

From Respect to Nazi Allusions: The Changing Emotional Climates of Fidesz Towards Germany after 1990

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Abstract: *This paper aims to enhance our understanding of the foreign policy of Hungary by looking at the emotional underpinnings of the relationship between Fidesz and Germany. Inspired by the 'emotional turn' in social sciences in general, and IR in particular, this paper charts the changing ways in which Fidesz politicians (both in government and opposition) have perceived Germany and German politics on an emotional level since 1990. We show how a mostly positive emotional climate before 2010 slowly turned into anger, culminating in repeated allusions to Germany's Nazi past. The main question is: how can we account for the fluctuations in the way Fidesz politicians have perceived Germany over the past three decades? While 'rational' policy disagreements have certainly played a part (i.e. on migration), they cannot explain on their own the ever intensifying anger on the part of Fidesz decision-makers, especially as the two countries are still close political and economic partners and share a wide range of common interests. Complementing rational approaches, we propose that 'collective narcissism' informs the general emotional disposition of key Fidesz figures since 2014, leading to a continuing estrangement between the successive Orbán governments and its German partners.*

Keywords: *Hungary, Germany, Fidesz, Orbán Viktor, collective narcissism*

I. Introduction

This paper aims to explain a particularly striking puzzle, namely the story of estrangement between two close allies and partners. On the one hand, Germany and Hungary have very close political, economic and cultural ties. The two

countries are EU and NATO allies. Germany is the biggest import and export partner for Hungary, and also the biggest investor in the country. German cultural influence is ever-present in Hungary. Vice versa, Hungary's role in the fall of the Berlin Wall is well-known and celebrated. The rather small country is also Germany's 14th biggest trade partner, set to overtake Russia for 13th place. In the 1990s, Hungarian president Árpád Göncz (1990–2000) went so far as to say that Hungary and Germany share a 'community of feelings' (quoted in Bilcik 2012: 164).

Yet over the last years, one could be forgiven for getting the impression that these two countries share an antagonistic enmity. From the migration crisis to rule-of-law issues in Hungary, political relations seem to be at rock bottom – on a rhetoric level, at any rate. Emblematic for this are repeated Nazi allusions of Fidesz politicians directed towards Germany and German politicians. These tensions have not gone unnoticed. A 2021 poll found that only 40% of Fidesz voters sympathised with Chancellor Merkel (Civitas Intézet 2021). (Meanwhile, Russian President Putin had a sympathy index of 61%.) On the other hand, only 29% of Germans thought that citizen rights were respected in Hungary (Nézőpont Intézet 2022).

To explain this discrepancy, we analyse successive Fidesz governments and their emotional climates towards Germany. The main research question is: how can we account for the fluctuations in the way Fidesz politicians have perceived Germany over the past three decades? Instead of using only tried-and-tested 'rationalist' approaches to answer this question, we will aim to complement them by integrating emotions into our analysis. As we will point out later, Hungary's current foreign policy is especially well-suited to be looked at through a psychology-oriented lens (and equally ill-suited to be explained purely by 'rational' cost-benefit approaches.) This paper claims that, based on the most frequently expressed emotions, it is collective narcissism which characterises the emotional climates of Fidesz' decision-makers after 2014 and explains the estrangement between the two countries. We base this claim on a wide range of sources which were analysed to aggregate their emotional content, to establish the prevailing emotional climates towards Germany. Specifically, we were looking at a group of Fidesz politicians, who, because of their bureaucratic position and authority, shape German-Hungarian relations to a large degree. In essence, we found that the emotional climate of Fidesz' decision-makers strongly resembles the emotional content of collective narcissism, but only since 2014. An important caveat applies: we attribute collective narcissism to a small group of Fidesz decision-makers, not to Fidesz voters or the Hungarian public in general. We also do not claim that Prime Minister Orbán (or any other decision-maker) is individually narcissistic.

The paper is structured as follows: after reviewing the literature and presenting our methodology, we go on to present our findings from the sources. Spe-

cifically, we are looking at parliamentary speeches and interviews of key Fidesz politicians concerning Germany over the last 32 years. In doing this, we aimed to establish what kind of emotional climates Fidesz politicians evinced when referring to Germany. In the fourth section, we offer three alternative explanations for the observed pattern of the change in emotional climates: (1) party politics, (2) policy disagreements and (3) the role of collective narcissism. We will find that a combination of the second and third explanation will be most convincing. A short conclusion sums up the findings.

One word of clarification. What do we mean when we say that the emotional climates of Fidesz politicians towards 'Germany' will be analysed? Given the political nature of the sources, this 'Germany' is mostly 'Germany as a political entity' in the widest sense. *Usually*, this version of Germany does not contain the totality of German society or culture. Instead, as expected, Fidesz politicians most typically express their emotions towards the German government of the day as well as the various German parties (or individual politicians thereof). Political issues such as migration, EU enlargement or economic policy are most often at the forefront: these are the topics which trigger positive or negative emotions. But, time and again, 'German' society or economy in their entirety are perceived and characterised. This is not surprising: obviously, it is impossible to completely separate the political system from the country it is governing.

II. Review of Literature and Methodology

German-Hungarian relations between 1990 and 2004 are relatively well researched (Hettyey – Rácz 2012; Bauer – Hettyey 2014). Publications analyse, among other things, the period of the regime change (Schmidt-Schweizer 2017), the relationship of the first democratic Hungarian government with Germany (Hettyey 2015), military cooperation (Marton – Wagner 2017), economic relations (Kőrösi 2009; Kőrösi 2014), German foreign direct investment (FDI) (Kondász – Engert 2004), Germany's role in establishing the chambers of commerce in Hungary (Zachar 2021) and cultural ties (Masát 2009). However, the period after 2004, and, especially, 2010, is much less well-researched. Cooperation in security and defence policy is fairly well-covered (Speck 2020; Etl – Csiki-Varga 2021) as well as some political aspects (Hettyey 2020). A recent in-depth article of investigative journalist Szabolcs Panyi offers an intriguing picture of day-to-day political relations (direkt36.hu 2020). But most of these contributions are focused on the description of the state of German-Hungarian relations and only rarely attempt to explain deeper causes and effects – and if they do, they mostly use rational approaches. This article aims to fill this gap in the literature by including emotions.

Puzzlingly, the role of emotions is still a relatively under-researched subject as far as the foreign policy of the Central European countries is concerned (but

see Eberle – Daniel 2022). This is especially odd in the light of the important role populist parties play in many countries of the region. Given that, increasingly, ‘the rise of emotional, identity-based politics is replacing the old norms of rational, analytical, and pragmatic decision making’, we argue that it is essential to integrate emotions into the explanations of the foreign policies of populist states (Forgas – Crano, 2021: 2). Populism and collective narcissism are intimately connected: voting behaviour for populist politicians and parties suggests that collective narcissist belief lies at the core of populist rhetoric. For example, American collective narcissism was the second, after partisanship, strongest correlate of voting for Donald Trump in the 2016 US presidential election, more important than factors such as economic dissatisfaction, authoritarianism, sexism or racial resentment (Golec de Zavala et al. 2019: 55). Collective narcissism also plays an important role in explaining the support for populism in Hungary (Forgas – Lantos 2021: 237) and Poland (Marchlewska et al. 2017). As can be seen, the literature has already provided first results as far as the effect of collective narcissism is concerned. However, these contributions almost exclusively focus on domestic developments, and have not been connected to foreign policy, as political scientists have not yet picked up on this contribution of social psychology. In giving an emotion-based explanation of the foreign policy of a populist party, our paper is one step in this direction, and thus may be of interest beyond Hungary and the Central European region.

This paper is based on two types of sources. The first are the verbatim minutes of the Hungarian National Assembly (Országgyűlési Napló). As part of a larger project, we have tracked down and analysed every plenary session speech since 1990 of the following Fidesz MPs in search of statements on foreign policy in the widest sense – around 550 speeches, ranging from a paragraph to ten

Table 1: The sample of Fidesz MPs

1990–94	1994–98	1998–2002	2002–06
Orbán Viktor, Németh Zsolt, Szájer József, Hegedűs István (4)	Orbán Viktor, Németh Zsolt, Szájer József, Kövér László, Rockenbauer Zoltán, Wachsler Tamás (6)	Orbán Viktor, Németh Zsolt, Szájer József, Balla Mihály, Búsi Lajos (5)	Orbán Viktor, Németh Zsolt, Kövér László, Potápi Árpád, Áder János, Hörcsik Richárd, Gyürk András (2002–04), Firtl Mátyás (2004–06) (8)
2006–10	2010–14	2014–18	2018–22
Orbán Viktor, Németh Zsolt, Hörcsik Richárd, Navracsics Tibor, Potápi Árpád, Balla Mihály, Kelemen András, Gógl Árpád (8)	Orbán Viktor, Németh Zsolt, Hörcsik Richárd, Balla Mihály, Nagy Gábor Tamás (5)	Orbán Viktor, Németh Zsolt, Szijjártó Péter, Gulyás Gergely, Balla Mihály, Csenger-Zalán Zsolt (7)	Orbán Viktor, Németh Zsolt, Szijjártó Péter, Gulyás Gergely, Balla Mihály, Csenger-Zalán Zsolt, Zsigmond Barna Pál (7)

pages in length (see Table 1). Out of these, we have zoomed in on speeches on Germany, which expressed discernible emotions – we found 53 of them. Some speeches deal in their entirety with Germany, but more often it is just one topic amongst many.

The leader of the party and prime minister (1998–2002, 2010–2022) Viktor Orbán was included for every legislative period, as well as key foreign policy expert Zsolt Németh, who was, among other things, state secretary of the ministry of foreign affairs, MEP and is currently chairman of the foreign affairs committee (FAC) of the National Assembly. Among the Fidesz foreign ministers, only Péter Szijjártó (2014–2022) is included, because his predecessor, János Martonyi (1998–2002; 2010–14) was not a member of Fidesz. Chairmen of the parliamentary group of Fidesz such as László Kövér and József Szájer are also included, as well as many Fidesz members of the FAC over the years – some of them backbenchers.

The second group of sources were statements in the media from Fidesz politicians on Germany. The backbone of these sources was interviews of the aforementioned Fidesz politicians in two major Hungarian daily newspapers. To give a balanced picture, we included *Magyar Nemzet*, a right-leaning paper and *Népszabadság*, a left-leaning daily. The time period is 1990–2022 for *Nemzet* and 1990–2016 for *Népszabadság*, which was closed that year. Unfortunately, Fidesz politicians have basically not given interviews to the last remaining left-leaning daily, *Népszava*, nor to other left-leaning newspapers since that. However, this unfortunate situation has not distorted the data to a large degree, as we have found only eight relevant interviews anyway in *Népszabadság* or *Magyar Nemzet*. In addition to these interviews, we also use other media sources and also lean on the existing secondary scholarly literature on German-Hungarian relations.

Having parsed the pieces on Germany, we then proceeded to identify passages that show emotions. Why are emotions important? We strongly believe in the need to perceive and assess politicians as humans, with their own personalities, psychologies, wants and needs. This means rejecting the age-old mind-body dualism, or the artificial contrast between *ratio* and *emotion* (Plamper 2015: 17–19), according to which emotions are associated with irrational behaviour whereas the behaviour of states is 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 conceptualisations on their head, one can even go so far as to say that ‘ignoring the emotional attributes of a decision is irrational’ (Bleiker – Hutchison 2008: 121; also Mercer 2005).

The integration of emotions is all the more necessary for the Hungarian case for two reasons. The first one, as already indicated, is the populist nature of Hungary’s political system. In order to understand the foreign (and domestic) policies of these states, it is essential to integrate the role of emotions. By do-

ing this, our paper aims to be a step in the direction of better understanding not only Hungary under the Orbán governments, but also the foreign policies of populist parties in general. Secondly, it is no secret that Orbán has been very successful in eliminating veto players from the decision-making process, giving his person (and his small group of trusted people) all the more leeway in guiding Hungary's foreign policy (Körösenyi – Illés – Gyulai 2020). It is fair to assume that in the Hungarian foreign policy decision-making process, the personality of a few individuals informs actual foreign policy much stronger, than, for example, in the German system, with its multiple veto players.

To analyse emotions, we used emotion discourse analysis (EDA). 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, we applied the three-tiered methodology of Koschut (2018: 283–285). First, we looked at emotion terms which convey emotional meaning explicitly by establishing a direct reference to an emotional feeling through an emotional term. Words such as *fear*, *pride*, *to condemn*, *to protest* or *shocking* refer directly to emotions. Secondly, emotions can be communicated implicitly through connotations. Such affectively loaded words and expressions include *partner*, *improvement*, *significant results* or *appreciate*. Thirdly, 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). Metaphors especially conjure up images which directly evoke emotions.

For an example of our reading of the texts to establish the most salient emotions, here are two examples. The first is a short excerpt from a speech of Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó (Országgyűlési Napló: 22 November 2019). For context, he is defending the building of economic ties between Budapest and Moscow:

It is not our fault, that... Gazprom is building North Stream 2 with the biggest Western European firms.

[expression of **anger**, occasioned by unjustified criticism]

Interestingly,

[**scorn**, as an expression of **anger**]

when we ask the Germans, French, Italians about this, what is the answer? Business issue. This time, it is a business issue, but when Russians have to be criticized and sanctions have to be approved, then it's *suddenly a political issue*.

[**scorn**, and implicit accusation of double standards showing **anger**]

So we see a *classic case of double standards*....

[explicit accusation of double standards, showing **anger**]

Last year, do you know how the three continental G7 countries, Germany, Italy and France handled their relationship with Russia? *Do you know how?*

[repetition of question showing **intense anger towards** the opposition, but presumably also towards the three countries]

The Germans increased their trade volume with Russia by 56%, the French by 40% and the Italians by 37%. So there is an *unbelievable hypocrisy* in this matter,

[expression of **intense anger**]

because while they constantly accuse the Russian on a rhetorical level, they *do business under the surface*.

[further emphasis on the duplicitousness of Germans, occasioning **anger**]

The second example is a speech by Fidesz backbencher Mihály Balla (Országgyűlési Napló: 20 February 2012):

We have achieved *a lot*... Hungary has joined NATO and the EU, and in all this we were always able to count on the support of *our German friends*, for which *we are grateful*.

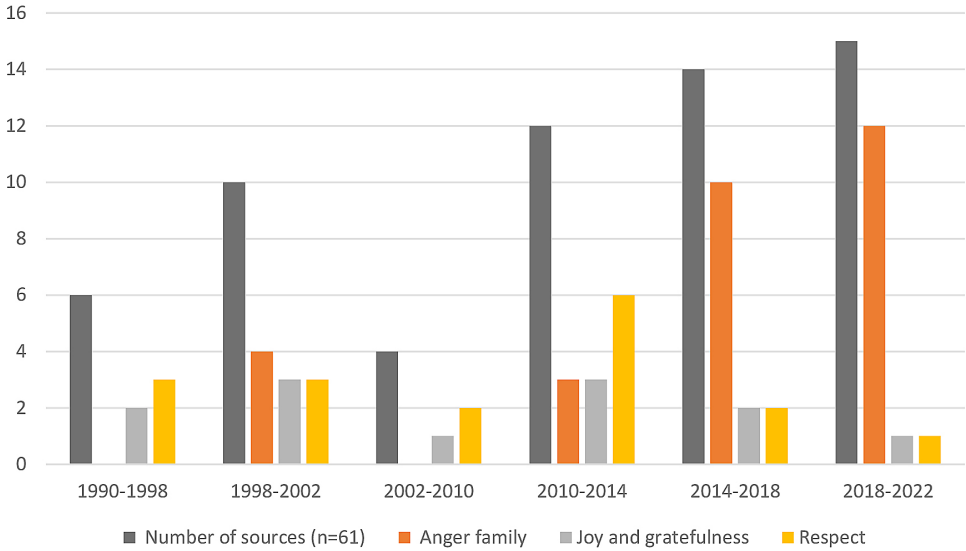
[**joy** over common achievements and explicit **gratefulness** for Germany's support]

Germany is Hungary's *most important* economic partner, this is why we expend *special attention* to the advice and proposals of our German friends.

[**respect** accorded to Germany's economic role as well as to its guidance]

In a next step, we counted the aggregate the emotions we found in the statements and speeches to establish the emotional climates towards Germany in a given legislative period (see results below). Emotional climates are 'sets of emotions or feelings which are not only shared by groups of individuals implicated in common social structures and processes, but which are also significant in the formation and maintenance of political and social identities and collective behaviour. Emotional climate therefore includes emotional tones and patterns which differentiate social groups or categories by virtue of the fact that they are shared by their members' (Barbalet 1998). In other words, emotional climates do not merely have a descriptive quality: it is not only how Fidesz politicians feel towards Germany. They also have a normative side: 'if you are a Fidesz member,

Figure 1: Emotions of Fidesz' politicians towards Germany



this is how you *ought to* feel towards Germany. Our social group (in this case, Fidesz) currently feels respect/anger/gratefulness towards Germany, and if you are a member, if you want to differentiate yourself from the members of other parties, you should feel about Germany in more or less the same way as we, the leaders of Fidesz, do'. It is this normative quality which makes emotional climates especially valuable to consider.

All in all, the following numerical picture emerges. We were able to find evidence for emotions towards Germany in 61 different speeches and interviews (53+8). Applying the methodology of Koschut, we grouped the expressed emotions into three broad categories: the 'anger family',¹ incorporating not only anger, but related emotions such as impatience, resentment and scorn; secondly, joy and gratefulness; and thirdly, respect.² These three categories capture more than 95% of all expressed emotions. Figure 1 shows how many speeches showing emotions were found in each of the six time periods, then how many of these speeches contained at least one expression of anger/joy and gratitude/respect. (One speech could contain more than one emotion.) As can be seen, the composition of emotions over the years changed considerably. The anger family was

1 I borrow the term 'family of emotions' from Thomas Scheff (2016: 68).

2 The difference between joy and respect lies mostly in intensity. Whenever emotions towards Germany were expressed in a positive but restrained way, I labelled it 'respect'. Whenever the expression was more intense and explicit, I labelled it 'joy'. Thus, expressions such as 'Germany is the dominant country in Europe' are signs of respect (Országgyűlési Napló, March 20, 2017). Expressions such as Germany and Hungary 'have achieved numerous important successes' in the scientific, cultural and educational field were grouped as 'joy' (Országgyűlési Napló: February 20, 2012).

already present prior to 2014, mostly in the form of impatience, but joy/gratefulness plus respect made up the majority of expressed emotions. After 2014, a completely different pattern emerges. The anger family makes up around three-quarters of the emotions while the others fall back to an almost negligible level.

III. Collective narcissism and two alternative explanations

In the introduction, we claimed that based on the most frequently expressed emotions, it is collective narcissism which characterises the emotional climates of Fidesz' decision-makers after 2014. Collective narcissism is associated with a distinct emotional profile and resulting action tendencies, and our core claim is that the politicians of Fidesz show precisely this profile and action tendencies since 2014. But what is collective narcissism? Ever since Sigmund Freud, (individual) narcissism has been a well-known concept in psychology (Freud 1957). Summarised 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 – 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 our case, the Hungarian nation (Golec de Zavala et al. 2009: 1074). The subsequent literature shows that among people who show this disposition, collective narcissism is likely to produce outgroup negativity (Golec de Zavala et al. 2009; Golec de Zavala 2011) and a biased and selective construction of the ingroup's past, picturing it as glorious, rejecting negative elements of its history (Golec de Zavala et al. 2019: 54).

As to emotions and emotion tendencies typical for collective narcissism, the literature points out that **anger** is central to both individual and collective narcissism (Golec de Zavala et al. 2019; Etensohn 2016: 74; Pincus – Roche, 2011: 35). Also collective narcissism is uniquely related to negative emotionality (Golec de Zavala et al. 2019). We therefore should not find many manifestations of positive emotions such as **gratitude**, **empathy** (Górska et al. 2020) or **trust** (Cichočka 2016) in the sources. Especially important for our paper: collective narcissists are expected to be particularly prone to interpret the actions of others as signs of disrespect or criticism of an ingroup and to react aggressively. They are also expected to react aggressively to actual criticism and other situations that threaten a positive image of an ingroup (Golec de Zavala et al. 2009). Since the self-esteem of collective narcissists is invested in their ingroup's image, it cannot be dissociated from the ingroup. Therefore, they are hypersensitive to signs that their ingroup's entitlement is undermined such as negative feedback, criticism or exclusion (Golec de Zavala et al. 2019). Also, collective narcissists are shown to be unlikely to feel solidarity and out-group empathy (Górska et al. 2020).

How does collective narcissism differ from the related and better-known concept, nationalism? Couldn't nationalism be the explanation behind Hungary's behaviour? Collective narcissism and nationalism have in common the belief that one's own nation is better than others (Golec de Zavala – 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 ingroup. Therefore, while '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 collective narcissism, and not nationalism, was related to hypersensitivity to intergroup threat and retaliatory hostility (Golec de Zavala et al. 2016). Even more importantly, nationalism was also shown to be negatively correlated with internationalism and positively related to militarism (Li – Brewer 2004). As a small, internationally active and economically interdependent country 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 Cichočka and Cislak 2020). Further underlining this point, Golec de Zavala and Keenan show that collective narcissism may inspire nationalism only when the nation is powerful enough to aspire to a dominant international position (Golec de Zavala – Keenan 2020) – which Hungary is not.

We offer two alternative, 'rationalist' arguments for explaining the trajectory of the emotional climate of Fidesz politicians towards Germany. One obvious explanation would be the role of party politics, the assumption being that Fidesz would have a more positive perception of Germany whenever fellow right-wing governments were in power in Berlin, and vice versa. As Raunio and Wagner have shown (2020: 523), parties and their ideological backgrounds do play an important role in the foreign policy of the given country. For example, right-wing parties in the EU, irrespective of country affiliation, tend to be more 'hawkish' and in favour of higher defence spending, military alliances and free trade. This is in line with research that leans toward indicating that in the EU, cross-national ideologies have more explanatory weight than countries – that is, membership in a party family is a better predictor of how individual parties view particular policies than the positions of other parties from the same country (518). Consequently, the party composition of governments should lead to a smoother relationship and more concord between two countries, if the parties leading them are from a similar political background.

This party politics-explanation is further based on the broad observation that transnational party cooperation (TPC), especially in the context of the European

Union, has been increasing in importance in recent decades (Day – Shaw 2003; Pridham – Pridham 1981). This is especially due to the European integration and its impact on the transnational party cooperation in broad political families/ party groupings. Fidesz has been part of the European People’s Party (EPP) between 2000–21, of which the CDU/CSU is the biggest and most important member. Orbán was even one of the EPP’s vice-presidents from 2002 to 2012 and, generally, Fidesz and the German Christian democrats were close allies in the People’s Party, with some even accusing Chancellor Merkel and her party of having ties to Fidesz that were too strong (dw.com 2017; Hettyey 2020: 135). Thus, this argument would explain the fluctuation of the emotional climates of Fidesz’ decision-makers with party politics, leading to the expectation that the years 2010– 2021, when the two countries were led by the EPP partners CDU/CSU and Fidesz, should constitute the high-point. Before and after that, the emotional climate should be less positive.

The other alternative and slightly related explanation are policy disagreements over decisive issues (Ward 1982). This line of reasoning holds, intuitively, that emotional climates follow policy (dis-)agreements: whenever there are disagreements, emotional climates will become more negative and vice versa: policy agreements will lead to a more positive perception. Credence is lent to this explanation if we accept that Hungarian foreign policy can be characterised as ‘transactional’. Often used to characterise the Trump administration, transactionalism can be defined as a foreign policy approach that focuses on short-term, quid-pro quo wins, favours bilateral to multilateral relations, rejects value-based policymaking and does not follow a grand strategy (Bashirov – Yilmaz 2020, 169). It has been proposed that populist governments such as the Hungarian one tend to enact transactionalist foreign policies in theory (Visnovitz – Jenne 2021), and it has been shown in practice how transactionalism is a guiding principle of Hungary’s foreign policy (Nic – Rác 2022). A transactionalist Hungarian government should thus focus on how Germany is reciprocating on decisive policy issues: whether there are agreements, joint wins, quid pro quos or not. The frequency of agreements/disagreements should thus be the explanation of the variation in Fidesz’ emotional climates towards Germany.

From the myriad of political, economic, cultural, regional, European, North Atlantic and global issues in the whole spectrum of German-Hungarian relations, there were four issues which stood out over the years in salience, making them the benchmark for showing whether agreement or disagreement was more prevalent. The first was temporally constant, namely the state of economic ties. Germany has been interested in having a pro-free trade, open, lucrative economic partner in Hungary, where its firms could profitably invest and bilateral trade could flourish. Over the years, no serious disagreement has endangered this part of the relationship, with most expectations met from both sides and the Orbán government going out of its way to lobby for German automotive firms in

Brussels (direkt36.hu 2020). The second topic, Hungary's NATO and EU accession, constituted the main issue up to 2004, and this was again characterised by agreement. Thirdly, migration was the overarching topic for a while after 2014, with clear points of disagreement, but the issue receded in salience in the following years, with Merkel downplaying the issue in a visit to Hungary in 2019 (index.hu 2019). And fourthly, the main issue of recent years has been the rule-of-law situation in Hungary. Although playing out in a European context, the issue clearly caused disagreement between the two countries (politico.eu 2022).

The second and third explanations – party politics and policy disagreements – are proposed to contrast the first, emotion-based approach. They try to explain the trajectory of the emotional climate of Fidesz towards Germany by purely 'rational' variables. Their common assumption is that a responsible, cost-benefit oriented decision-maker will not let his/her foreign policy be distracted by psychological, emotional matters. In other words, interests are exogenously given – a core claim of such influential and diverse theories as realism (Sterling-Folker 1997), liberal intergovernmentalism (Kleine – Pollack 2018) or rational institutionalism (Leuffen et al. 2013). Our first explanation – the role of emotions captured by the concept 'collective narcissism' – in contrast, integrates psychological variables into the explanation. We find that this approach offers a much more convincing explanation to the trajectory of the emotional climate of Fidesz towards Germany. Throughout the next chapter, the paper will present evidence for this claim, mainly from the rhetorical level, but also from concrete political acts. In keeping with the 'narrative turn' in international relations, we see the rhetorical and implementation level as dynamically intertwined and consider both the rhetoric *and* the implementation level as constituting the relationship between Hungary and Germany. Statements, narratives, analogies and other verbal acts make certain 'action possible, allowing for some practices and policies, while foreclosing possibility for others. This further reproduces and entrenches dominant policies while marginalizing alternative ones' (Subotic 2016: 613). Thus, how key Fidesz decision-makers speak and feel about Germany must be part and parcel of an overall appraisal of the relationship between the two countries.

The main shortcoming of the paper is its mostly unidirectional nature. We only charted the emotional climates of Fidesz, i.e. Hungarian politicians. This is a problem because emotional climates do not form in isolation: often, they are reactions to actual events, such as policy disagreements or German criticisms, which in turn trigger positive or negative emotions towards Germany. None of the Nazi allusions came out of nowhere: they always had an antecedent. While we will try to hint at these antecedents, events and issues, we simply did not chart the emotional climates of German politicians towards Hungary in a comparable, systematic way. Thus, we will try to highlight the back-and-forth dynamics and the tit-for-tat of German-Hungarian relations, but we will only focus on what has been said from the German side and not on what has been felt.

IV. The evidence from the sources

3.1. 1990–2002: *Between respect and impatience*

‘O.K., let’s call the Graf’, Viktor Orbán allegedly said on the morning after his first election victory on 24 May 1998.³ ‘The Graf’ was none other than member of the Bundestag, former chairman of FDP, former federal minister of economics and mentor of the young Orbán, 71-year-old Otto Graf Lambsdorff. Two days later, Orbán was in Germany having discussions with leading economic figures thanks to the help of Lambsdorff (valaszonline.hu 2019). In the light of our sources, it seems fair to say that, prior to 1998, Fidesz had only very limited contacts to German political, economic or cultural actors. What relationship existed was mostly confined to party-to-party relations in the context of Fidesz’ membership in the Liberal International. It was the FDP, and its party foundation, the Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung, which had the strongest ties to Fidesz (the director of its Budapest bureau, Gergely Pröhle later became ambassador to Germany). In the early 1990s, Graf Lambsdorff was certainly the most important mentor of the young Viktor Orbán, although after 1994 Fidesz slowly began a turn to the right, refashioning itself as a conservative party, leaving the International in 2000. By this time, in line with its domestic recalibration, it was the ex-chancellor Helmut Kohl who became a respected father figure for Orbán. This relative lack of contacts, and thus a lack of discernible emotional climate towards Germany is not surprising: Fidesz was a small opposition party before 1998 and its leadership had limited to no foreign policy functions.

After its election victory in 1998, Fidesz certainly extended its contacts to Germany and thanks to this, started to develop a more discernible emotional climate towards it. The issue of how Fidesz perceived Germany was, however, embedded into the much more important question of the enlargement of the EU, which was Hungary’s main goal. By and large, Germany was a strong motor of the enlargement process, and Fidesz politicians duly appreciated this: while no love was lost between Orbán and SPD Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, Orbán acknowledged the positive ‘personal contribution and goodwill’ of his German colleague during the accession negotiations (Hettyey 2019: 174). But there were also periods of German hesitancy during the years of the enlargement negotiations between 1998 and 2002 as certain opposing interests between Berlin and Budapest were clearly visible, such as the freedom of movement for workers or agriculture. The perception of Germany among Fidesz was therefore ambiguous: if the accession process moved dynamically, there was praise, if obstacles came up, impatience, frustration and even anger shone through – not necessarily towards Germany per se, but towards the EU as a whole, of which Germany was an important part.

3 Personal communication with former Hungarian diplomat.

For example, Orbán lamented in an interview in late 2000 that the West had missed a great chance at the end of the Cold War by not incorporating the CEE region right away. Instead, Europe decided to deepen first, which was ‘unfortunate for us’ (magyarnemzet.hu 2000). The same ‘Europe missed a chance’ argument also cropped up in an interview with *Süddeutsche Zeitung* where the prime minister claimed that the EU had blown several opportunities since 1990 of enlarging itself eastwards (Hettyey 2019: 196). At around the same time, Orbán pointed out in a parliamentary speech that there exists an imbalance between the accession-ready Hungary and the accession-reluctant EU: if this imbalance continues, the interests of one of the parties would suffer (Országgyűlési Napló: 30 November 2000). Meeting German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer in 1999, a disapproving Orbán stated that Hungary felt an ‘ambivalence’ from the German government: while accession negotiations continue, more and more enlargement-sceptical German opinions could be heard (Hettyey 2019: 176). Orbán also had qualms over Germany’s goal to curtail the free movement of workers: this basically means that the new countries are supposed to forgo one of the basic freedoms which make up the essence of the Union, he said in an interview (magyarnemzet.hu 2000).

Further angering Fidesz decision-makers were two parallel developments: the first was the sense that Germany was favouring Poland over Hungary in the enlargement process. Overall, Budapest considered itself much more accession-ready, while Berlin made it clear that Poland and Hungary would join at the same time, thus effectively making Budapest wait for the laggard Warsaw (Hettyey 2019: 202). In other words, this ‘positive German discrimination’ of Poland constituted a negative discrimination of Hungary in the eyes of Fidesz politicians. The other issue was Budapest’s nation policy, which never met with much enthusiasm from Germany at the best of times. Hungary’s 2001 status law conferring certain benefits for Hungarian minorities (but not to other Romanian or Slovakian citizens) was heavily criticised behind closed doors in Berlin as it could have destabilised the Carpathian Basin shortly before the EU accession, according to German diplomats. This sparked anger from Fidesz member and Deputy Secretary of State Csaba Lőrincz, who summed up Germany’s position (and his frustration) this way: ‘the ostensible stability of the CEE region is more important for Germany than the proper resolution of the minority problems’ (Hettyey 2019: 183). Overall, the emotional climate of Fidesz oscillated between respect and gratitude on the one hand, and impatience and low-intensity anger on the other.

3.2. 2002–2010: An interlude

During the opposition years of Fidesz in 2002–2010 it is again difficult to discern a particular emotional climate towards Germany – apart from the Iraq War of 2003. Contrary to Germany, Hungary did support the American inva-

sion, eventually also sending troops there. What angered Fidesz was the fact that the socialist-liberal Hungarian government gave unconditional support to Washington in an open letter of eight European heads of states in January 2003, without having consulted (or at least notified) its European partners. This would lead to a lack of trust and deep dissatisfaction from its major European allies such as Germany, said Fidesz MP Zsolt Németh – something that Hungary could ill afford (Országgyűlési Napló: 4 February 2003). Clearly, for Fidesz, friction with Berlin was to be avoided at all costs, showing the respect the party had for Germany.

3.3. 2010–2014: The high-point

The emotional climate of Fidesz towards Germany was at its most positive after their election victory in 2010. Influential Fidesz MP Zsolt Németh stated after Orbán's first visit in Berlin that the two countries have the same 'intellectual-philosophical' foundations (Országgyűlési Napló: 22 July 2010). On the 20th anniversary of the 1992 'Hungarian-German agreement on friendly cooperation and European partnership', Fidesz speakers in Parliament vied with each other in praising Germany. 'Hungary will always be grateful' for the political, diplomatic and economic support; there is 'a special relationship' between the two countries; our 'German friends' have been 'trustworthy partners' over the years; projects such as the Andrásy Gyula German Speaking University are common successes, etc. (Országgyűlési Napló: 20 February 2012). In late 2014, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó underlined that Hungary would be grateful for German firms for their FDI and activity in Hungary. Szijjártó also praised his counterpart, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, for his personal engagement in the Western Balkans enlargement process, a huge interest for Hungary (kormany.hu 2014). These positive emotions from Fidesz are all the more remarkable because the German government had repeatedly (if rather cautiously) voiced its concerns over Hungarian domestic developments after 2010, as regards the controversial media law of 2010, for example (Hettyey – Rác 2012).

In response to these criticisms, however, there were two angry remarks of Orbán, which, in retrospect, proved harbingers of things to come. The first was in 2010, when Merkel's vice speaker Christoph Steegmans expressed hope that Hungary would comply with EU norms as far as the new media law was concerned. Subsequently, Orbán tried to make believe that Steegmans spoke in his own name and referred to Merkel as 'the poor Lady Chancellor' who mistakenly got cited as being critical of Hungary (hvg.hu 2010). If this seemed a little condescending, the 2013 episode was far more concrete. To all intents and purposes Merkel wanted to be conciliatory when she remarked that one should not threaten Hungary with ejection from the EU, i.e. 'should not send the cavalry', even if there were problematic developments there. Yet Orbán

instantly shot back, for the first time using a Nazi parallel: ‘The Germans have already sent one wave of cavalry to Hungary, in the form of tanks. Our request is, please don’t send them again. It didn’t work out’ (dw.com 2013).

3.4. 2014–2018: Anger to the forefront

After 2014, the emotional climate changed drastically. The ensuing migration crisis certainly played an important part in this. As a result, ever since 2014, anger has been the master emotion of Fidesz towards Germany, steadily increasing in intensity, although the migration situation has eased significantly since then. Yet somehow German-Hungarian relations never really recovered from this disagreement, even though the topic lost most of its salience after 2018. Speaking about the issue, Orbán said in 2016 that ‘the trouble was caused by parties and governments which answered naively to the challenges posed by migration’ (Országgyűlési Napló: 12 September 2016). There can be no question that in the eyes of Orbán, the German was one of those governments. What was Berlin’s answer to the problem according to Orbán? ‘The Germans say *at home* that they will *get rid* of those who came in by redistributing them in Europe *all right*’ (Országgyűlési Napló: 12 September 2016). In this sentence alone, two directions of anger play out: (1) towards the German government for being duplicitous and hypocritical – in Europe, it is cheerleading *Willkommenskultur*, while at home it tries to assuage fears by trying to assure the electorate that they will pass on the migrants to others; (2) towards migrants, who seem to be a disposable mass you can get rid of. As far as the migration crisis was concerned, the only positive assessment of Germany in the Parliament came from Fidesz MP Zsolt Németh, who considered it an ‘outstanding achievement’ of Hungarian diplomacy that Merkel successfully sealed the EU-Turkey migrant deal (Országgyűlési Napló: 9 October 2015). At least Germany was willing to let itself be shown in the right direction.

Starting from 2016, the intensity of anger towards Germany can be grasped for the first time in the practice of what can be called the ‘emotional re-construction’ of German domestic politics. Fidesz politicians started to vent their anger by assigning certain meanings to German domestic developments, which were in line with their own emotional climate: because they themselves were angry with Germany over the migration crisis or their European policy, Fidesz started to assign anger to German voters. The perpetual German state elections proved to be useful for that: AfD did well and CDU lost in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in 2016 ‘because the people see the [*migration*] situation and expressed their opinion accordingly’ said a Fidesz backbencher in Parliament (Országgyűlési Napló: 19 September 2016). (He did not mention that six months earlier, in the midst of the migration crisis, the pro-*Willkommenskultur* Greens became the largest party in a state legislature for the first time after the state election in Baden-Württemberg). After Germany tightened its asylum regulations in 2016–7,

another backbencher went even further by saying that the era of the ‘irresponsible’ German migration policy was over. Granted, ‘terror attacks with human casualties were necessary for the socialists [*he meant the SPD*] to come to this conclusion.’ (Országgyűlési Napló: 20 March 2017). Once again, it was angry German voters who were needed to inject common sense into their politicians.

This mixture of anger and scorn extended to the assessment of the 2017 German election. While congratulating the CDU/CSU and humiliating the SPD by pointing out that they were moving towards the size of a small party, Fidesz MP Németh expressed his anger towards the German government in a passive-aggressive way: he said, that in light of the ‘sobering’ results, one hoped that Berlin would ditch its aims of a federal, two-speed Europe and that it would ‘unequivocally return to the notion of European unity’ (as if before Germany was against that). Even more remarkably, Németh went on to say that ‘if our expectations are met, we can offer our cooperation, and Hungary and the Hungarian people will extend the hand of friendship’ towards Germany (Országgyűlési Napló: 25 September 2017). Summing up the emotional climate of Fidesz around the high time of the migration crisis in a neat metaphor, Orbán said that because of the disagreements with Berlin he constantly had a ‘German boot’ on his chest, which was not nice – but he did not cave in (mandiner.hu 2022).⁴

3.5. 2018–2022: Intense anger

Even though migration as an every-day topic faded somewhat after 2018, the intensity of anger towards Germany only increased, irrespective of the composition of the German government. Traditional areas of common German-Hungarian interests were characterised by diametrically opposed world-views and, accordingly, emotions. Take European policy: ‘Brussels wants to create a German-led European state against us’, said Orbán in 2021 (magyarnemzet.hu 2021). Or the question of EU funds: Western propaganda paints a picture as though Hungary was a net winner of EU funds while other countries were net contributors, said Orbán. ‘This is not the case. This is not the case. If there is a real net winner of the financial system of the European Union, it is Germany itself, who is the biggest winner of the European economy, although the first impression might be that he is a contributor. But no, he is a net beneficiary of the whole system’ (Országgyűlési Napló: 16 November 2020). Leaving the question of how to measure such things out, the intensity of anger shows itself in the repetition of the core claim. This citation also tells us about the emotional need to compare the ‘wins’ of individual countries and to point out who is the ‘bigger’ or the ‘real winner’. Apparently, common wins or joint benefits for both Germany and Hungary were out of the question. In another ‘competitive

4 I did not count this as a Nazi allusion.

comparison' from the same interview, Orbán claimed that Hungary is much less corrupt: for proof, one only had to look at the list of names of the new Scholz government (magyarhugary.net.hu 2021). (Unfavourable) comparisons with Germany leading to anger were also typical of Foreign Minister Szijjártó, who pointed out the hypocrisy of Germany in three different parliamentary debates in 2019 alone. Each time, the issue was the Hungarian rejection of normativity in foreign economic policy. Szijjártó defended his building of ties with Russia or China by pointing out that 'the Germans' did the same, only more so. Nord Stream 2 was prime evidence, as was the 25% increase of the German-Russian trade volume between 2016 and 2018 (Országgyűlési Napló: 13 June 2019).

Yet a zero-sum world view and allegations of hypocrisy were only part of the evidence for intense anger as the Hungarian master emotion. The others were six separate instances where high-ranking, experienced Fidesz-politicians made undeniable Nazi allusions.

1. In 2019, minister of the prime minister's office Gergely Gulyás said that in Germany the state media is an instrument of the left-liberal propaganda and that the German propaganda has a tradition of being good (444.hu 2019).
2. In 2020, Minister of State Michael Roth claimed that antisemitism is gaining strength in Hungary. Gergely Gulyás answered that Roth's criticism reminds him of the German propaganda of the 1930s and that Roth's impertinence is 'the shame of German foreign policy' (hvg.hu 2020).
3. In 2020, Vice President of the European Parliament Katarina Barley (SPD) said that the EU should 'starve' Poland and Hungary financially. In response, government spokesman Zoltán Kovács asked on Facebook 'which German starving know-how is about to be performed on Hungary? The Stalingrad, the Leningrad or the Varsaw version?'⁵
4. In the third such instance in 2020 alone, offence was taken by a piece in the satirical heute-show in which a comedian called Orbán, among other things, 'a Hungarian goulash with ears'. Spokesman Kovács answered that he remembers a time when Germany felt itself superior and looked down on everybody else. 'It did not work too well' (dw.com 2020).
5. In April 2021, football club Hertha, Bsc. sacked its Hungarian goalkeeper coach, Zsolt Petry over his remarks that 'a moral degradation has swept over Europe' and that 'if you don't approve of migration because loads of criminals have befallen Europe, you are branded as racist'. Questioning whether rule-of-law still exists in Germany, Gergely Gulyás reminded everybody that in the 20th century there was a type of totalitarianism which originated in Germany and that 'we don't want that to happen in the 21st again' (telex.hu 2021).
6. In his 2022 Tuszányos speech, Orbán mused about how the European Commission might force the member states to cut their gas consumption

5 <https://www.facebook.com/308154079343580/posts/1685820724910235/>

by 15%. ‘I don’t see how they can coerce [the member states] to do that, but the Germans have know-how on this – back from the old days, I mean’ (miniszterelnök.hu 2022).

Turning to the new German government, we might assume that if anger was reserved for the CDU-led cabinets after 2014, this must have become all the more intense after 2021. But this is only half right. Writing in the autumn of 2022, there seems to be no improvement, but also no deterioration in the emotional climate of Fidesz towards Germany. Anger remains at the forefront: by emptying the concept of ‘nation of its meaning, by aiming for a federal Europe, by defining Germany an immigration country and by refusing to categorize society into men and women, the new German government throws up many “question marks”, Orbán said (magyarnemzet.hu 2021). But as of yet, ‘only’ one new Nazi allusion has come up during the first months of the Scholz government.

So far this is the evidence from our various sources about the emotional climates of Fidesz towards Germany. Let us now summarise the findings and try to find patterns, and explanations for them. First, prior to 1998 there weren’t enough contacts to really speak of a well-formed attitude towards Germany – apart from respect towards individual German politicians like Graf Lambsdorff or Kohl. Between 1998 and 2002 positive emotions such as respect and gratefulness meshed with impatience, even anger, if Germany was seen as failing to support Hungary’s EU bid. After an eight-year opposition period where Germany was not in the focus of Fidesz, the first years after 2010 saw a very positive emotional climate centred on gratefulness and respect. However, after 2014 emotions changed drastically: anger and scorn came to the forefront in the context of the migration crisis. Although the issue faded after around 2019, anger only intensified on the part of Fidesz, to the point where comparisons with, and allusions to, Germany’s Nazi past became a regular occurrence, mainly triggered by German criticisms of the Hungarian rule-of-law situation. Negative emotions were absolutely dominant in the speeches and interviews.

Table 2: Emotional climates of Fidesz towards Germany

	1998–2002	2010–2014	2014–18	2018–22
Master emotions	impatience, respect, low intensity anger	gratefulness, friendship	anger, scorn	intense anger
Main issue(s)	Hungary’s EU accession	rule-of-law issues	migration crisis	rule-of-law issues
Nazi allusions	0	1	0	6

V. Three possible causes for variation and the role of collective narcissism

Having established the emotional climates, let us turn to the main research question: how can we account for the fluctuations in the way Fidesz politicians have perceived Germany over the past three decades? One obvious answer would be the role of party politics. To recapitulate: the assumption would be that Fidesz would have a more positive perception of Germany whenever fellow right-wing governments were in power in Berlin, and vice versa. Is this borne out by the facts? Quite the opposite. Between 1998 and 2002 there was a total political mismatch: in Hungary, Fidesz led the government while in Germany an SPD-Grüne left-wing coalition was in power. Yet the emotional climate of Fidesz was balanced: positive emotions such as respect meshed with impatience and anger to give a mixed and ambiguous picture – but very far from the overall negativity characterising Fidesz after 2014. Between 2010 and 2022 the emotional climate should have been the most positive as there was only a partial mismatch: Fidesz was in power in Budapest, while the CDU led all the governments in Berlin (until 2013 with the FDP, after that with the SPD – thus the partial mismatch). Both parties were also members of the EPP until 2021. But this continuity and parallelism did not make for a continuity and positivity in the emotional climates: while the situation was arguably the best up until 2014, things quickly and dramatically deteriorated after that, although no government change happened on either side. It is too early to tell reliably how Fidesz perceives the new left-leaning German government, but the first signs point to at least no deterioration, which is once again counterintuitive.

Discarding the party politics argument, we turn to the other ‘rational’ argument, namely policy disagreements over decisive issues. To recapitulate, this line of reasoning holds, intuitively, that emotional climates follow policy (dis-)agreements: whenever there are disagreements on issues of high salience, emotional climates will become more negative and vice versa: policy agreements will lead to a more positive perception. In the context of German-Hungarian relations, four salient issues stand out, through which we can measure the validity of this argument. The first, Hungary’s EU accession prior to 2004, supports this explanation: there was clear agreement on this issue, thus the mostly positive emotional climate. The second issue was the common interest in having strong economic and trade ties between the two countries. Although our sources shed somewhat less light on this, based on the existing literature we can claim that there has been a constant agreement on this issue since 1990. Yet this did not prevent the deterioration of the emotional climate of Fidesz towards Germany after 2014.

The third issue was migration, which dominated the years 2014–2018, but its salience in our sources receded significantly after that. The positions of

Berlin and Budapest were wide apart and disagreements over how to handle the migration and refugee crisis are amply documented (Beger 2021). Overall, the migration issue does not seem to support the assumption that emotional climates follow policy disagreements. True, the topic contributed greatly to the deterioration of Fidesz' perception of Germany after 2014. Yet as the issue faded, the emotional climate never recovered.

The fourth topic was (and is) disagreements over Hungary's rule-of-law situation. Starting with Hungary's controversial 2010 media law, this topic has overshadowed all the years since, increasing in salience with the start of the Article 7 procedure in 2017, the Sargentini Report in 2018 and the initiation of the rule-of-law mechanism in 2022. This issue *does* fulfil the expectations following from the policy disagreement-explanation. The observed pattern is intuitive, and also supported by the facts: in the first years after 2010, policy disagreements were (in retrospect) of a low salience, hence the good perception. However, after the initiation of the Article 7 procedure in 2017, compounded by the negative effects of the disagreement over migration, the emotional climate went downhill and anger intensified in lockstep with further EU (and thus German) pressure on Hungary.

Overall, the emotional climate of Fidesz as far as the rule-of-law issue was concerned can be explained by the policy-disagreement-argument, but not migration or the issue of economic ties. In fact, a striking pattern emerges: somehow, policy disagreements do have the capacity to influence emotional climates in a negative way, but the opposite is not true: policy agreements after 2014 did not lead to an improvement. After an inflection point had been reached around 2014–15, there was only one direction, namely southwards, and the emotional climate of Fidesz towards Germany never recovered. So, we must conclude, that the 'rational' policy disagreement-approach only explains one half of the picture, namely the rule-of-law issue.

But what about the other half? Why has Fidesz been stuck in its emotional climate since 2014 despite the receding of the migration issue and constantly strong economic ties? But also: how can we explain the level of anger, i.e. the extent of negativity of Fidesz' emotional climate? We have seen that German rule-of-law concerns over the last years have led to continuous Nazi-allegations from Fidesz. How can we explain that these criticisms have warranted such a strong, intense response from Budapest? Using a 'rational' cost-benefit approach, one would need to conclude that Hungarian decision-makers would not allow themselves to feel (or, at least, articulate) this emotional climate towards their most important ally and partner. This paper proposes that the explanation lies in complementing 'rational' approaches with insights from social psychology and thus propose that the explanation for this odd behaviour lies in the peculiar emotional underpinning of Fidesz decision-makers since 2014, namely collective narcissism.

Simply put, the main finding of our research has been a striking overlap between the emotional foundations of collective narcissism on the one hand, and the composition of emotions of Fidesz politicians towards Germany on the other. In a nutshell, Fidesz politicians feel the way collective narcissists feel, but only since 2014. To recap, consider the emotional make-up of collective narcissists:

- anger as the most important, most frequent emotion. Intensity of anger grows after 2014, culminating in repeated Nazi allusions;
- lack of positive emotions, such as gratefulness, joy or respect, despite common interests and success stories;
- hypersensitivity to criticisms of Hungary's rule-of-law situation, causing aggressive reactions such as Nazi comparisons;
- unwillingness to feel solidarity and out-group empathy; and
- an unwillingness to forgive, as seen in the fact that once an inflection point has been reached in 2014, the emotional climate of Fidesz towards Germany never recovered, despite common interests.

We should also point out, that these above features only came to the fore after 2014. While subliminally present, Fidesz decision-makers showed signs of collective narcissism in their emotional climates towards Germany much less frequently before 2014. One example, however, was the aforementioned 'theory' that the EU should have welcomed Hungary much earlier than 2004. In this proposition lies the germ of collective narcissism, because it implies that the EU should have made an exception to its rules on accession for the sake of Hungary. Anger that the ingroup's exceptionality is not sufficiently externally appreciated is a core feature of collective narcissists (Golec de Zavala et al. 2019). But, prior to 2014, these considerations were outweighed by more positive feelings. Why did Fidesz allow itself to express its collective narcissistic disposition after 2014? Here we cut back to the second explanation: what triggered the open expression of these emotions (and resulting action tendencies) were the increasing German criticisms from the press and the government over the two aforementioned areas of policy disagreement: migration and rule-of-law. As these grew more frequent, Fidesz decision-makers reacted more often and more strongly in collective narcissistic terms and having this disposition, it is hard, if not impossible, for them to turn around and forgive the sleights. Overall, these policy disagreements should intuitively lead us to expect a deterioration in the relationship, but it is only in combination with collective narcissism that we can explain the way criticisms have impacted on the emotional climate of Fidesz, its constantly negative trajectory and the increasing frequency of Nazi allusions.

IV. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to enhance our understanding of Hungary's foreign policy under the Fidesz governments. We argued that because of its populist nature and its lack of veto powers in foreign policy decision-making, tried-and-tested rational explanations have to be complemented by an approach which integrates the insights of social psychology. By focusing on and aggregating the emotional content of speeches, and interviews of Fidesz politicians, we aimed to show how collective narcissism informs the way Germany is perceived and felt towards, especially since 2014. Two alternative, rational approaches have, on their own, not produced satisfactory results in explaining for example why Fidesz politicians routinely insult their most important economic and political ally by comparing it to its genocidal predecessor. Going forward, more research should incorporate psychological variables in line with our admittedly limited case-study. We believe this is essential to better understand the foreign policies of populist states in the Central European region and beyond, otherwise their seemingly 'irrational' behaviour might remain unfathomable.

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