

INTRODUCTION

Nationalism has been one of the most important formative forces in politics for more than a century. In the great scheme of things, a world consisting mostly of countries organized on the basis of nation-states is often presented as evidence of the veracity of nationalist doctrine. However, nationalism retains its power also after the establishment of these organizational units by means of its potential to attract, motivate and mobilize people towards political goals. To clarify the point, alleging that they act for the benefit of (or usually on behalf of) the nation always provides an irrefutable justification for the policies and strategies of political movements and parties. Furthermore, issues such as national security, national interests, and the future of the nation always remain on the public agenda in nation-states, and therefore all actors active in the public life of nation-states are somehow obliged to take stances on those issues.

The phenomenon of nationalism manifests itself in different ways in the public sphere of different states. The most salient reason for this, as aptly asserted by Canetti (1984, p. 169), is that there is no one right definition for the nation which would be equally applicable to all nations and therefore nationalism, which is essentially based on various competing claims concerning the nature of the nation, cannot have the same content in every country. Although unitary theories on nationalism often obscure the particularities stemming from the specific contents in any individual nationalism for the purpose of

creating a universal framework for nationalism, those contents are what need to be examined in order to comprehend how nationalism works in any particular case. On this point, as Finlayson (1998, p. 100) clearly manifests, nationalist discourse is what to be concentrated on in order to grasp both the peculiarities in those contents and the phenomenon of nationalism within a broader context. The discursive approach, thus, provides us with the conceptual toolbox to study nationalism at the empirical level (Sutherland, 2005) for such a task. Especially comparative studies concentrating on nationalist discourse possess the opportunity to assess both the particular and the universal in cases under examination.

This is a significant contributing factor towards the fact that a considerable amount of literature that addresses nationalism by analyzing political discourses comparatively has been published in the last decades. Since nationalism is generally identified with right-wing politics (Heywood, 2013, p. 225), it is understandable that the mentioned literature centers upon the political discourses of right-wing political parties to a great extent. Regarding its rise in many countries, again justifiably most of this literature prefers either to handle the nationalist discourses of the parties that are considered as “extreme” or “radical” right-wing parties; or to concentrate on the nationalist discourses of the movements or parties of ethnic minorities even though they cannot always be classified as radical or extreme in many cases such as Catalonia or Scotland.¹ However, these parties struggle either to come to power or to gain recognition and political liberties, and their nationalist discourses are mainly focused on directing and mobilizing the people for these purposes. On the other hand, the nationalist discourse of a ruling party, which is already in power,

1 And in these cases, the movements and parties might even be considered to be left-wing or tied to larger liberal frameworks within the context of the EU.

has to be constructed with the explicit purpose of maintaining that power. Furthermore, some other parameters influence the discourses of ruling parties such as the responsibilities and tasks which arise due to possessing the executive power of a state and appealing to a wider range of voters than the radical parties. Such differences indicate that nationalist discourse could function differently in the cases of ruling parties. Yet, the vast existing literature on nationalism and nationalist discourse has a notable gap on this issue. Although it is possible to find some studies individually focusing on various aspects of the nationalist discourses of some political parties in power, they generally do not provide a comparative structure and contribute to the literature in this way by discussing particularities and commonalities.

This book aims to contribute to the literature on nationalism by comparatively analyzing the political discourses of two ruling parties in Hungary and Turkey, namely Fidesz and the AK Party.²

In the Hungarian case, the Fidesz-KNDP alliance has exercised governmental authority in the country since 2010; yet, the junior partner in the coalition has been a satellite party of Fidesz since the 2006 election. Thus, although it is technically a coalition, in fact, Fidesz and its leader, Orbán, have ruled Hungary by establishing single-party governments. Looking at the Turkish case, AK Party and its undisputed leader Erdoğan have also held office since 2002 as a single party in government. Although Erdoğan was elected as the president in August 2014 and had to withdraw from his prime minister and party leader posts for a term; he remained as the supreme political leader for the party and government, and eventually Turkey transformed into a presidential system as a result of a constitutional referendum in April 2017.

2 It is possible to find this party under the names “Justice and Development Party” and “AKP” in the academic literature.

Nationalism possesses a remarkable place in the political discourses of both parties, and these parties also occupy quite similar positions on the political spectrum, which can be identified as center-right. Although these parties define themselves as conservative or nationalist conservative, both they and their strong leaders have been addressed and also widely criticized with regard to their alleged populist, authoritarian, illiberal, and anti-democratic tendencies (Bozóki, 2011; Bugarič, 2015; Antal, 2019; Vadhanavisala, 2019; Öktem & Akkoyunlu, 2016; Çağaptay, 2017; Kaygusuz, 2018). However, these parties and leaders also exhibit firm and explicitly nationalist features in their political discourses and ideologies. In the discourse of both parties, notions and concepts such as nation, national identity, and national interests occupy a substantial place. Despite these parallels between them, their countries are very different from one another with regards to the features such as demographics, size, and economic growth and they have quite dissimilar cultural and political backgrounds. These facts are expected to make the contents of their nationalisms distinctive. On the other hand, the ruling party status in both cases obliges them to maintain the existing political power. Consequently, these parties appear as suitable cases through which both the peculiar contents of nationalist discourse of ruling parties and the common patterns of this discourse independent from the contents can be uncovered.

As the main research question, the book asks how the right-wing ruling parties under examination, Fidesz and AK Party, construct their discourses on the nation. However, as this question intrinsically entails, it also concentrates on the functions of these discourses in the respective political arenas, and questions why these parties deploy these discourses. As another issue coming along with the main research question, it asks which aspects and dimensions are emphasized in the discursive reconstructions of the nations by the parties. This study

thereby also seeks to understand in which ways the political and ideological approaches of the parties affect their conceptualizations of the nation, and how they configure and position both themselves and the opposition through their discourses on the nation. To state it clearly, the book hypothesizes that the nationalist discourses of Fidesz and AK Party function in a similar way to reconfigure the political arena through polarizations although they follow different paths in how they identify the nation. The validity of this statement, which can be viewed as an answer to the main research question stated above, is demonstrated by applying the chosen methodology to the political discourses of the case parties. Conducting analyses on a comparative ground, this book aims to ascertain the particular and common patterns of nationalist discourse in the political discourses of these two right-wing ruling parties.

The study begins with a chapter that lays out the theoretical and methodological groundwork. In addition to the general references of nation and nationalism, various aspects that are thought to be explanatory and helpful for the analyses of the two case studies are discussed, and in this way, a theoretical frame of reference is formed. Within an interaction with this frame, the determined research method for the analyses, namely critical discourse analysis (CDA) in general and socio-cognitive approach in particular, is introduced, and what this method means for this study is explained in detail. Additionally, the logic behind the data selection and the limits of the study are presented in this chapter.

In the following chapter, a bipartite discussion on “the nation” concept within a historical overview is performed for both the Hungarian and the Turkish cases. In this way, this chapter enables the study to reach a better understanding concerning the positions of Fidesz and AK Party in the existing debates and traditional interpretative schemes concerning the nation in their respective countries, as well

as expounding the nation-building processes in the case countries and raising questions when necessary.

After laying out the theoretical, methodological, and historical groundworks, the data selected from the two countries are individually analyzed. To put it more precisely, this data consists of the selected speeches and interviews of party leaders, Orbán and Erdoğan, made on the national days and in the electoral campaigns within a determined time frame. Following the analyses, the findings acquired by them are discussed within a comparative framework in the following chapter and they are evaluated in a wider context with references to the theoretical discussions. The task undertaken in this chapter is accomplished in three steps. In the first step, the conceptualization of the nation in the discourses of Fidesz and the AK Party is addressed. In the second one, how these parties configure and position themselves through nationalist discourses in their respective political stages is exposed. In the last step, how they construct and position the opposition in their nationalist discourses is unveiled. Both the common patterns and differences in the nationalist discourses of the two parties that are close to each other in terms of their political spectrums, despite being located in two very different countries in many respects, are ascertained through the discussion of the findings.

Chapter 1

Theory and Method

The primary research question of the study can be summarized as how Fidesz and AK Party construct “the nation” and politically utilize it. However, some other significant questions come along with this:

- How are national historical narratives built? Why do they matter?
- How do these parties conceptualize the nation? Which factors and components such as religion, ethnicity, language, etc. are featured and emphasized?
- Why do these political parties need nationalism and nationalist discourse to reconfigure the political stages and opposition parties in their respective countries?
- How do these ruling parties establish the relationship between “the party” and “the nation?”
- What are the interactions between the elections (and also other important contextual developments) and nationalist discourse? How do they influence each other?

Certainly, this study looks for answers to these questions in the light of some theoretical insights and within a definite research methodology. Therefore, this chapter of the book lays out a theoretical frame of reference for the key concepts, nation and nationalism, and also gives a methodological groundwork in accordance with this frame.

The sections on the theory firstly discuss what kind of political ideology the nation is the product of as a project and what kind of psychological background it needs in creating a group identity. Afterward, a theoretical groundwork on the relationship of nationalist ideology with religion and populist politics is presented, taking into account the particularities of the two cases that are the subject of the study. The sections related to the methodology are primarily intended to explain the CDA and socio-cognitive approach to be used in the analysis. In addition, it is also explained how and according to which criteria the set of data is selected.

1.1. Theoretical Concerns

In this part of the study, one of the main intentions is to proclaim the theoretical groundwork within which nation and nationalism are situated. To put it simply, the nation concept is approached as an ongoing process of social construction, and nationalism is the ideological impetus behind this process. In order to comprehend and analyze both the process and its product, this study follows a modernist (or constructive) line.

Dealing with nation and nationalism, the study posits that discourse is the most prominent element to examine the aforementioned construction process. To address the nation as a social form, the study takes its inspiration from the discourse-based approaches brought forward by Calhoun (1997), Finlayson (1998), and Özkırımlı (2005). This situation is also influential on the designation of the research methodology.

In particular, this part lays out a theoretical groundwork for the analysis of the nationalist discourses of Fidesz and AK Party as the cases of this study. As remarked earlier, both the content and functions of nationalism may vary to a large extent in any particular case. Thus, different dimensions and aspects of nationalism can be more salient,

influential, or determinative in the selected nationalist discourses. The theoretical discussions presented in this part are utilized to make sense of the particularities in the discourses within a broader framework. In the same vein, the references and connotations to the elaborated theoretical issues here are helpful to deepen the following analyses. However, it should be noted that this part does not prescribe a specific theory to apply for the rest of the research. Instead, it gathers the theoretical concerns which present guidance for further analyses and discussions.

Nation as a Political Project

To clarify the theoretical approach adopted in this study, the best point to begin with is the existing theories on the origin of nations. In general, they are divided into two main categories, as primordialism and modernism (or constructivism), which purpose to answer the question “when (and how) did nations emerge,” and it is possible to see a third category, ethnosymbolism, in some sources (Calhoun, 1997; Özkırımlı, 2010). In primordialist theories, nations are viewed as persistent, durable, and continuous structures from the very beginning of time, and there is a direct connection and continuity between modern nations and ancient ethnic groups. Yet, almost all the most pre-eminent figures of nationalism studies have rejected the idea that pre-existing ethnicities can explain the modern phenomenon of nation (Calhoun, 1993, p. 227). Modernist theories posit that nations are constructed by nationalism within the conditions of modernity, mostly in the last two centuries. Among these theorists, some explain the construction of nations through the transition to industrialized societies and the requirements of this new social order (Gellner, 1997), some claim that inequalities between the economic development levels caused nationalism to emerge as in the cases of anti-colonial movements (Nairn, 2003), and some argues that changing political framework in the world