Party, Jobbik holds outright irredentist claims and calls for a revision

of the ‘Trianon diktat’. In fact, the party’s political horizons are not defined by the borders of the Hungarian state but by those of the Hungarian nation (that is, Greater Hungary), which today includes 15 million people (Jobbik 2006, 2010a: 15–16).¹⁵ Despite the high salience of this issue, the party lacks a concrete geopolitical strategy; therefore, Jobbik seems content with elevating the conditions of Hungarian minorities abroad (especially in Slovakia; see, for example, *Zur Zeit* 2010).

The Slovak National Party has played the ‘Hungarian card’ extensively, often jeopardizing Slovak–Hungarian diplomatic affairs. This form of irredentism *ex negativo* was pursued by both questioning the loyalty of the Hungarian minority to independent Slovakia and denouncing the irredentist claims of the Hungarian government (SNS 2006: 58). The salience of the irredentist issue remained high in the 2010 programme, where the party displays its unwillingness to compromise on Slovak–Hungarian relations. As a result, the Slovak National Party seeks to counter domestic and foreign Hungarian policies by criminalizing any threats to the Slovak Republic (SNS 2010: 6–7).

The issue of irredentism, with its two facets, may appear fluid at first. Often connected to minority issues (especially in the case of irredentism *ex negativo*), the two issues may seem to overlap. Nonetheless, two elements justify separate treatment in this article: first, the fact that irredentism, unlike the ethnic minorities issue, harks back to a pre-communist past, thus qualifying it as a stand-alone issue; second, irredentism retains a territorial aspect that is virtually absent from the anti-minorities rhetoric. In light of the presence and salience of the issue in party programmes, irredentism demonstrates a core feature of the populist radical right ideology in Hungary and Slovakia; in this regard, it is important to note that actual irredentism (Jobbik) and irredentism *ex negativo* (the Slovak National Party) represent two sides of the same coin – Slovak–Hungarian relations. Ataka’s irredentist appeals are occasional, and the indications of the issue outside the party programme documents fail to qualify irredentism as a core feature of the party’s ideology.

Social National Economics

The impact of economic policies on populist radical right parties’ electoral performance in Central and Eastern Europe is contested

(see, for example, Pop-Eleches 2010: 222). However, material needs remain a prime concern for the post-communist masses and these parties cannot afford to disregard economic issues as they endeavour to present themselves as reliable actors in different policy areas.

The programmatic differences between Ataka and Jobbik have more to do with the wording than the actual policies advocated. While the former appeals to ‘social capitalism’, the latter invokes ‘social national economics’. In their programmatic documents, both parties call for a stronger role of the state in the economy, redistribution of wealth and a revision of privatization contracts (that is, renationalization of agricultural, financial and public service sectors) (Ataka 2005b; Jobbik 2006, 2010a: 2–4). Also, in light of their economic agendas, Ataka and Jobbik are unequivocally deemed ‘leftist’ (Bakker et al. 2012; Hooghe et al. 2010).¹⁶

All three parties support forms of ‘economic nationalism’ by endorsing ‘buy national’ movements as well as domestic production and agriculture. This notwithstanding, the type of economic nationalism advocated by the Slovak National Party has moved towards more liberal positions over time (SNS 2006, 2010). The position of the party leans towards the centre of the left–right continuum when it comes to economic policies (Bakker et al. 2012; Hooghe et al. 2010), perhaps being somewhat closer to the Christian democratic and conservative economic views held by many populist radical right parties of the West.

Social national economics fails to qualify as a communist issue, mostly due to the anti-communist ideological stance of these parties. However, the economic policies advocated by them are often leftist, partly indebted to the legacy of state socialism. After 1989, modernizing forces and mainstream political parties supported market liberalization and capitalist institution building; the process of political and economic transformation essentially proved to be a one-way route, involving major costs. In practice, the shift from state socialist to capitalist market economies brought about a progressive retrenchment of social protections affecting almost every stratum in society, and the populist radical right translated dissatisfaction with the economy into a leftist and conservative economic agenda appealing to ‘transition losers’ (Bustikova and Kitschelt 2009). Certainly, these appeals are often vague (not to say, unrealistic) – a constant in the ‘overpromising’ of these parties. Yet, social national economic policies remain instrumental to the nativist ideology of

populist radical right parties. In light of the different formulation and positioning over the issue, social national economics demonstrates a core feature of party ideology only for Ataka and Jobbik; at the present time, the Slovak National Party fosters a liberal economic platform and 'social national' aspects are generally absent from its agenda.

Ethnic Minorities

After the collapse of the communist bloc, the issue of ethnic minorities proved highly salient in Central and East European politics, justifying its qualification as a post-communist issue. Minorities in these countries vary between almost 10 per cent of the total population in Hungary to 20 per cent in Slovakia, with the Roma population often the principal target for discrimination.¹⁷

Ataka (2005a) views Bulgaria as 'a single-national, monolithic state' that refuses divisions on the basis of faith, ethnicity or culture. To answer the problem of Roma and Muslim minorities, Ataka invokes policies of forced assimilation (Dikov 2009). Bulgarian nativism is generally encapsulated in the two programmatic documents of the party (Ataka 2005a, 2005b), yet it is mostly through public statements and its website that the party fosters its stance against ethnic minorities.

Jobbik (2010b) claims to be the only party to have denounced 'the unsolved situation of the ever growing Gypsy population' in Hungary. In actual fact, as early as 2005, István Csurka referred to an ongoing 'Gypsy problem' in the Hungarian Justice and Life Party manifesto (MIÉP 2005). The 'Gypsy issue' would appear as a clear-cut issue on the Jobbik agenda only in late 2006 (Krekó and Szabados 2010). This element tends to substantiate the idea that part of the issues fostered by the Hungarian Justice and Life Party had been absorbed by Jobbik at the end of their alliance. Jobbik currently regards the problem of 'Gypsy crime' as 'a unique form of delinquency, different from the crimes of the majority in nature and force' (Jobbik 2010b). In response to this problem, the party has repeatedly called for a policy of forced assimilation (Jobbik 2010a).

In Slovakia, the Slovak National Party has been riding high on minority issues ever since the 'Velvet Divorce'. The party leader Slota and other members of the party have reiterated to the public their hostility towards ethnic (Roma) minorities (Petrova 2006).

Moreover, the Slovak National Party has often questioned the legitimacy of the Party of the Hungarian Coalition (Strana Mad'arskej Koalície – SMK) and the very existence of the Hungarian ethnic minority in Slovakia. Hungarian and Roma minorities are portrayed as enjoying above-average rights, especially compared to those of the Slovak minority abroad (SNS 2006: 39). While the party calls for a general reassessment of subsidies and ‘diversification’ (marginalization), the perception is that the Slovak National Party’s policies would fall into a broader assimilationist framework. Throughout the period analysed, the issue of ethnic minorities unequivocally qualifies as the party’s *leitmotiv*.

At the present time, the issue is present in all party programmes, and its salience is high for all three parties analysed. Populist radical right parties in Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia present themselves as the most competent actors to handle the problem of ethnic minorities; in return, their rise to prominence is often linked to this anti-minorities stance, for they are believed to retain ownership over this issue.

Corruption

Corruption is the second post-communist issue analysed. For the populist radical right, this issue serves as a medium for populist politics and its dual vision of the world, split between ‘the pure people’ and ‘the corrupt elite’ (Mudde 2004: 543). The anti-corruption agenda is an integral part of the anti-communist profile of the parties discussed here and serves to denounce the mismanagement of the privatization process after 1989.

Ataka opposes the corrupt ‘anti-national’ elite and calls for the revision of the privatization process (Ataka 2005a, 2005b). During the 1990s, Bulgarian enterprises were subject to a process of unrestrained privatization favouring forms of economic and political crime. Ever since its foundation, Ataka has called for the prosecution of political corruption (Ataka 2005a). The high salience of the issue elevates the anti-corruption stance of the party to that of primary importance.

In Hungary, Jobbik claims that political and economic crimes have compromised the good of the nation to the benefit of the corrupt (national and foreign) elite. At first, Jobbik engaged in fighting all forms of corruption (Jobbik 2006); subsequently, the party articulated its anti-corruption agenda by promising to put an

end to criminality in politics, to reform the regulations governing public procurement and to review the privatization contracts tainted by corruption (Jobbik 2010a). As in the case of Ataka, the salience of the corruption issue remains high over time for Jobbik.

The situation is different for the Slovak National Party. The party's anti-corruption agenda does not appear to be as salient as that of Ataka and Jobbik. Anti-corruption appeals are present, yet ill-defined; moreover, corruption is often treated together with other issues (for example, heavy bureaucracy and powerful group interests). From the way the issue is addressed, corruption resembles a side effect stemming from complex state legislation (SNS 2006: 9, 2010: 9) rather than a problem per se.

Populist radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe have been able to address the issue in such a way that it appears connected to the transformation process of 1989. Formulated in these terms, corruption comes across as an endemic problem related to the communist past and former communist elites that only a radical change could solve. Populist radical right parties generally present themselves as the answer, for they are anti-establishment and anti-corruption organizations by definition. The corruption issue demonstrates a core feature for Ataka and Jobbik, but the Slovak National Party's emphasis on the issue appears only secondary. In this regard, it should be noted that the party's anti-corruption agenda (and anti-establishment profile in general) has been severely weakened by its own conduct in power. During Slotá's leadership, and especially during the Slovak National Party's participation in government (2006–10), the party has been tainted by major corruption scandals (*Slovak Spectator* 2009).

European Union

The EU issue is the last post-communist issue presented. The issue, as delivered by the populist radical right, should distinguish between a pre-accession and post-accession phase. In the pre-accession period, the populist radical right parties in these countries (for example, the Slovak National Party and the Hungarian Justice and Life Party) tended to hold 'Euro-reject' positions.¹⁸ Concentrating on parties that (re-)emerged during third-generation elections has the advantage of highlighting how this pattern has changed after accession to the EU.

By and large, populist radical right parties have moderated their agendas over time. At the time of writing, understanding populist radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe as those supporting ‘the general ideas of European integration, but pessimistic about the EU’s current and/or future reflection of these ideas’ would qualify them as Eurosceptics (Kopecký and Mudde 2002: 302).

Within their Eurosceptic framework of action, populist radical right parties in Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia have started to consider the EU as an opportunity to voice their dissent. For instance, Ataka explicitly invokes a revision of Bulgaria’s clauses of accession to the EU; amongst these clauses is the contract for the shutdown of the Kozloduy nuclear power plant (Ataka 2005a).

At first, Jobbik demanded a referendum on withdrawal from the EU (Jobbik 2006). Subsequently, the party seemed to abide by Hungary’s membership of the EU; hence, the EU has been progressively interpreted as a platform for ‘the achievement of Hungarian interests without compromise’ (Jobbik 2010a: 21). According to the party’s 2010 manifesto, the EU had not proved capable of solving the problem of national minorities living within its boundaries; therefore, the party aimed to ‘elevate the Hungarian question, within the EU, to that of a matter touched on daily in political discussions’ (Jobbik 2010a: 21).

The Slovak National Party is the most compliant of the populist radical right parties analysed. The party generally accepts Slovak membership of the EU and aims to take advantage of European funds to strengthen the regional cohesiveness of the country (SNS 2006: 3). The 2010 programme, which also served as an account of its achievements as a junior coalition partner during the 2006–10 term, lamented a progressive lack of national sovereignty on several issues. At the same time, however, the Slovak National Party takes credit for the adoption of the euro (SNS 2010: 6).

In their programmatic documents, all three populist radical right parties reject the integration model outlined in the Lisbon Treaty, a document designed to establish a ‘United States of Europe’. At least for this reason, these parties qualify as Eurosceptic. In a famous interview, Ataka’s party leader Siderov envisaged the EU as a Europe of nations and nation states able to preserve their national identities (Dikov 2009). Jobbik claims that Hungary is part of Europe not because of its entry into the EU but because of its own historical right. Therefore, the party aims to promote, in collaboration with its

allies, ‘the concept of a Europe of the Nations’ (Jobbik 2010: 21). In a similar fashion, the Slovak National Party states, ‘by the entry of the Slovak Republic into the European Union, the history of the Slovak nation neither begins nor ends’ (SNS 2006: 57), and claims that the EU, as the Europe of nations, ‘must respect, protect and support the cultural individuality and variety of its member states’ (SNS 2006: 40).

The stand on the EU issue changed when the focus shifted from accession to integration. Before accession, populist radical right parties used to hold an uncompromising Euro-reject position. To varying degrees, populist radical right parties seem to have adapted to the status quo and moved towards Eurosceptic positions. While the distinction between Euro-reject and Eurosceptic party positions proved valuable for the analysis of the pre-accession context, the post-accession setting saw many variations on the Eurosceptic theme. Whereas Ataka and Jobbik maintain a fierce Eurosceptic stance, the Slovak National Party’s position appears quite erratic.¹⁹ With regard to our period of analysis, it seems only fair to consider Euroscepticism as a core feature specific to the Bulgarian and Hungarian parties’ ideology.

A Minimum and a Maximum Combination of Ideological Features

In terms of their ideology, Ataka, Jobbik and the Slovak National Party are fairly ‘like minded’, yet they do not constitute an entirely homogeneous group (see Table 2). A strict analysis based on the presence *and* salience of ideological features reveals that only two of the six issues analysed qualify as core features in the ideology of all three parties: these are clericalism and (opposition to) ethnic minorities – the minimum combination. However, a looser analysis based only on the presence of these features in party literature would extend this range also to irredentism, (anti-)corruption and EU(scepticism) – the maximum combination.

Irredentism (actual and *ex negativo*) is a core feature of the ideology of Jobbik and the Slovak National Party only; the issue is not articulated in a systematic fashion in the case of Ataka, where it is mostly relegated to indications in official media and statements. Social national economics, in light of its leftist imprint, represents a core feature only for Ataka and Jobbik. The Slovak National Party is generally ‘pro-market’ with a centrist economic platform; this

Table 2
Summary of Ideological Features by Party

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Ataka</i>	<i>Jobbik</i>	<i>Slovak National Party</i>
Clericalism	++	++	++
Irredentism	(+)	++	++
Social national economics	++	++	-
Anti-minorities	++	++	++
Anti-corruption	++	++	+
Euroscpticism	++	++	+

Note. ++ = core (present and salient); + = not core (present in party programme); (+) = indication (present outside party programme); - = absent.

formulation substantially diverges from the social national economic model outlined in this article, and the issue could be considered absent from the ideology of the Slovak party.

Ultimately, the analysis tells us that Jobbik could serve as an archetype of the populist radical right party in Central and Eastern Europe. At present, the Hungarian party is found to deliver all six issues in a consistent manner. Ataka resembles Jobbik's agenda in all aspects but one – irredentism. The Slovak National Party seems to have 'moderated' its agenda over time and does not match the radical profile of the other two parties.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Over recent years, populist radical right parties gained momentum in Central and Eastern Europe. The populist radical right in this region has generally received little attention, perhaps due to the erratic electoral performance of these parties. The (re-)emergence of this phenomenon prompts a better understanding of the parties' context and the (different) issues at the core of their ideology.

As one commentator observed, when the Iron Curtain fell, social identities of class, religion, region and ethnicity proved immediate sources of division; communist rule had not destroyed them and had often stimulated them (Whitefield 2002: 197). These parties do not embody a 'silent counter-revolution' like the populist radical right parties of the West; rather, populist radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe tap into a 'post-communist syndrome'

stemming from the disappointments of the transformation process. This is primarily reflected in the framing of the ideology of these parties: populist radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe address pre-communist issues such as clericalism and irredentism, social national economics and post-communist issues such as ethnic minorities, corruption and the EU.

This has at least two implications for the understanding of the populist radical right in these countries. First, parties belonging to this party family transcend the phase of 'unemployment and xenophobia' identified by von Beyme (1988); this classification restricts the scope of the analysis as it does not capture the peculiarities of the populist radical right in this region. Second, this article suggests that populist radical right parties in these countries foster issues very much indebted to the idiosyncrasies of their context.

Besides their differences from the Western populist radical right, Ataka, Jobbik and the Slovak National Party also display a rather distinctive range of issues within the Central and East European space. A minimal combination of (core) ideological features found that only clericalism and opposition to ethnic minorities are shared across all parties. However, a maximum combination of (core and secondary) ideological features extended the list to irredentism, anti-corruption and Euroscepticism.

As regards the extension of the maximum combination of issues to the whole Central and East European space, one last consideration is in order. Irredentism is likely to be found only in the discourse of populist radical right parties with a country-specific legacy of pan-nationalism. Countries lacking external homelands or not subject to territorial claims by neighbouring countries will yield populist radical right parties with no irredentist agenda. Therefore, a refined maximum combination willing to take this observation into account will only include clericalism, ethnic minorities, corruption and the EU as the defining issues of the populist radical right in the region. Then, irredentism would have to be assessed on a country-by-country basis.

By providing a framework for the analysis of their ideological features, this article has suggested that populist radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe are indebted to their historical legacies and the idiosyncrasies of the post-communist context. Ultimately, findings highlighted the *raison d'être* of populist radical

right parties in Central and Eastern Europe, individually and comparatively. The emergence and electoral performance of these parties depends on the competition over these issues; putting the issues identified at the core of an interactive framework between the demand side and supply side of populist radical right politics will give a better insight into their success and/or failure. In particular, the core ideological features of these parties may be crucial to explain their electoral performance when matched by a high demand for these issues.

The assessment of these and other aspects is necessary for the study of the populist radical right in context; only when these questions are systematically addressed will it be possible to achieve a refined understanding of this phenomenon in Central and Eastern Europe, the electoral performance of these parties and their broader impact on national party systems and liberal democracy.

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NOTES

- ¹ For the purposes of this work, Central and Eastern Europe refers to former communist countries which are also new EU member states.
- ² Taggart (2000: 74) refers to 'new politics', including under the umbrella both green and left-libertarian parties.
- ³ The nominally independent First Slovak Republic (1939–45) was de facto a Nazi-protected state.
- ⁴ Anti-corruption and anti-establishment views are intertwined in the populist radical right discourse. As far as 'populist anti-party sentiments' are concerned, 'all established parties are accused of being thoroughly corrupt' (Mudde 1996: 270).
- ⁵ Motives and instances of anti-Western views in Central and Eastern Europe are documented in Tismaneanu (1998), Mudde (2005).
- ⁶ The distinction between pre-communist, communist and post-communist issues is indebted to the party categorization by Mudde (2000), which is amended accordingly for the purposes of this article.
- ⁷ Earlier examples include the Hungarian Justice and Life Party and the same Slovak National Party. With the exception of the Danish People's Party (2002), populist radical right parties of the West hardly ever address religious issues.

- ⁸ One notable exception would be the Greater Romania Party (Partidul România Mare – PRM) in Romania. See, for example, Shafir (1991), Mudde (2000: 14).
- ⁹ Previous contributions emphasized how different legacies could affect the emergence and electoral performance of populist radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe. An assessment of these aspects is beyond the scope of this article; however, it is noteworthy that recent electoral results seem to challenge interpretations on the basis of these factors. For reference, see: on the role of communist legacies, Bustikova and Kitschelt (2009); on the role of nation types, Beichelt and Minkenberg (2002).
- ¹⁰ The two programmatic documents of Ataka (2005a, 2005b) were both released in 2005 and remain valid to this day.
- ¹¹ Ataka, www.ataka.bg; Jobbik, www.jobbik.hu and www.jobbik.com; Slovak National Party, www.sns.sk.
- ¹² Party leaders' statements are mostly employed in the case of Ataka, whose programme documents are short (and unchanging).
- ¹³ For the purposes of this article, party positioning was deemed relevant for the analysis of parties' economic platforms and was, therefore, assessed in the appropriate subsection.
- ¹⁴ The distinction between presence and indication relates to the inclusion/non-inclusion of the issue in electoral party programmes. However, both scenarios would yield secondary issues which are present, but not core.
- ¹⁵ Note that the Hungarian population living within Hungarian borders amounts to 10 million people (Hungarian Central Statistical Office 2012: 19).
- ¹⁶ Chapel Hill Expert Survey data at www.unc.edu/~hooghe/data_pp.php.
- ¹⁷ Estimates of the actual ratio of Roma population in these countries are 10 per cent in Bulgaria, 6 per cent in Hungary, and 9 per cent in Slovakia (see Mizsei 2006).
- ¹⁸ According to Kopecký and Mudde (2002: 302), 'Euro-rejects' 'subscribe neither to the ideas underlying the process of European integration nor to the EU'.
- ¹⁹ If possible, the Slovak National Party's position would qualify as 'soft Eurosceptic', whereas that of Ataka and Jobbik as 'hard Eurosceptic'. This differentiation in degree adheres to the conceptualization of 'Eurosceptic' party position by Kopecký and Mudde (2002: 302). For a different usage of 'soft' and 'hard' Euroscepticism, see Taggart and Szczerbiak (2001).

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