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ARTICLE

Collective Narcissism and Hungary's Kin-State Policy after 2010

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Abstract

This article analyzes Hungary's kin-state policy starting from the premise that the concept of collective narcissism most succinctly captures its emotional foundations. I look to substantiate this claim by examining at a wide range of sources on how Hungary feels toward neighboring states and show the preponderance of emotions connected to collective narcissism. The real-life consequences of collective narcissism are demonstrated through a case study of the relationship between Hungary and Ukraine before and after the Russian attack of 2022. Overall, I find that anger is the master emotion of Hungary's kin-state policy, resulting in a lack of solidarity and characteristic self-centeredness in Hungary's foreign policy, which cannot be explained by rational factors alone.

Keywords: Hungary; Orbán Viktor; kin-state policy; foreign policy; collective narcissism

Introduction

Many analysts have tried to explain Hungary's recent foreign policy and its frequently controversial decisions from a rational, cost-benefit perspective (Végh 2015; Huszka 2017; Hettyey 2020). However, lately more and more foreign policy decisions have come to the fore, which can hardly be explained by rational economic considerations or domestic vote maximization. These steps included Fidesz leaving the strongest and most influential European party family, the European People's Party in 2021; a cordial visit of the Hungarian prime minister to the last dictator in Europe, the president of Belarus; or repeatedly vetoing EU foreign policy decisions. More pertinent to the topic of this article, how can we explain rationally that Hungary has been blocking Ukraine's high-level cooperation with NATO over violations of the human rights of the Hungarian minority or that in the first months of Russia's renewed, 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Budapest repeatedly traded malicious accusations with Kyiv, while being among the few European countries not to send weapons to its embattled neighbor, not even allowing lethal weapons to transit its territory to Ukraine directly, despite its proximity to, and troubled history with, Russia/Soviet Union. How can we explain this odd behavior? To do that, this article seeks to complement, rather than replace, previous rational explanations of Hungary's foreign policy with a novel, emotions-based approach. I wish to show how collective narcissism underlies Hungary's kin-state policy and, especially, its recent relations with Ukraine.

Rational-choice explanations typically postulate utility-driven decision makers, who optimize their actions for domestic vote maximization, economic gains, or interest advancement. The

significance of this article is that, for the first time in the literature, it analyses a primary part of Hungary's foreign policy, its kin-state policy, by looking at its emotional foundations since 2010, when Fidesz and prime minister Orbán Viktor took over. This approach postulates the following ideas: interests are not only socially but also emotionally constructed. Consequently, I conceive of foreign policy decision-making as a cognitive-affective process (Renshon and Lerner 2012). Emotions are certainly only one of the elements that play a role in the decision-making process, but they shape choice behavior by constituting the preferences of agents. "Serving as cues in decision-making, emotions make some preferences possible and others not. They define the boundaries of the kind of decisions that actors consider taking… . Together with ideas, they give material factors the explanatory role that they have for actors by investing them with meaning" (Markwica 2014, 46). In short, I follow Wendt's logic and believe that emotions do exert a constitutive effect on the process of preference construction (Wendt 1999, 87–88).

Based on the most frequently expressed emotions, I propose that it is collective narcissism, which underlies Hungary's recent kin-state policy. By claiming this, I attribute collective narcissism to a small group of Fidesz decision makers and/or communicators of kin-state policy. Focusing on them, I claim neither that Orbán (nor any other decision maker) is individually narcissistic nor that Fidesz voters or public opinion in Hungary would necessarily show signs of collective narcissism. Although this might or might not be the case, further research would be necessary to verify or falsify these propositions, which I cannot do here.

Specifically, I am looking at a group of politicians and journalists, who, because of their bureaucratic position, purview, formal and informal authority, and influence, shape Hungary's kin-state policy. Although the decision-making process of Hungarian foreign policy is opaque, it is nevertheless possible to identify key members of this group, by virtue of their formal positions. These include

- Prime Minister Orbán Viktor (2010–2022), by far the most important figure in decision making (see Körösényi, Illés, and Gyulai 2020);
- foreign ministers Martonyi János (2010–14), Navracsics Tibor (2014), and Szijjártó Péter (2014–2022);
- deputy prime minister and minister without portfolio responsible for kin-state policy Semjén Zsolt (2010–22);
- deputy state secretary for Hungarian communities abroad at the Ministry Of Public Administration and Justice Répás Zsuzsanna (2010–14);
- her boss, Minister of Public Administration and Justice (2010–14) and Foreign Minister (2014) Navracsics Tibor'
- secretary of state for kin-state policy at the prime minister's office Potápi Árpád (2014–2022);
- and from the *Magyar Nemzet*/*Magyar Idők*, journalists and regular publicists covering kin-state policy issues such as Pilhál György, Pataky István, and Sitkei Levente.

Because the kin-state policy of Budapest is embedded in its wider system of bilateral relationships with neighboring states, this article also sheds a light on Hungary's regional foreign policy. Through a case study on the emotional basis of Hungarian–Ukrainian relations, I look at how the current "structure of feelings" toward Ukraine influences Hungary's foreign policy, limiting options and generating an emotional context that made a confrontation between Budapest and Kyiv not only possible but also very likely.

The article proceeds as follows. In the next section I give an overview of the "rational" literature on Hungary's kin-state policy and point out the research gap, only to fill it with the help of the so-called emotional turn. Then I present the methodology, which combines official and nonofficial sources. In the next section, I present the emotions of the official Hungarian kin-state policy, showing the prevalence of anger and pointing out its narcissistic features. Then I look at our case study on the structure of feelings Hungary has evinced toward Ukraine, both before and after the

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Russian aggression. The conclusion shows the deep-lying narcissistic disposition of Fidesz decision makers as far as neighboring states and their Hungarian minorities are concerned and show the effects of collective narcissism on foreign policy.

Overview of the Literature

Hungary's kin-state policy is relatively well researched (for general overviews, see Waterbury 2010; Bárdi 2017; Csizmadia 2020; Lesinska and Héjj 2021). From the more recent literature on the Hungarian minorities abroad, impressive works dwell on various aspects such as the unequal accommodation of Hungarians in Romania (Kiss et al. 2018), the basic treaties of the 1990s and their afterlife (Vizi 2021), the autonomy of Vajdaság/Vojvodina in Serbia (Tóth 2017; Borisova and Sulimov 2018), the Hungarian public discourse on nation and nationhood (Kántor 2014), and dual citizenship (Pogonyi 2017).

However, all these contributions share a similar, utility-maximizing, "rational" approach, neglecting the role of emotions almost completely. For example, Waterbury (2010, 143) emphasizes, how Hungarian political actors such as Fidesz "utilized the state's relationship with the ethnic Hungarians across the border as a political resource" to further their own strategic (mostly ideological and electoral) goals. Pogonyi (2017, 73–74) also applies a rational approach when he claims that Fidesz was "motivated purely by reasons internal to Hungarian politics" in giving voting rights to the Hungarian minorities abroad, because it wanted to strengthen its own "nationalist image and pre-empt nationalist outbidding by the rising far-Right Jobbik party." Similarly, Bárdi (2017, 143–50) charts the ways of how Fidesz used the topic of Hungarian minorities to outbid its rivals in a competition on who is "more Hungarian." Lesinska and Héjj (2021, 53) also emphasize the objective of Hungarian authorities to strengthen the influence of nonresident ethnic Hungarians as voters in Hungary's elections.

I argue that this omission of emotions is especially lamentable for a topic that is connected so much to "nonrational" notions such nation, nationhood, or identity. Traditional, rational theories of international relations (IR) or even small-state theory have always had a hard time grasping the role of identity, and thus Hungary's kin-state policy (Szalai 2015, 14). This is why, instead of more classical approaches, this article is inspired by the literature on emotions in IR (for overviews on the history of emotions, see Reddy 2004; Matt and Stearns 2014; Boddice 2018). Based on the emotional turn witnessed over the last decades in social sciences in general, and IR in particular, this perspective rejects the age-old mind-body dualism, or the artificial contrast between *ratio* and *emotio* (Plamper 2015, 17–19), according to which emotions are associated with irrational behavior whereas the behavior of states is (or, rather, should be) based on rational factors. Over the last decades, "neuroscientists have led the way in revealing the extent to which rationality depends on emotion. It is now evident that people who are 'free' of emotion are irrational" (Mercer 2010, 2). Turning previous conceptualizations on their head, one can even go so far as to say that "ignoring the emotional attributes of a decision is irrational" (Bleiker and Hutchison 2008, 121). Because of their strong emotional content, an explicitly psychological approach to rationality may beat a rationalist one when using certain concepts, such as trust, identity, justice, or reputation (Mercer 2005, 77).

For the case study, I see the inclusion of emotions warranted for four reasons. First, kin-state policy is predicated precisely on notions with a strong emotional content such as identity and nation. Second, as will be shown, my sources show frequent and often intensive emotions, allowing the assumption that they do play a constitutive part in preference formation. Third, emotions also shape concrete policy outcomes. In what amounts to substantive (costly) policy gestures, the Hungarian government let its anger show in blocking Ukraine's high-level cooperation with NATO, a move that has been heavily criticized by its allies (*Reuters* 2018). In an expression of joy, on the other hand, Serbia has seen Hungary go out of its way to support Belgrade's bid to join the European Union. Emotions, such as anger or joy, certainly play a tangible part in Hungary's

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concrete diplomacy (Hall 2015). Fourth, Orbán has been very successful in eliminating veto players from the decision-making process, giving his personality (and his small group of trusted people) all the more leeway in guiding Hungary's foreign policy (Körösényi, Illés, and Gyulai 2020).

Over the last decade or so, IR scholars have certainly started to incorporate emotions into their explanations. Edited volumes on the role of emotions in international politics have been published (Ariffin, Coicaud, and Popovski 2016; Clément and Sangar 2018), and various emotions such as anger (Ost 2004; Ross 2010), resentment (Petersen 2002), affect (Eznack 2012), trust (Tikhomirov 2013), and joy (Penttinen 2013) have been analyzed. As to the region, in their book Krastev and Holmes have recently offered an explanation of the domestic success of Polish and Hungarian antiliberal parties, which takes emotions into account (Krastev and Holmes 2019). But Hungary in general, and Hungarian kin-state policy in particular, have not been systematically investigated so far.

From the vast literature, this article postulates that "collective narcissism" best characterizes the emotional disposition of Fidesz and thus Hungary's kin-state policy. Ever since Sigmund Freud, (individual) narcissism has been a well-known concept in psychology (Freud 1957). Summarized briefly, individual narcissism can be defined as an excessive self-love or inflated, grandiose view of oneself that requires continual external validation (for a detailed view see Campbell and Miller 2011). Raised to a collective level by Agnieszka Golec de Zavala and her colleagues, collective narcissism describes "an ingroup identification tied to an emotional investment in an unrealistic belief about the unparalleled greatness of an ingroup," in this case, the Hungarian nation (Golec de Zavala et al. 2009, 1074). Based on an impressive sequence of large-*N* studies, the literature on collective narcissism shows, among other things, that it is likely to produce out-group negativity (Golec de Zavala et al. 2009; Golec de Zavala 2011) and a biased and selective construction of the in-group's past, picturing it as glorious, rejecting collective responsibility for crimes perpetrated by the in-group against another group (Golec de Zavala et al. 2019, 54).

For the sake of conceptional clarity, let us separate collective narcissism from two other, related concepts: nationalism and "genuine" in-group satisfaction. Collective narcissism and nationalism have in common the belief that one's own nation is better than others (Golec de Zavala and Keenan 2020). But whereas nationalists justify intergroup hostility as a means of achieving national supremacy, collective narcissists justify intergroup hostility as a means of achieving appropriate recognition for the in-group. Therefore, although "nationalistic hostility is actively aggressive and openly dominant, collective narcissistic hostility is subjectively defensive, as it is motivated by the desire to protect the ingroup's image and assert the recognition that is due to the ingroup. Thus, collective narcissists emphasize the need to assert appropriate recognition for the ingroup's exceptionality rather than the ingroup's dominance" (Golec de Zavala et al. 2019). A further difference is that when the overlap between nationalism and national collective narcissism was controlled in the studies, collective narcissism, not nationalism, was related to hypersensitivity to intergroup threat and retaliatory hostility (Golec de Zavala et al. 2016). Nationalism was also shown to be negatively correlated with internationalism and positively related to militarism (Li and Brewer 2004). Thus, as a small and internationally active nation without the ends and means to aspire to dominance, Hungarian decision makers should be much more prone to evince collective narcissism than nationalism (see also Cichocka and Cislak 2020).

Further emphasizing this point, Golec de Zavala and Keenan (2020) show that collective narcissism may inspire nationalism only when the nation is powerful enough to aspire to a dominant international position—which Hungary clearly is not. By eschewing irredentism, supporting the EU accession of all of the neighboring states and, generally, relying on concepts accepted in Western Europe such as regionalism, devolution, and subsidiarity (Csergo and Goldgeier 2004, 27), the various Hungarian governments since 1990 made it clear that they do not strive for regional dominance or supremacy through their kin-state policy. Thus, I agree with Pogonyi that although kin-state policy is a major strategic and moral objective, the Hungarian governments did not "go so far in kin-state activism as to harm Hungary's geopolitical interests" (Pogonyi 2017, 4). This

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assessment does not seek to challenge the observation that, through financial and other means, its kin-state policy has led to a more accentuated influence of Hungary in, for example, Romania (Kiss et al. 2018).

Although collective narcissism and in-group satisfaction also overlap, they make different predictions for intergroup relations. Collective narcissism with in-group satisfaction partialed out "can be interpreted as group-based entitlement without the comfort of belonging to a valued ingroup. Its focus is on the demand for privileged treatment and a concern about loss of the ingroup's external recognition. Collective narcissism is associated with prejudice, intergroup hostility, revengefulness, and retaliatory aggression… . In contrast, ingroup satisfaction with collective narcissism partialled out can be interpreted as secure ingroup positivity, independently of the need to be recognized and admired by others" (Guerra et al. 2022, 418). As a consequence, collective narcissism and in-group satisfaction are associated with distinct emotional profiles: whereas the former is associated with negative emotionality, the latter is related to self-transcendent emotions such as gratitude and compassion (Golec de Zavala et al. 2019).

How can we connect emotions found in the texts, on one hand, and collective narcissism on the other? Along with certain dispositions and corresponding actions tendencies, narcissists (individual or collective) also tend to show distinctive emotions. Based on the sizeable literature on collective narcissism, the most important signs for the purposes of this study are the presence (or absence) of following emotions and resulting action tendencies:

- **anger:** (or rage). Anger is central to both individual and collective narcissism (Post 1993, 114; Pincus and Roche 2011, 35; Ettensohn 2016, 74; Golec de Zavala et al. 2019). Collective narcissists are expected to be particularly prone to interpreting the actions of others as signs of disrespect or criticism of an in-group and to react aggressively (Golec de Zavala et al. 2009).
- **Resentment:** that privileged (rather than fair) treatment is not granted to the in-group (de Zavala et al. 2019). Resenting parties tend to feel a particular need to express, propagate, and justify their negative views about others (Wolf 2018).
- **(self-centered) pride:** the idealization and perceived superiority of the national in-group and a tendency to assert that the in-group has exceptional characteristics (Golec de Zavala et al. 2019). As a consequence, collective narcissists are very much invested in their own nation's achievements, to the extent that common, international (for example, Hungarian-Slovak) successes are marginalized.
- **fear:** collective narcissism is associated with a chronic conviction that others threaten the in-group (Cichocka 2016). Because narcissistic in-group identification stimulates increased perception of threats in intergroup contexts, this will lead to fear (Górska et al. 2020).
- collective narcissism is uniquely related to negative emotionality (Golec de Zavala et al. 2019; Guerra et al. 2022). We therefore should not find many manifestations of positive emotions such as **gratitude**, **empathy** (Górska et al. 2020) or **trust** (Cichocka 2016) in the sources.

One limitation of this article is, that for the sake of brevity, it assumes temporally constant neighbors and does not distinguish between, for example, the Radicova (2010–12), Fico (2012–18), Pellegrini (2018–20), and Matovic (2020–21) governments of Slovakia.[1] The article also cannot compare present emotional regimes with that of the pre-2010 governments because of lack of information: maybe Hungarian kin-state policy has always had a narcissistic basis, we just don't know. It also bears repeating that I do not claim that emotions have taken over Hungary's kin-state policy: certainly, political, economic, and other interests play an important part.

Methodology

To establish the emotional foundations of the the kin-state policy of Fidesz governments, I look at four different sources. The first consists of only two documents: the official Strategy of the so-called

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Hungarian "nation policy."[2] of the Fidesz government dating back from 2011 but still in force (Közigazgatási és Igazságügyi Minisztérium 2011) and a document on how to implement the Strategy from the administrative side (Közigazgatási és Igazságügyi Minisztérium 2013). Second, I looked at the official closing statements of the annual Hungarian Standing Conference (MÁÉRT) since 2010: 11 statements all in all. (MÁÉRT is the official meeting between the Hungarian government, Hungarian parliamentary parties and the leaders of minority Hungarian political organizations abroad, a yearly highlight of Hungarian kin-state policy.) Third, I analyzed four of the speeches of prime minister Orbán Viktor at the MÁÉRT summits, where he is wont to give a rather expansive overview on current European, regional, and domestic affairs. (Only these four Orbán speeches were publicly available.) Last, I included the right-wing press in form of the pro-government daily *Magyar Nemzet*/*Magyar Idők*.[3] I think that including this nonofficial source enriches our understanding because (a) politicians might be more openly showing their emotions in an interview setting (as opposed to a formal speech or a policy document) and (b) given the close ties between *Magyar Nemzet* and Fidesz, even news items not directly reflecting the statements of politicians offer a glimpse of the thought process of the Hungarian right in general (on the strong ties between Fidesz and media, see Griffen 2020). I took three random periodical snapshots: the whole periods of September from the years 2010, 2015, and 2020, and analyzed all news items, which dealt with the Hungarian minorities living abroad. For the sake of brevity, this article does not look at all of Hungary's neighbors, only those with a significant (more than hundred thousand) Hungarian minority—Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania, and Serbia.

To establish which emotions dominate in Hungary's kin-state policy, I use emotion discourse analysis. Emotion discourse is concerned with "how actors talk about emotions and how they employ emotion categories when talking about subjects, events, or social relations" (Koschut 2018, 277). In mapping the verbal expression of emotions in the text, I apply the three-tiered methodology of Koschut (2018, 283–85). First, I look at emotion terms that convey emotional meaning explicitly by establishing a direct reference to an emotional feeling through an emotional term. Words such as *fear*, *pride*, *love*, *joy*, *to condemn*, *to protest*, or *shocking* refer directly to emotions. Second, emotions may be communicated implicitly through connotations. Such affectively loaded words and expressions include *partner*, *disenfranchisement*, *battle-hardened*, *significant results*, or *appreciate.* Third, a typical characteristic of affective language is that it is highly figurative. "Figures of speech, particularly metaphors, comparisons, and analogies, play an important role in encoding emotional expressions" (Koschut, 2018, 285). Complementing this three-tiered methodological approach, I also take up Koschut's (2018) suggestions to "read the silence," by pointing out which emotions are avoided and toward which subjects.

For an example of my reading of the texts to establish the most salient emotions, here is a short excerpt from one of the MÁÉRT (2010) declarations:

> MÁÉRT notes with *contentment*
> [expression of moderate, non-intense joy]
> that the new Slovak government is free of nationalism, *but*
> [qualification of previous joy]
> expresses its *regret*
> [expression of sadness]
> that until now the new coalition government has not done the necessary steps to restore *trust.*
> [expression of lack of trust, for which the Slovakian side is entirely responsible]
> MÁÉRT members *condemn*
> [expression of anger]
> the *discriminative*
> [further expression of intense anger]
> Slovak state language law because of its *fear-inducing* spirit.

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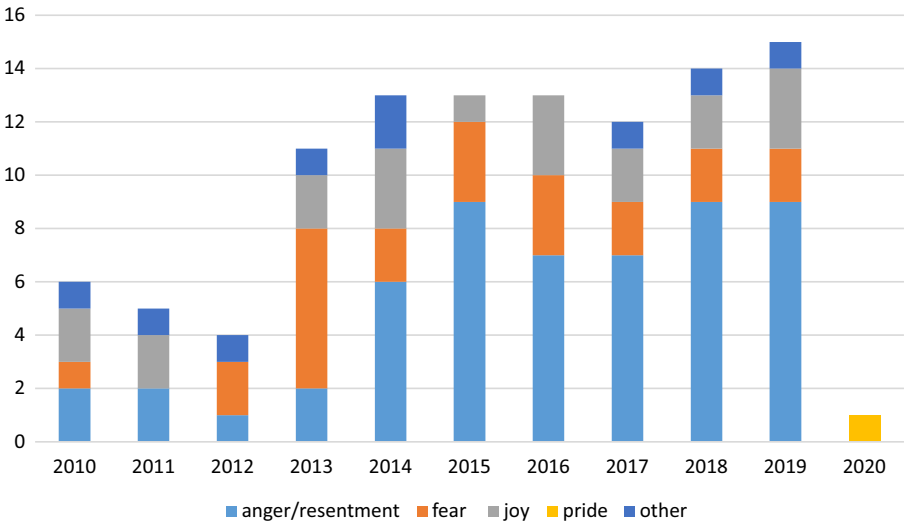

Figure 1. Emotions in MÁÉRT declarations 2010–2020.

> [expression of fear as far as the Hungarian minority in Slovakia is concerned, triggering further anger from the MÁÉRT representatives].
> They note that despite the planned amendments, the law *still*
> [hint of possible joy, but immediately qualified by passive-aggressive anger]
> contains provisions and *sanctions*
> [negative connotation, leading to anger]
> which *limit*
> [negative connotation, leading to the expression of further anger]
> the use of the Hungarian language

Figure 1 offers a snapshot of the quantified results.[4] Here, the emotions expressed in the yearly MÁÉRT declarations are shown, more precisely, the number of individual text snippets that spoke of anger, fear, joy, or self-centred pride. Overall, anger has been expressed 54 different times, fear 23, and joy 20 times. (Anger and resentment were at times very hard to tell apart, so they were grouped them together.) As can be seen, the emotional content of the speeches grew significantly after 2013. Also, starting with 2014, anger started to take up around two-thirds of all expressed emotions, with fear and joy mostly making up the rest. To finish enumerating the list of emotions raised in the previous section, self-centred pride was expressed once, empathy four times, whereas gratitude and trust not once. (For methodological clarity, all the emotions in the MÁÉRT declarations that I have found, not just hand-picked ones, are on the chart.)

Emotions in Hungary's Kin-State Policy: A General Overview

The most frequent, and thus most defining, emotion in the sources is anger. Less often, anger is directed against the Hungarian opposition: the socialist-liberal government before 2010 was against the nation (traitorous; Orbán 2010, 2015). Second in line in the targets of government anger is the European Union because the EU is not effective in guaranteeing that the rights of the Hungarian minorities are respected: "The rules of the EU concerning minority rights are dead letters," declared Orbán in strong terms (Orbán 2016). As far as the Strategy of the government is concerned, the EU membership of the region has admittedly brought "positive changes," but it also points out that there is still no coherent EU-wide policy protecting the rights of the minorities. Betraying anger, the

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Strategy summarizes that "apart from general … declarations, there is no determined and unified will to protect the rights of the minorities" (Közigazgatási és Igazságügyi Minisztérium 2011, 9).

But the most frequent targets of anger are the neighboring countries with large Hungarian minorities: Romania, Ukraine, and to a slightly lesser degree, Slovakia. (As we will see, emotions toward Serbia are much more positive.) The reason for this anger is that, according to the Strategy, Hungarian minorities are in a disadvantageous position. They are not considered equal by their host countries. They have a legal disadvantage. In certain countries, the situation of the Hungarians worsened significantly after EU accession, which is "completely against the values of the EU." Because of these developments, the Hungarian governments "have been forced to constantly react to the anti-minority policy of the neighbouring states" (Közigazgatási és Igazságügyi Minisztérium 2011, 8–10).

Anger toward the neighbors (bar Serbia) is fueled by the dominant frame of fighting: for the government and media, it is unquestionable that the Hungarian minorities abroad have to fight for their survival. "It is good to see so many battle-hardened veterans," said Orbán, looking at the political and cultural representatives of the Hungarian minorities abroad in the room where MÁÉRT was held (Orbán 2015). We "fight for the long-term accreditation" of the János Selye University (a Hungarian-language university in Slovakia), said Orbán in 2015 (Orbán 2015). Ahead of the 2020 Romanian local elections, a political analyst quoted in *Magyar Nemzet* dubbed the ethnically mixed towns of Szatmárnémeti/Satu Mare and Marosvásárhely/Târgu Mureş "frontline cities," as Hungarian candidates had a legitimate chance to win there (Pataky 2020).

This frame of fighting is connected to the overarching emotional disposition disseminated by the Hungarian government, which is collective narcissism. As László has pointed out, this has deep roots in the Hungarian literature, schoolbooks and movies: "The Hungarian national history is represented in collective memory as a continuous struggle against great powers and neighbouring peoples in which triumphant victories are repeatedly followed by defeats and enduring subjugation" (2014, 110). I argue that this constant representation of the Hungarian minorities as being involved in a fight is narcissistic for two reasons. You attack somebody if he/she has something valuable and/or if she/he is forceful and intimidating. Being attacked from the outside proves that being Hungarian is valuable (because others want to take something away from them) and that Hungarians are forceful and intimidating (you only attack somebody who is seen as a threat). The frame of fighting and struggle thus satisfies a deep psychological need of the narcissist: the need to feel important and significant (Ettensohn 2016, 8).

Resentment is also frequently observed. As noted previously, resentment is felt when privileged (rather than fair) treatment is not granted to the in-group. Privileged treatment in the case of the Hungarian minorities would be territorial autonomy—a nonobligatory possibility for states according to Recommendation 1201 of the Council of Europe (Tóth 2014). In fact, the granting of autonomy was a long-standing priority of Hungary's kin-state policy well before 2010 (Csizmadia 2020). According to the Strategy, it still is one of the main goals (Közigazgatási és Igazságügyi Minisztérium, 2011, 20). MÁÉRT declarations also repeatedly emphasize the need to grant autonomy because this would most securely guarantee that Hungarians "can live a full life as Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin" (MÁÉRT 2010, 1). The need for autonomy has been stressed in further declarations (MÁÉRT 2013, 2; 2014, 2) as well by government officials (*Magyar Idők* 2015b). Serbia is the only country toward which Hungarian kin-state policy only seldomly expresses resentment. I think this is not a coincidence: it is the only neighboring states that grant privileged treatment—that is, autonomy to the Vojvodina region populated by Hungarians, who make up about 13% of the area.

As for pride, there is much to be proud about, according to the sources, it's just that it is never the neighboring other that triggers this emotion. Instead, it is the government's own initiatives, the contribution of the Hungarian minority, or Hungary's 1,000-year-old history that sparks pride (Közigazgatási és Igazságügyi Minisztérium 2011, 13). The only exception is once again Serbia: Orbán repeatedly highlighted the cooperation with Belgrade as exemplary (Orbán 2018). As far as

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the other countries are concerned, this self-centredness leaves no room for pride to be expressed over common successes and joint projects, such as Hungarian-language universities in the neighboring countries. Instead, pride is self-centered: in a narcissistic register *par excellence*, the 2020 MÁÉRT declaration states that "no other nation would have survived the last hundred years" (MÁÉRT 2020, 1). Similarly, Orbán compared other nations with Hungarians in 2015, with predictable results: "There is probably no other nation in Europe whose representatives or fighters would have had to stand strong on so many 'frontlines', as Hungarians do" (Orbán 2015). The Hungarian nation has every right to think of himself as a great nation and can expect to be called as such (Orbán 2010).

Fourth, fear. Fear is necessitated by the perception that Hungarian minorities are under threat of losing their identity—that is, of assimilation. The Strategy frames the whole kin-state policy as a reaction to this threat. The list of concerns is long: conscious efforts at assimilation (the term is mentioned 22 times), increase in the number of mixed marriages, reduction in the number of Hungarian children attending Hungarian-languages kindergartens or schools, a "loss in positions" for Hungarians in the cities, lack of autonomy, and lack of European or international pressure. Fear is also expressed 23 separate times in the MÁÉRT declarations. Concern is mostly voiced over discriminative policies of the neighbors, such as the curtailing of the use of the Hungarian languages (MÁÉRT 2017, 3). In a similar vein, an open letter in *Magyar Nemzet* by a minority rights activists describes Hungarian in Romania as a "frightened" community (*Magyar Nemzet* 2020).

As for positive emotions, I searched for gratitude, empathy, and trust. Gratitude is not once expressed in the MÁÉRT declarations and only seldomly in the other sources. One example is an Orbán speech, where he highlights Serbia's accommodating approach to the Hungarian minority (Orbán 2018). Empathy, in the sense of a willingness "to recognize or identify with the feelings and needs of others" (Reynolds and Lejuez 2011, 18) is expressed only a handful of times. And trust is only ever expressed in the form of distrust (Orbán 2018).

At the end of this overview, it perhaps bears emphasizing that I basically mentioned all the examples of positive emotions toward the neighboring countries. The previous paragraph was not a selection: it included almost all there is in the sources, which make up a total of about 75,000 words. As we will see in more detail below, positive emotions toward Ukraine were basically nonexistent even before the 2022 war or the 2017 education law. Apart from a very small number of occasions, the same is true of Slovakia and Romania—trust, empathy, the celebration of common successes, the pursuit of common interests, the acknowledgement of the positive contributions of these states to the well-being of their Hungarian citizens—all these are almost nonexistent. Serbia is the only neighbor toward whom positive emotions clearly outweigh others, as Belgrade was the only country ready to grant autonomy—that is, privileged status to the region where Hungarians live. To read only what can be read would only be half of the story. In our case, at least as important is to point out the silence.

Emotions in Hungary's Kin-State Policy: Country-by-Country

Romania

Taking a country-by-country look and starting with Romania, positive emotions are expressed only two times, as when the Romanian Parliament designated November 13 the Day of the Hungarian Language (MÁÉRT 2015, 3). Apart from that, anger dominates all the MÁÉRT declarations. The document identifies "hate speech" against Hungarians, "arbitrariness of Romanian authorities" against RMDSZ[5] politicians, "repressive measures" targeting the religious and cultural life of Hungarians in Romania, and (using a terminology usually reserved for Communist-era persecutions) "show trials" against two nationalist Szekler activists accused of terrorism. The declarations also emphasize their support for those who are "innocently persecuted." These aforementioned passages are identically repeated in all MÁÉRT declarations between 2016 and 2019 (MÁÉRT 2016,

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2–3; 2017, 3; 2018, 4; 2019, 3). Overall, Romania is seen as a discriminating country, with concomitant anger from the Hungarian side. In the press, positive emotions such as empathy were to be observed initially after 2010: Highlighting togetherness and commonalities, Foreign Minister Martonyi János visited Bucharest in 2010, emphasizing common interests, with *Magyar Nemzet* quoting Hungarian poet Ady Endre: "Single the voice of Olt[6] and Danube" (2010). Yet by 2015, anger took center stage. Reacting to comments of Romanian prime minister Victor Ponta that the closing of borders by Hungary due to the migration crisis was an "autistic and unacceptable act," Hungarian foreign minister Szijjártó Péter shot back: "The hostile behaviour and the lies of the Romanian politicians have made cooperation completely impossible." His state secretary, Magyar Levente added that Ponta, who was under investigation for corruption at the time, "tries to save his questionable political and personal ethical integrity by anti-Hungarian lyings" (*Magyar Idők* 2015a). Even the much-publicized efforts of the Romanian National Anticorruption Directorate (DNA) to fight corruption have been summarily dismissed as an anti-Hungarian campaign because the DNA also targeted ethnic Hungarian politicians (Orbán 2016).

Slovakia

Slovakia fares slightly better. Positive emotions were expressed by Orbán because of strong economic cooperation and their common push to take the EU refugee quota system to the European Court of Justice (Orbán 2015). The main bone of contention between Budapest and Bratislava arose after the Hungarian Parliament passed a law in 2010 that allowed any ethnic Hungarian living abroad to seek Hungarian citizenship. In response, the Slovak Parliament limited dual citizenship by barring Slovak citizenship for anyone who acquired foreign citizenship by an act of will. This is "unacceptable" according to the MÁÉRT declaration of 2011 (MÁÉRT 2011, 2). Other declarations condemned the 2009 language law as "angst-inducing" and "discriminatory" (MÁÉRT 2010, 1), fretted that a new education law would lead to "the widespread closing of Hungarian schools" (MÁÉRT 2013, 3), and criticized discriminatory tendencies against Hungarian language programs by the Slovak media law (MÁÉRT 2015, 4).

Serbia

Serbia is certainly in an emotional league of its own, most probably because it is the only neighboring country that has granted territorial autonomy to the territory (Vajdaság/Vojvodina) where the majority of Hungarians live. Even though it is not the Hungarian community per se that has autonomy, rather the whole territorial region of Vojvodina, this preferential treatment validates the main thrust of Hungary's kin-state policy since 1990, which, as already indicated, has always centred on the claim that the most effective solution to the grievances of ethnic minorities in Central and Eastern Europe is to grant territorial autonomy to ethnically mixed regions. "I feel our success in building Serb-Hungarian relations is outstanding," Orbán said in 2018 (Orbán 2018). The cooperation is "exemplary," according to the 2017 MÁÉRT declaration (MÁÉRT 2017, 5). Empathy was highlighted when a joint commemoration of the Hungarian and Serb victims of the Second World War was attended by both the Serb and Hungarian presidents in 2013 (MÁÉRT 2013, 4). Instead of anger, pride and happiness are the dominant emotions: "We would be very happy if the Serb legal regulations were common in the whole of the Carpathian Basin," enthused Orbán in 2018 (Orbán 2018).

Hungarian–Ukrainian Relations through the Lens of Emotions

This section seeks to explain the peculiar Hungarian-Ukrainian relations since 2010 in general and Hungary's outlier behavior toward Kyiv since the outbreak of the war in February 2022, in particular by looking at how the structure of feelings has affected actual Hungarian foreign policy,

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which thus deviated from those of all the other countries in the region. It shows that utility-maximizing rational considerations alone cannot account for the course Budapest has taken and that it is collective narcissism of the Hungarian governments that explains its foreign policy.

Before 2014, relations between the two countries were fairly harmonious (Fedinec 2012). Hungary was a steadfast supporter of Ukraine's territorial integrity: Ukraine's independence is one of the "cornerstones" of Hungary's foreign policy, said Fidesz MP Németh Zsolt in 2013 in the Hungarian Parliament, where he also reaffirmed his government's support for the signing of the association treaty between the EU and Ukraine (Országgyűlés 2013). Yet already at that stage, several controversial and unresolved issues were complicating the picture, such as Ukraine's opposition to dual citizenship or an election law, which made it more difficult for the Hungarian community to send an MP to the parliament in Kyiv (Fedinec 2012, 117–18).

In 2014, when Russia attacked Ukraine, these tensions were reflected by the subsequent MÁÉRT declarations, which offered only minimal solidarity or empathy: Without mentioning Russia, the 2014 declaration emphasized the need to resolve "the Ukrainian political situation peacefully" (MÁÉRT 2014, 4). The declaration of 2015 noted in a passive-aggressive manner that "we hope that in Ukraine peace will prevail and that it will become a democratic, lawful country" where the rights of the minorities are extensively guaranteed (MÁÉRT 2015, 1). In the midst of Ukraine's armed struggle against Russian-fueled secessionist tendencies in the Donbas region, Orbán suggested that, although "they have our compassion," Ukraine cannot be stable or democratic as long as it is not giving its minorities "what is their due: dual citizenship, collective … rights and autonomy" (Népszava 2014, 4).

Anger irrevocably came to the fore after a controversial Ukrainian education law of 2017 that limited the language rights of the Hungarian (and other) minorities. Kyiv does not try to fix the problems, to the contrary: Ever new regulations have made the situation worse and worse, complained Orbán in 2018, accusing his Ukrainian counterparts of constant lying: "on Monday, we agree on something and on Tuesday they say we haven't agreed on anything." This unreliability was a new level even for him, Orbán added, "although I have often worked with Romanians before" (Orbán 2018). Anger remained the dominant emotion until the war in 2022: MÁÉRT is "shocked" by the media campaign that labels Hungarians as the enemy of Ukraine and "demands" its immediate stop; the "baseless harassment" of Ukrainian authorities must cease forthwith, just like "efforts at assimilation" (MÁÉRT 2018, 1; 2019, 6). Since 2017, Hungary has repeatedly blocked the high-level cooperation between Ukraine and NATO, not even lifting it after the attack of Russia. Fear for the Hungarian minority was also present: after a raid on the home of a Hungarian minority leader by the security service of Ukraine, Foreign Minister Szijjártó said that Hungarians in Ukraine were "under attack" (kormány.hu 2020).

Such was the structure of Hungarian feelings toward Kyiv when Russia resumed its war in 2022 and all-out attacked Ukraine. This second part of the war that had started in 2014 has not led to a change in the emotions of Fidesz decision makers toward Ukraine. Over the first three months of the war, Hungary condemned the Russian aggression, supported the first five rounds of EU sanction (but not the sixth on the oil embargo, despite significant outside pressure) and welcomed 700,000 refugees from Ukraine. Yet unlike its Visegrád partners, the Baltic countries or, in fact, most of the EU/NATO countries, it did not send military equipment to the Ukraine, purportedly so as not to endanger Hungarians living in Ukraine. It was also one of two EU countries not to expel Russian diplomats (Körömi 2022). After the Ukrainian PM criticized Hungary for this and his close ties to Russia, Orbán labeled Volodymyr Zelensky his "opponent," and Foreign Minister Szijjártó said "it is time Ukraine's leadership stops offending Hungary" (Infostart 2022). Szijjártó also accused Ukraine's Foreign Minister of trying to influence the elections in Hungary based solely on the (unproven) assertion that he was in contact with the Hungarian opposition (Mrav 2022).

Hungary's peculiar foreign policy toward Ukraine cannot be explained by rational factors alone. Yes, Hungary has a sizeable minority in Ukraine, and Budapest does not want to threaten them by overexposing itself by sending weapons. Yet other countries that also have significant minorities in

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Ukraine—Poland, Romania or Greece—have sent lethal or nonlethal military equipment (Gedeon 2022). Hungary is highly dependent on Russian energy imports, but so are other countries in the region. Hungary and Russia had strong political and economic relations prior to the war, but Budapest was not alone in this: Austria also had "cozy ties" (*The Economist* 2022), and Italy and Russia were reportedly caught up in a "love affair" (Roberts 2022). In geopolitical terms, Hungary is one of the most affected countries: it is among the few EU member states that shares a border with Ukraine. In May 2022, Russia bombed the village Volovets, barely 110 kilometers from the Hungarian border. Yet in the eyes of Hungarian decision makers, the level of threat emanating from Russia does not necessitate sending weapons to Ukraine. Such a relaxed view on the Russian war could have been expected from Spain and Portugal, yet both countries have sent weapons, whereas Hungary has not. Clearly, the geographical location, energy dependency, minority community considerations or ties to Russia cannot explain the variation in Hungary's foreign policy toward Ukraine when compared with other states.

Instead, I propose that it is the collective narcissistic disposition of the decision makers that explains Hungary's odd behavior. All the signs of this disposition can be observed in Hungarian-Ukrainian relations:

- anger as the dominant emotion;
- the frame of fighting: Zelensky as "opponent"; Hungarians in Ukraine "under attack";
- fear: Hungarian minority threatened and under attack;
- self-centeredness, as Budapest sees the war primarily through the prism of the Hungarians in Ukraine;
- hostility and out-group negativity toward Ukraine for, supposedly, not treating the Hungarian minority well and for allegedly supporting the opposition; and
- a total lack of positive emotions, such as empathy or trust.

The real-life consequences of collective narcissism are manifold. Based on this case study on Hungarian-Ukrainian relations, I can draw some cautious preliminary conclusions. First, a government with such a disposition is less able to feel and express solidarity and empathy to a government in need than others. Consequently, it will offer less support. To the extent that it has veto power, a collective narcissistic government will also make it harder for international organizations like the EU to reach common decisions. One might also speculate that its strategic thinking will be more self-centered and self-confident than those of other states, making it less able to identify outside threats. Perhaps it will be also more ready and able to tolerate outside pressure in the form of shaming than other countries, being assured of its own virtue and righteousness.

Conclusion: Collective Narcissism in Hungary's Kin-State Policy and its Consequences

Having reviewed the sources, I conclude that based on the expressed emotions it is collective narcissism, and not nationalism or in-group satisfaction, which underlies Hungary's kin-state policy since 2010. In line with the literature, anger is the dominant emotion, along with feelings of resentment, self-centered pride, and fear. Anger is necessitated by the frequent frame of fighting: for the Fidesz decision makers, it is unquestionable that Hungarian minorities abroad have to fight every day just to stay alive. This frame flows straight from the immensely popular notion that Hungarian history is nothing but a continuous struggle against great powers and neighboring peoples. I argued that this notion is in itself narcissistic: he who is attacked is both valuable and intimidating.

But narcissism as the emotional basis of Hungary's kin-state policy does not stop here. Further proof is the absence of positive emotions such as trust or empathy (apart from Serbia, which was ready to grant privileged treatment to Hungarians, thus fulfilling one of the needs of collective narcissists). I should also highlight a curious linkage in the documents, which further underlines the

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dominance of collective narcissism among the decision makers. This idea links the improvement of the situation of Hungarian minorities living abroad to the economic and political performance of Hungary proper. The situation of the Hungarian minorities can only be improved if Hungary proper is politically and economically successful: "Only a strong Hungary can be the basis for a successful nation policy" (Közigazgatási és Igazságügyi Minisztérium 2011, 13; see also Orbán 2015). Apparently, the "only way" to stop assimilation and to have thriving Hungarian communities is if Hungary "increases its regional role" (Közigazgatási és Igazságügyi Minisztérium 2011, 39).

How can one account for the spatial and temporal variation in the emotions of Fidesz politicians toward the neighboring countries when I collective narcissism informed Hungary' kin-state policy since 2010? The introduction pointed out that emotions are certainly only one component in the decision-making process. Thus, the overall minority-right situation of the Hungarian community in the given country certainly plays a part in how that country is seen by Fidesz decision makers. Serbia is indicative in this respect. One could argue that by giving territorial autonomy to the Vojvodina/Vajdaság region, Belgrade has not only objectively improved the minority-rights situation of the Hungarians there but also acknowledged the exceptionality of them in the sense that Hungarians have been given special treatment and received positive discrimination. As we have seen, in-group exceptionality is central to collective narcissism. On the other end of the spectrum, Ukraine has not only introduced legislations, especially in the years since 2017, which had significantly curtailed the rights of minorities. Kyiv also failed to acknowledge the exceptionality of Hungarians by not granting autonomy to Transcarpathia, against the express wishes of Orbán. Slovakia and Romania fall somewhere in between the end points of this spectrum.

As for temporal variation, Figure 1 indicated how emotions connected to collective narcissism, already dominating in 2010, strengthened even more after 2014. Why? I do not have a definitive answer yet, but based on research on how Fidesz decision makers related emotionally to Germany since 1990, I propose the idea of the nonreversible quality of collective narcissism (Hettyey forthcoming). Once a tipping point has been reached, where a serious disagreement damages the relationship between two countries, the emotional perception of the collectively narcissist side toward the other country will not improve even after that disagreement loses its salience. Things cannot get back to normal: a collectively narcissist leadership will not forget the sleight, even if the other side is, for example, being attacked by a vastly bigger neighbor.

What conclusions can we draw from Hungarian collective narcissism and how could further research contribute to better understand this phenomenon? Over and above rational explanations, I believe collective narcissism is a necessary element in explaining Hungary's kin-state policy in general and its peculiar foreign policy toward Ukraine in particular. Moving forward, similar studies tracking the emotions of decision makers in, say, the Visegrád countries could also show the presence or absence of collective narcissism and how this influences the foreign policies of these states. This is not only of academic interest: the presence of collective narcissism among Europe's foreign policy decision makers would make for a more conflictual and troubled coexistence in the EU and NATO. This is why we need to take nonrational approaches into account much more prominently than before.

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Notes

1 One might assume, for instance, that Fidesz would have a more positive attitude toward countries that were led by fellow, right-leaning governments, but our data is not fine grained enough to track eventual changes. However, the date that we do have does not suggest that this is the case, as the emotions were fairly homogenous over time.

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2 In the Hungarian political discourse, nemzetpolitika" (nation policy) is the most widely used term for kin-state policy.
3 After 1990, *Magyar Nemzet* was supportive of the right-wing governments, especially so after the 2010 elections that brought Fidesz to power. However, Fidesz financier and tycoon Simicska Lajos, who owned the newspaper, publicly turned against Orbán in early 2015, initiating an anti-Fidesz turn in the tone of *Magyar Nemzet*. To counter this, pro-Fidesz journalists founded *Magyar Idők* in 2015. By 2018, Simicska ran out of will and money and closed *Nemzet*. Following the closure of *Magyar Nemzet*, the owner of *Idők* bought the now-defunct newspaper and revived it with *Magyar Idők*'s journalists. Therefore, starting from February 6, 2019, *Magyar Idők* is no longer published.
4 Due to the COVID pandemic, no "classic" MÁÉRT summit was held in 2020, only an online gathering, which issued a short, merely half-page declaration.
5 RMDSZ (Romániai Magyar Demokrata Szövetség/Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania) is the greatest and most successful party representing the Hungarians in Romania.
6 The Olt being a river that originates in Transylvania and flows through the Carpathian Mountains to Wallachia, Romania.

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