

Do not quote without
permission – Draft version
for publication in Politics in
Central Europe- March 2026

Populist-patriotism in Hungary: 'a conservative island in this liberal European ocean'¹

Simon Bradford(a) and Fin Cullen (b)

Abstract

The growth of illiberal and authoritarian political parties and governments has given the notion of patriotism fresh political impetus. This article explores how Hungary's Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán, used patriotic discourse during Hungary's Presidency of the Council of the European Union from July to December 2024. It draws from an analysis of Orbán's speeches and interviews from this period that shows patriotism was used as a powerful signifier of illiberal ambition. We ask whether the Presidency was utilised by Orbán to further his stated aim of 'conquering' the EU on behalf of a European political right. The example of Hungary, though historically, culturally and geographically specific, provides insights into permutations of patriotism and its use in political discourse. The analysis contributes to understanding the intersection of nationalism and populist-patriotism in illiberal and authoritarian states.

Keywords: Hungary, patriotism, Fidesz, myth, populism, illiberalism, nationalism,

Introduction

Hungary assumed the rotating Member State Presidency of the Council of the European Union from July to December 2024. The Presidency was important in giving a prominent platform to Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and his politics as well as firmly positioning him within the populist political right.² Orbán is represented by supporters and others as a key actor in the transnational populist right, the model 'illiberal' politician and Hungary epitomising the illiberal nation-state in transnational populist politics, arguably influential beyond its size (Political Capital, 2022).³

¹ Orbán's description of Hungary, (Orbán, 2024, I 14).

² In Hungary a governing coalition of FIDESZ (Hungarian Civic Alliance) and KDNP (Christian Democratic People's Party), has been in power since 2010. The coalition has 135 seats in the 2022 Parliament (of which 18 are from KDNP) and the various opposition parties have 64 seats.

³ We understand illiberalism as an umbrella term that challenges three main principles of liberal democracy: limited power (e.g. rule of law), neutral state (e.g. impartiality, non-discrimination) and open society, (e.g. universalism, tolerance), (Enyedi, 2024).

Do not quote without
permission – Draft version
for publication in Politics in
Central Europe- March 2026

This article draws on research on populist politics in Hungary (Bradford & Cullen, 2021; Bradford & Cullen, 2022; Bradford and Cullen, 2025). In that work, we had become aware of Orbán's (and others on the global political right) frequent use of so-called 'patriotic' discourse. We were struck by the term's fluidity and its ambiguity, yet its apparent power to excite, inspire and legitimise. We wanted to understand how Orbán used patriotic discourse during his Presidency and what it meant especially in his often-troubled relations with the EU. Our guiding question in the article asks what part patriotic discourse played in this and how it fostered Orbán's illiberal politics locally and transnationally. In the article, we analyse Orbán's frequent use of patriotism in his speeches and interviews during the Presidency period.

As an invocation of attachment and devotion patriotism relies on 'nation' as a boundary (the *patria*) on which it is dependent. Moffat (2017) points out that transnational populism struggles to construct a politically workable notion of 'the people'. We wonder whether Orbán's commitment to Patriots for Europe (Pfe) (in Hungarian, *Hazaftak Európáért*), a transnational grouping within the EU Parliament, is similarly undermined by his fundamental commitment to a singular and pure Hungarian nation. However, patriotism's sheer abstractness, its ambiguity, seems to endorse its generalisable political currency. Importantly, Orbán's invocation of patriotism counters liberal or 'cosmopolitan' iterations of patriotism that embraces a duality of local identity with acknowledged moral obligations to a wider humanity (see, for example, Appiah, 1997). Indeed, Orbán seeks to further a singular ethno-cultural Hungarian national identity. During the Presidency, and given his inward-focused perspective, Orbán attempted to share and export his patriotic politics and ideology across the European populist right using the EU as a networking and bridging mechanism. In that, patriotism seemingly provides a discursive cement. We explore this in the article.

Current strengthening of global illiberalism, fostered through transnational alliances of political actors, for example, Conservative Political Action Conference CPAC), the US Heritage Foundation or Hungary's Institute of Foreign Affairs, render patriotism especially important as a discursive baseline shared with actors in the transnational political right (Camus, 2022; Abrahamsen et al, 2024, Caiani & Eren, 2025). The article aims to contribute to the broad literature on the intersection of nationalism and populist-patriotism in illiberal politics. In particular, this work adds to the literature on the emotional and symbolic politics

Do not quote without
permission – Draft version
for publication in Politics in
Central Europe- March 2026

of belonging, the Hungarian case showing how these are mobilised and woven into political discourse.

The article first establishes the political context of Hungary's Presidency. We then theorise populist-patriotism followed by an overview of methodology before presenting our data analysis. This is followed by a concluding discussion that identifies the significance of patriotism for Hungary and for transnational illiberal politics.

Hungary's (populist) Presidency of the European Union Council, July–December 2024

The rotating EU Council Presidency, chaired by member states, is intended to contribute to progressing and ensuring continuity of the Council's work on EU legislation, promoting good legislative processes and enhancing cooperation among member states (European Council, 2025). Perceptions of the Presidency offering opportunities for a Member State to promote national issues ('agenda setting') is contested, some analyses suggesting the entrepreneurial aspect of the Presidency (Vaznonyte, 2022; Gonzatti & Völker, 2025) while others identify this as potentially undermining its mediating functions that necessitate impartiality (Harwood, 2025, 720). Accounts of Orbán's Presidency included elements of both these interpretations. In September 2024 the EU Parliament Research Service noted that the priority areas of the Hungary's priorities for the Presidency partially "... *overlap with the [Council's] Strategic Agenda... but its approach is idiosyncratic... It does not list among the priorities climate action, equal opportunities, and democracy (including rule of law) ...* " (EPRS, 2024, 4). These were priorities for Hungary's 'Trio partners', Spain and Belgium, involved in taking forward the Council's Strategic Agenda but are areas that are deeply contested by right-wing populist politicians.⁴

Hungary's Presidency occurred in the conjunction of difficult political circumstances for the Government: the ongoing war in neighbouring Ukraine, contentious dependencies and relations with Russia and China, recurrent conflict with the EU over migration and 'rule-of-law' matters, challenging economic indicators, accusations of political corruption, sexual abuse scandals in public and religious settings and the sudden rise of an emboldened political opposition.⁵ The significance of Hungary's Presidency is difficult to quantify. Outcomes

⁴ By the beginning of the Presidency some 21 billion Euros of EU funding had been frozen (under the conditionality mechanism) because of concerns about, inter-alia, rule of law matters in Hungary.

⁵ Interestingly, patriotic discourse appears regularly (though differently) in the campaigning of the main opposition party, 'Tisza'.

Do not quote without
permission – Draft version
for publication in Politics in
Central Europe- March 2026

consistent with the view that the Presidency should contribute to progressing the EU Council's work were achieved. These included expanding Schengen, matters concerned with EU enlargement and the Western Balkans accession, and the adoption of the Budapest Declaration on New European Competitiveness Deal (Political Capital, 2025).

In contrast, Orbán's spectacular and much-publicised series of diplomatic meetings in Ukraine, Russia and China, characterised as 'peace missions', though with no EU mandate, were controversial, especially the meeting in Moscow. They risked overshadowing the Presidency and were regarded by some as undermining the EU's position. In geopolitical terms, especially in contributing to any resolution of Russia's war on Ukraine, the meetings had little apparent impact. Critics of the Hungarian Government took a negative view of its Presidency. German Green Party MEP, Daniel Freund claimed that "... *Viktor Orbán delivered the worst performance in EU history*" (Freund, 2024), another analyst suggested that "... *Orbán used his presidency to gain visibility rather than to attempt advancements towards common European goals...*" (ECA, 2025), whilst one supporter described it as "... *one of the most remarkable and successful presidency semesters in recent years*" (Scheffer, 2024). Though gaining admiration from some, Orbán's Presidency challenged extant EU diplomatic norms, attracting criticism for aggravating already strained relations with EU institutions and other member states.

The Presidency can be understood as a key period in attempting to legitimise Orbán's international standing. It undoubtedly raised Hungary's international profile, contributing to strengthening Orbán's identity as 'statesman' and further established him as a leading light amongst far-right politicians in Europe, Russia and the MAGA movement in the USA. The Presidency also corresponded with Orbán's ongoing attempts to foster a 'European patriotism' now institutionalised in the trans-EU right-wing Parliamentary group Patriots for Europe, whose formation was announced by Orbán on June 30th, the day before the Hungarian Presidency began. Orbán contends that PpE are "... *the representatives of common sense*" (Orbán I 20). Characteristically populist, this claim of common-sense suggests that PpE symbolises the 'natural' order, reflecting the interests of 'the people' rather than a liberal elite allegedly represented by Brussels. PpE is based on ethno-*nations* notionally forming a European ethno-*region*, and encompassing the group's manifesto commitments to national sovereignty, identity, tradition, as well as freedom and peace. It is now the third largest grouping in the European Parliament, comprising members from thirteen right-wing

Do not quote without
permission – Draft version
for publication in Politics in
Central Europe- March 2026

European parties and described by one analyst as an “... *undemocratic organisation of illiberal states*” (Hoeksma, 2024, 4). The group’s manifesto lies under the rubric of ‘patriotism’, a seemingly virtuous positioning yet obscuring a sometimes-crude nationalism exemplified by long-standing antipathy to migration. Orbán defines Patriots for Europe in binary terms “...*as we are patriots this means right wing...Leftists are internationalists*” (Föld, 2024). Despite PFE’s apparently shared (‘internationalist’) commitment to a European ‘patriotism’, tensions are evident within the group on policy including EU enlargement, relations with Russia, NATO membership, support for Ukraine, free movement within the EU and rights issues. Whether Orbán’s “*right wing*” patriotism can reconcile these differences is an open question.

In the following section we contextualise Orbán’s populist-patriotism.

Populist-patriotism in Hungary

As a form of strategic political practice, populism is neither intrinsically politically ‘right’ nor ‘left’ but fundamentally concerned with acquiring and sustaining political power on behalf of ‘the people’, as in Fidesz’s version of Hungarian populism. Hungary’s Prime Minister has been described as “... *the role model of international right-wing populism*” (Mos & Piozevan, 2024, 329). Importantly for our argument here, populism can be understood as a political form highly amenable to absorbing content in order to ‘signify’, to create representations (and, therefore, meaning) through different language forms: textual, visual and so on. Some scholars have argued that populism is “... *an empty form to be filled with meaning*” (Szebeni and Salojarvi, 2022, 815). During his EU Council Presidency, Orbán had much to say about patriotism and its importance for the nation-state and its place in Europe. He constructed narratives of patriotism aimed at both domestic and transnational audiences and supporters, these being disseminated widely through Hungarian and transnational hybrid media sources (broadcast, digital and traditional press). We interpret these as constituting attempts to buttress illiberal political and far-right cooperation across borders.

Transnationalism has various permutations and can be defined as the “... *multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation-states*” (Vertovec, 1999, 447). This multiplicity forms an important site of political engagement for the global far-right. A body of empirical and theoretical work has focused on the growing significance of transnational far-right networks (Caiani, 2018; Fangen & Weisskircher, 2024). This

Do not quote without
permission – Draft version
for publication in Politics in
Central Europe- March 2026

scholarship traces multiple on and offline transnational practices and political alliance building developed to counter the alleged erosion of ‘traditional’ values by left-liberal politics (Calani, 2018; Ettliger, 2025). The EU provides a rich networked cross-border eco-system for organising cooperation between illiberal populist parties (Zúquete, 2015), clearly evident in the EU’s Patriots for Europe group, launched as the Hungarian Presidency commenced.

The extensive literature on populism (see, for example, Canovan, 1981; Hunger & Paxton, 2022) identifies multiple approaches and perspectives, However, we suggest three principal characteristics shaping populist politics, each clearly evidenced in Hungary, contextualising Fidesz’s populist-patriotism and forming its underlying logic. First, populism emphasises “...*the sovereignty of ‘the people’*” (De Cleen, 2017). This entails an antagonism between infinitely malleable and ambiguous discourses of an imagined entity, *‘the people’*, whose interests populist politicians claim to represent and, similarly ambiguous, corrupt ‘elites’ *against* whom they purport to act on the people’s behalf (Mudde, 2004). This purity/corruption binary is central to populism and especially salient in Hungary whose government’s self-representation is symbolic of a pure and *essential* Hungarian-ness (*Magyarság*).

Second, and contrasting with liberal-constitutionalism’s alleged bureaucracy and its agonistic and endless debate (for example, its ‘due diligence’ in relation to environmental and social consequences of policies and their implications for ‘rule of law’), populist ambition seeks to ‘get things done’. This generates antipathy to ‘intermediate’ institutions, networks and actors (for example, in Hungary NGOs, the EU and the ‘European central state’, the UN, George Soros’s Open Society Foundations⁶ and multiple civil society actors) which, these politicians claim, constrain political action (Osborne, 2020; Lanczi, 2015) and block their unhindered relationship with the people. Orbán’s contempt for EU institutions, as we show in the article, reflects this view.

Third, right-wing populism is often predicated on discourses of nation. So-called ‘origins’ iterations of nation and nationalism rely on appeals to ‘blood and soil’, often drawing on ancient symbolic or cultural forms or invoking elemental ties of race and ethnicity in underpinning nationalist discourses (Gellner, 1983; Anderson, 1991; Smith,

⁶ George Soros, Hungarian, liberal, Jewish financier-philanthropist has long been demonised by Fidesz because of his ‘globalism’, ‘open borders’ and promotion of migration into Europe allegedly threaten Hungary’s security.

Do not quote without
permission – Draft version
for publication in Politics in
Central Europe- March 2026

2010). National membership's apparent *naturalness* encourages cohesion and identity whilst demanding loyalty and allegiance. It necessitates nation as a bounded and reified social form imagined (by populists) as a fixed and ethnically homogenous entity set in separated geographic and cultural space. Nationalism (and patriotism, we argue) is always focused on matters of boundary, inclusion, and exclusion, centred on the nation discursively constructed as 'imagined community' with an 'inside' and an 'outside' and usually coterminous with the nation-state. Hungary's loss of substantial parts of its territory and population following the Treaty of Trianon in 1920 renders this partially problematic. For some, Hungary's historically *imagined* national boundary (and its national 'soil') remains consistent with pre-Trianon geography, thus integrating lost territory and Hungarians 'beyond the borders' into the nation, the context for Orbán's patriotism. In drawing a boundary around the Hungarian nation, Orbán celebrates homeland, an imagined common history and culture in a 'Europe of nation states' (Orbán, 2025). However, nation's imputed historical and cultural commonality is always open to contestation, revision and reinterpretation.⁷ Orbán has argued that the future of nations is determined by "...which community loves its homeland more... the most important thing is patriotism" (FEOL, 2021). According to Orbán, for Hungarians "... the homeland is immanent, the nation's origin, without patriotism there is no healthy emotional life." He suggests that Hungarian patriotism (in Hungarian, *hazafiasság* or *hazaszeretet*) is 'in-dwelling', inseparable from a romantic imaginary of the homeland and distinct from the "...post-Christian and post-national state" as he describes much of Europe (Orbán, 2021).⁸

Declarations of a political patriotism have become common in populist and illiberal politicians' accounts and defences of their ambitions and programmes. Political communication using appeals to patriotism denotes the expressive power inhering in myths of the pure nation and the nation-state that underlie patriotism and upon which it is dependent and variously mobilised in everyday, routine and 'banal' ways (Brubaker, 2004, 120; Billig, op cit, 6).⁹ Some of the literature draws a binary distinction between patriotism and

⁷ In Hungary this occurred as a consequence of its own historically complex multi-ethnic and religious identity and the idea of an ethnically singular Hungary is illusory (Berend, 2001; Molnár, 2001).

⁸ Christianity is a powerful underlying signifier that offers Fidesz a language of "*historical imagination*" emphasising the authority of continuity and tradition (Heller, 1999) despite religiosity in Hungary being relatively low (Pew Research Center, 2018).

⁹ Importantly, patriotism is not solely reducible to discourse. It can include instances of embodied 'effervescence' during collective emotional experiences, in politicised form in national commemorations, celebrations or elections. An example is Budapest's ritualised patriotic public performance of nation, the so-called *Békemenet* (*Peace March*), a mass march and political rally, intermittently organised by the Fidesz-

Do not quote without
permission – Draft version
for publication in Politics in
Central Europe- March 2026

nationalism as either ‘virtue’ or ‘vice’ (Keller, 2005). However, patriotism is broadly theorised in three, sometimes overlapping, forms. First, patriotism’s nineteenth century expression in romantic European thought disparages ‘national egoism’, emphasises devotion and love of country, a way of life and tradition often formed abstractly yet also engendering a spiritual compact between the national and the universal, the particular and the general (Viroli, 1995, 125).

Second, patriotism purportedly fosters an affectionate and expressive relationship between members of a (national) community and its ‘homeland’ (construed as geographic, cultural or social space), abstract values, material cultural practices and imagined history (Tinsley, 2021). These are invoked and accredited as superior in comparison with those of (inferior) cultural others. The use of patriotic discourse thus entails the potential exclusion of those unable to share or access that history. In that sense, patriotism’s current political utility may lie in bolstering national identities whilst simultaneously excluding or disparaging those categorised as abstract others, suggested in Hungary’s preoccupation with migration questions.

Third, patriotism is understood as a potentially positive moral force (Anderson, 1991; Mestrovic, 1994). Patriotism, for Durkheim includes the capacity for enhancing social solidarity (Turner, 2019, 18) and he argues that *patria* can exist in concrete form (e.g. one’s own country) or more abstractly and universally as a European or even world patria (Pendenza, 2014, 160). Durkheim warns of patriotism’s potential for dangerous transformation into its *other*, an unfettered aggressive, militarised and exclusionary nationalism, apparent in the run-up to the First World War (Durkheim, 1915). Bellah, reflecting Durkheim’s position, similarly proposes a binary between (virtuous/rational) patriotism, “... *love of country*”, and (bad/irrational) nationalism as “*idolatrous worship of country*” (2006, 307). For Bellah, nationalist ideology is fundamentally exclusionary and contrasts with patriotism’s alleged appeal to shared universal civic values. In current political circumstances, the binary’s instability is evident. Patriotism’s parasitic dependency on nation (as in Hungary) suggests that it always contains the potential for the identification of ‘the other’ and its exclusion.

supporting *Civil Összefogás Fórum* (CÖF: Civil Unity Forum). Prior to the 2022 parliamentary election, for example, *Magyar Nemzet* daily reported that *Békemenet* attracted half a million marchers.

Do not quote without
permission – Draft version
for publication in Politics in
Central Europe- March 2026

This literature illustrates the ambiguity (and tension) surrounding the idea of patriotism, crucial in understanding how its political utility is mobilised. We argue that the distinction between positive or virtuous patriotism and negative destructive nationalism is overemphasised and unhelpful. The potential for patriotism's negative or positive effects is constantly present. As part of strategic political practice, patriotism is often deployed instrumentally by political elites soliciting identification, compelling loyalty or compliance from patriotic subjects and, as now in the Hungarian context, encouraging struggle or resistance against some *other*. As Orbán recently observed, “... *in Europe, in the Western world, in the internal struggle, the liberals are losing, and the patriots are winning. The biggest victory in this regard is the victory of US President Donald Trump*” (Magyar Nemzet, 2024). Though patriotism claims an implicit virtue framed in terms of affection, allegiance, identification and sacrifice in the name of ‘patria’, it is used, in common with nationalism, to largely further the political aims and interests of elites. Both nationalism and patriotism's linguistic forms and associated claims-making practices may work on different registers but, currently at least, they exist within broadly similar discursive spaces. They may emphasise different attributes or tendencies, yet both are primarily attuned to boundaries delineated by nation or nation-state implying either inclusion or exclusion. This means that nationalism and patriotism are most usefully understood as overlapping and flexible political languages denoting insider/outsider-ship (Brubaker, 2004) and deployed in different forms and settings to appeal to and mobilise loyalty and allegiance in the pursuit of power. In this article, we approach our data from that perspective.

Methodology

Our research interest in this article lies in analysing Viktor Orbán's discursive use of patriotism during the 2024 Hungarian Presidency of the EU Council. We understand this as part of Orbán's project of disseminating his worldview domestically and transnationally. Rotating member state Presidents, it is argued, have “... *significant agenda-setting powers...and are able to obtain policy outcomes closer to their ideal preferences*” (Van Gruisen, 2019, 694). It is difficult to know the extent to which of Orbán's “*ideal preferences*”, as expressed in speeches and interviews during the Presidency, were translated to policy. Turbulent EU politics and Orbán's reputation due to Hungary's persistent EU rule of law and corruption deficiencies are likely to have had a bearing. However, as a defined period in which Orbán's ideas were made very clear, the Presidency offered a specific case

Do not quote without
permission – Draft version
for publication in Politics in
Central Europe- March 2026

study for analysing his political discourse and especially his use of patriotism. The expression of political aims during the Presidency was, we argue, especially significant for transnational constituencies within Europe and elsewhere with whom Orbán seeks to further relationships. Our analysis identifies Orbán's understanding of patriotism and how multiple strands of a fluid discursive patriotism were mobilised to establish and further political agendas. As well as being aimed at transnational audiences, extracts from his speeches and interviews were widely distributed throughout Hungary's domestic hybrid media landscape in various forms: radio, television, newspapers, magazines, billboards and so on. In this article we present a thematic analysis of the transcripts of these speeches and interviews, exploring discourses of patriotism, its meaning and performative political potential in Europe and beyond. We suggest that the co-option of patriotism is becoming plain in the transnational right's political script, and our analysis of this in Hungary offers insights into patriotism's political utility.

Speeches and interviews (and their texts) are pervasive forms of political communication, important components in political 'fields of action' (Wodak, 2001, 66). As texts they are *performative* in the sense that they are not simply accounts or descriptions of some extant reality; rather they work to organise knowledge and construct the terms in which their objects can be understood. They comprise groups "... of statements which provide a language . . . a way of representing . . . a particular kind of knowledge" (Hall, 1992, 44) which shapes meaning and conduct within the realities constructed by their discourse. As well as positioning Orbán these interviews and speeches (and their texts) position audiences (domestic and other audiences) through various narrative devices, for example the use of symbols and metaphors, analogy, myth, voice and the emotional appeal of 'deep stories' (Hochschild, 2016).

Throughout the process we endeavoured to stay reflexively aware of our own assumptions and any biases that might shape our understanding of the texts, our analysis of them and our interpretations of their contents (Trundle, et al, 2025). A broad critical discourse analysis approach was adopted as methodologically appropriate to the task of analysing such texts because of its emphasis on the performativity of language in the realisation, exercise and reproduction of political power (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak & Meyer, 2001). We began by obtaining transcripts of 27 interviews and 36 speeches given by Viktor Orbán during Hungary's July 1st to December 31st 2024 Presidency. These are available on the Hungarian Government website in Hungarian, English and German. Each official

Do not quote without
permission – Draft version
for publication in Politics in
Central Europe- March 2026

English transcript was searched for references to ‘*patriot*’, ‘*patriotic*’ and ‘*patriotism*’, and the corresponding Hungarian transcripts for ‘*patrióta*’, its close associates, ‘*hazafi*’, its associates and ‘*hazaszerető*’ and its associates. We examined the context of the terms in the transcripts to understand how they were being used. Of the 27 interviews conducted during the Presidency and available on the Government website, 15 contained references to ‘patriot’ or associates (either in Hungarian or English) and of the 36 speeches, 11 contained references to ‘patriot’ or associates (either in Hungarian or English). These references increased towards the end of the Presidency period, perhaps encouraged by the election of Donald Trump who was represented in the texts as emblematic of Orbán’s notion of patriotism. It was evident that the key terms identified above were used in very similar ways in the speeches particularly, perhaps because they drew on similar sources and content. Interviews, on the other hand, necessitate a speaker responding to questions in real-time and they showed evidence of more diverse and reflective statements.

Having traced the location of terms in the transcripts we read and re-read the sections of the transcripts in which they appeared. This enabled contextualisation and consideration of the ‘problems’ that were being created in their representations of the world, the underlying assumptions, how subjects and institutions were positioned, ‘absences’ and how all these were represented and articulated in political space, raising inevitable questions about political interests (Bacchi, 2012). From the original key words, we identified initial codes emerging from our data, similar to a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), and informed deductively by our theoretical interest in patriotism as political discourse. We systematically compared these codes and collated them to form analytic themes which we understand as recurrent clusters or patterns of meaning distributed throughout the data. These were reviewed and refined to construct a discursive topography, a thematic map of the data set (Ripley, 2011, 274). The analysis in the following section is presented as four themes. In this article we draw on data from 15 interviews and three speeches.

We should note that working across two different languages raises particular methodological challenges. Translation of terms from one language to another must recognise porous and sometimes problematic boundaries, as meaning is culturally made and re-made (Tyulenev, 2023, 212). For example, knowing what counts discursively as ‘patriotic’, either in English or Hungarian, is not always entirely clear. Acknowledging these terms’ shifting cultural meanings, we were sensitive to the potentially different associations

Do not quote without
permission – Draft version
for publication in Politics in
Central Europe- March 2026

that they have in the two languages. In practice we relied on the speaker's contextual use of language to guide us. One of the article's authors is a non-native intermediate-level Hungarian speaker but guidance was taken from a native speaker, informing our approach and understanding of meaning and significance. Although the data are specific to the Hungarian context, we suggest that they can contribute to developing exemplars which enable generalisation to other settings (Flyvbjerg 2001: 73-74) in which discourses of patriotism are deployed politically by the transnational populist illiberal right.

Data analysis: Hungary's patriotic EU Presidency

We present our analysis under four sub-headings which derive from the themes identified in the data analysis and constructed from the coding process. They map a political ontology of Orbán's populist patriotism that was evident throughout his Presidency. Of course, these themes as 'materialised' linguistic forms extracted from Orbán's talk were present prior to and following the Presidency period. Indeed, patriotism has become an almost ever-present motif in his discourse. The Presidency gave an opportunity to *formally* or *officially* disseminate these ideas, the point being that the Presidency should be understood as an institutionalised source of power, albeit time-limited and temporary, that facilitated Orbán's presentations.

The four themes through which organise our data are interconnected and mutually referential but not, we suggest, overlapping in the sense that one theme simply repeats or negates another. The themes interlace, appearing and reappearing through the data, forming an underlying structure and rationale to Orbán's patriotic discourse. In reading the texts and listening to his speeches and interviews, one is struck by so many elements being skilfully integrated under the rubric of patriotism or rendered in some way patriotic. Hence, patriotism's identification here as a 'floating signifier' which we discuss as part of the first theme, below. Perhaps inevitably, patriotism's dependence on nation evokes notions of boundary; insides and outsides, belonging and otherness and we discuss aspects of these in the data. The idea of home and a homeliness under attack is, as we show here, central to Orbán's patriotism and the necessity of protective battle and struggle against hostile and predatory (external and internal) monsters and the monstrous is made clear. Finally, we think it possible to detect Orbán's sense of hope in his patriotism, again marked by boundaries, in

Do not quote without
permission – Draft version
for publication in Politics in
Central Europe- March 2026

this instance between a liberal dystopia and a utopian future marked by developments, real, anticipated or imagined, in transnational illiberal politics. illiberal politics.

Data extracts are referenced with either ‘Interview’ (I) or ‘Speech’ (S) and a number. So, (Orbán, 2024, I 01) is interview number 1 and (Orbán, 2024, S 06) is speech number 6. They are included in the references list at the end of the article.¹⁰

a) Orbán on patriotism

Orbán’s speeches and interviews contain references to patriotism as a sometimes abstract, ambiguous, yet invariably virtuous, idea as well as it being part of the title of his political affiliation within the EU, ‘Patriots for Europe’. It is often difficult to comprehend precisely what Orbán (like others) understands or means by patriotism as there is slippage between usages. Orbán’s patriotism slides from ‘romantic’ notions to patriotism as a tool for stimulating politically adversarial discourse and practices. That capacity for shifting meaning empowers patriotism as political discourse, rendering it highly malleable.

In an interview with Hungarian state television at the start of the Presidency in July 2024, Orbán was asked whether patriotism undermines commitment to an international alliance, PfE, for example. Though not responding to the suggestion of tension between the particular and the universal implicit in the question, Orbán attempted to pin down the idea of patriotism. *“The starting point is that we love our country, we love our country passionately. This is patriotic feeling. It’s also called nationalism. There are two kinds: the good and the bad.”* This mirrors the binary identified in the literature between virtuous patriotism which includes a commitment to ‘universals’, and destructive nationalism which, for Orbán, is the ‘bad’ kind characterised by those *“... who love their country while trampling others underfoot... who love their own country against others are usually considered chauvinists and bad nationalists”*. Authentic (virtuous) patriotism, it seems, is non-transactional, patriots love their country intrinsically, for its own sake, for *“...its culture, language, achievements, land, geography, family, history... cemeteries... churches... our children, and our future; this is what we love. This isn’t aimed against anyone. And we don’t want a Europe that takes away, diminishes, erases everything that is important to us as patriots.* (Orbán I 01). Contradictions exist between the neo-romantic patriotism expressed here and Fidesz’s ethno-nationalism, the latter easily, it seems, accommodated by the former. This suggests

¹⁰ All are accessible on the Hungarian Government Cabinet Office website: <https://kormany.hu/miniszterelnok-i-kabinetiroda>

Do not quote without
permission – Draft version
for publication in Politics in
Central Europe- March 2026

patriotism's inexorable potential for the creation and exclusion of the *other* (Tinsley, 2021). For example, migration and migrants are represented as a primary threat to the nation and the national 'home'. Orbán explains that inward migration would erode Hungarians' identity as migrants will "... *change the cultural context of the country, we will lose our sense of homeliness... One does not want to be a tourist in one's own country, but rather to be at home, and this is very strong in Hungarians. Hungarians are a very patriotic and family-loving people, and therefore solving the demographic problem in Hungary with foreigners or strangers is unthinkable*" (Orbán I 14). These expressions are set in cultural space where this patriotic imaginary is threatened not only by migration, but by an imperious EU and the political left seeking to encourage inward migration to Europe. George Soros is, of course, the principal adversary here. We return to this point.

Throughout these interviews and across Orbán's speeches, patriotism emerges as a dynamic yet ambiguous *signifier*, a locus from which Orbán's politics can be tracked, either domestically or in the context of transnational/trans-EU settings. It is difficult, however, to understand this discourse of patriotism as having any 'anchored' form. It occupies no singular space and, apparently, contains no clear or fixed 'signified'. In Orbán's usage the idea of patriotism can be almost infinitely extended, stretched to legitimise political aspirations and projects deriving from populist iterations of 'the people', "...*since people want peace instead of war... People want migration to be stopped... People don't want their families to be made into jokes, and the family bond that is important to them, which organises life around a man, a woman, and raising children, is ridiculed by all sorts of other forms of coexistence that have been raised to the same level, let's call it simply gender...*" (Orbán I 03). Discourses of patriotism absorb and circulate these political messages and almost anything can apparently be construed as having patriotic possibilities.

In his discussion of the social production of political meaning, Laclau (2005, 305) suggests that "... *the plurality of discourses interrupting each other...*" renders some signifiers unfixated, unanchored, indeterminate. Patriotism is one such. This is especially marked in contemporary media eco-systems where signifiers, like patriotism, proliferate, transmute and become repositioned. Laclau refers to these indeterminate entities as 'floating' signifiers, unfixated yet absorbing meaning from different sources and, potentially, recirculating meanings that rarely remain static or stable. These meanings are never simply the property of the signifier; patriotism is not a fixed essence or entity. Patriotism's meaning

Do not quote without
permission – Draft version
for publication in Politics in
Central Europe- March 2026

is formed in practices – in discourse - in which it is appropriated, redefined and used by actors to create meaning in a signifying field (Hall, 1997, 24). Orbán's patriotic discourse can, we suggest, be understood as such a floating signifier, difficult to define yet having adequate traction, especially at an expressive level, to be of political utility.

In recent years, appeals to patriotism have become more frequent in Hungarian government discourse, precisely because it appears to have become a powerful and emotive discursive tool in the realisation of political power. Patriotism's pliability, its elusiveness, its resistance to fixed definition and absence of anchorage becomes a politically valorising feature in its signifying capacity. Its expansive and ambiguous status leads almost naturally to a further chain of signifiers that colonise diverse political and policy territories (peace, migration, gender, family and so on) constituting a discourse of patriotism, whose value emerges in a range of settings. Of course, it is not only in Hungary where patriotic discourse's political utility is evident. Trump, the MAGA movement and others also sequester patriotism as their own, whilst similarly claiming to reflect the authentic voice of the people.

b) On boundaries and binaries

Throughout these interviews and speeches, we find references to different kinds of boundaries as social, cultural, spatial and temporal borders. Late modernity's uncertainties, fears and anxieties create multiple boundary crises. Questions of precarity and inequality, financial and economic challenges associated with neo-liberalism, the politicisation of migration, terrorism, competing ideas of identity, challenges to custom and individualisation suggest the contingency of contemporary social life (Bauman, 2007). Temporally, much of Orbán's analysis of the present-day world expresses a sense of longing or lament. It relies on a nostalgic version of a historical past in which navigating the social world is imagined as having been simpler, the social bond characterised by a shared morality and similarity rather than difference. The texts here suggest that the Fidesz political world is shaped by boundaries (drawn implicitly from 'tradition') that offer certainty, fixity and binaries that enable the world to be represented and understood in relatively simple terms. As an attempt to evade modernity's ambiguities this creates conditions in which population - society - becomes the object of *government*, the 'conduct of conduct' (Foucault, 1983, 221). As part of the broader exercise of political power these interviews and speeches (and their texts), thus, have

Do not quote without
permission – Draft version
for publication in Politics in
Central Europe- March 2026

pedagogic functions,¹¹ they distribute discourses of what is ‘thinkable’ (and ‘unthinkable’) in Hungarian identity and culture. Within this, the ritualised media-disseminated vilification of *others* (as actors, institutions or ideas: liberals, ‘Brussels’ or ‘gender’, for example) is performatively juxtaposed with a version of normative cultural expectations and obligations, often represented as tradition and purportedly embodied by Fidesz and Orbán. Patriotism is the discursive medium in which these binaries and boundaries are constructed and through which they are distributed. They rest on a popularised version of ‘global crisis’; exemplified by Huntington’s post-cold war ‘clash of civilisations’ argument, exhaustively critiqued elsewhere (e.g. Orsi, 2018; Said, 2001). However, its re-deployment in Orbán’s (and others on the radical-right) sometimes apocalyptic utterances attests to an enduring influence, especially in the capacity to justify and legitimise illiberal and authoritarian politics in simple boundaried terms.

The texts pose a range of dualities which, Orbán asserts, underlie politics in Hungary and more broadly signify a “... *great civilisational struggle... taking place in the Western world*” (Orbán I 25). The binaries include reductive abstract entities: leftist/rightist; liberal-progressive/patriotic forces; westerners/patriots; west/central Europe; nation-state/post-nationalism; loyalty/betrayal. Equally attenuated yet *embodied* binaries emerge around fixed notions of sexuality or ethnicity, crystallised in ‘gender’ and ‘migration’ discourses. On one side of each binary a discourse of patriotism is located in relation to its *other*. Sometimes specific actors are identified as the bearers and defenders of patriotism. “... *everything we hold dear is under full-spectrum attack... including in politics, but also in sport, the media, entertainment, everywhere... As patriots, we must stand up for our country and our national identity, otherwise it will be devoured by attacks.*” (Orbán I 04). Alongside this is a view in which patriotic discourse absorbs elements beyond a simple spatialised romantic patria and in which a patriotic politics is organised “... *against migration... [which] protects families and children... that’s pro-peace and not pro-war... that finally brings order to the economy*” (Orbán I 22). For Orbán, Hungary exemplifies this as “... *an island of difference.... conservative, Christian, national... ..not part of the liberal [European] ocean*” (Orbán I 13). Clearly, binaries ensure that ‘otherness’ can be made to exist in multiple forms, suggesting a view of an ambiguous yet boundaried patriotism under threat by a range of ‘liberal’ others.

¹¹ They are intended to influence audiences within Hungarian society’s ‘expressive’ domain, dealing with the transmission of moral order, especially matters of consensus and difference.

Do not quote without
permission – Draft version
for publication in Politics in
Central Europe- March 2026

Metaphors of battle and warfare have long been normalised in Orbán's media communications (Szabó, 2020) and are evident here. In an October 2024 speech to the Lega per Salvini Premier in Italy, Orbán explained that PfiE's aim is to defeat 'the Empire': Brussels. The spaces of the EU's central powers, both geographical and discursive, emplace the struggle, at the utopian end of which "... *Paris will turn around, we will take back Warsaw... Then we will take Brussels politics into our hands and make Europe great, strong, secure, rich and free again. We, Patriots, can do this!*" (Orbán S 06). PfiE "... *have a war plan... how we will develop cooperation with European conservatives... the real Christian democratic right and tradition are with the patriots...*" (Orbán I 27). The task is to resist and eliminate "... *Brussels' liberal, bureaucratic, centralising ambitions*" (Orbán I 24). As Orbán's Presidency advanced, Donald Trump's parallel election focused further attention on the patriotism of struggle. Trump is a "... *determined actor, prepared for a civilizational struggle, a struggle for the soul and future of the West... [he] has stepped on the side of the patriots...on the side of life*" (Orbán I 26). The struggle between binaries is presented as rooted in destiny, a battle between the 'old' and the 'new', between life and, Orbán implies, death.¹² These references suggest how transnational links have capacity for nurturing illiberalism and authoritarianism, patriotism as a discursive catchall, sufficiently ambiguous yet also retaining adequate signifying traction to focus the struggle. It is easy to see how, given the drama of Orbán's account of battle, oppositional forces can readily be understood as monstrous and monsters. We now turn to consider Fidesz's monsters.

c) Patriotism's foes: multiple monsters

We explore here the figure of the monster and the concept of haunting, both present in these texts. This uncanny turn arises in the mobilisation of neo-nationalist/populist discourse reproduced both in the delivery of and repurposing of tropes from 'imagined' pasts, but also significantly in the rendering of the monstrous *other* in the present to be repelled from the nation/home. The *monstrous* takes a variety of forms: from the globalist demon Soros to the nameless Muslim hordes massing as unwanted and unwarranted refugees and economic migrants at the border fence (Barna & Koltai, 2019; Kalmar, 2020; Sata, 2023). Fortress Europe is besieged; Hungary her protector. The role of the 'good' patriot becomes that of

¹² The absent reference here to death is, we suggest, a reference to Russia's war with Ukraine. The pro-Fidesz slogan 'Nem fogunk meghalni Ukrajnáért' ('We will not die for Ukraine') has been evident in Hungary during the war.

Do not quote without
permission – Draft version
for publication in Politics in
Central Europe- March 2026

valiant knight, as embattled protector of an ethno-nationalist kinfolk and tradition. Such discourses are threaded through populist-patriot leader speeches globally, Orbán's being no exception.

Freud's concept of das *unheimliche* is helpful here (Freud, 2003). Whilst in English this is often translated directly as 'the uncanny', in German it contains a play on words and *heimlich* can mean the homely or familiar. Thus, *unheimliche* would suggest something that upends or challenges the boundaries of the home: the metaphorical 'haunted house'. Orbán repeatedly returns to representations of the nation as home, and the importance of the creation of homeliness. The battle posed is to drive out the 'unfamiliar' presence, people, cultural practices and discourses that pose an uncanny abject threat to the 'known' familiar homeland, "... Hungarians think, and they're right – they'll [migrants] displace us from our own country. They'll change the cultural context of the country, and we'll lose our sense of home" (Orbán I 14). Thus, to be patriotic is to sustain and nurture the known-familiar or risk intergenerational cultural dilution and erasure. As Orbán observes: "*The issue of home is at the heart of the domestic political problem that is straining Westerners in the whole migration pact. There are two ways to lose your home. One is that you are being dragged away from your home. The other is that you stay at home, but suddenly everything around you changes without your consent. You realize that the sense of homeliness in which you lived your life and which you wanted for your children and grandchildren has disappeared. And what's more, it has disappeared irretrievably. There is no greater political problem than this*" (Orbán S 12). As we see here, the crisis posed by these monstrous others is fundamentally existential. By repeating the multitude of threats, one might question the underpinning frailties anxiously evoked. Whilst the good, European, patriotic Hungarian is culturally and morally righteous in such language, peril lurks everywhere threatening the erosion of this fragile normality. Thus, politics becomes a hegemonic struggle framed in existential terms.

Invocation of the monstrous other renders populist-patriotism both normative and exclusionary (Puar & Rai, 2002). Drawing on Foucault's work on the *abnormal* (see Foucault, 2016), Puar & Rai argue that patriotism is often constructed as a heteronormative moral bulwark against the monsters within and at the gate, sexual deviants engaging in non-procreative sex, sexuality and gendered difference. Throughout these texts Orbán reaffirms such immutable sex-gender binaries, traditional family relations and a fixed and 'traditional' gendered and sexual division of labour. "*It's the same with gender. I was born in a world –*

Do not quote without
permission – Draft version
for publication in Politics in
Central Europe- March 2026

and Hungary is still in a world – in which we know that someone is either a man or a woman. In the West it's already thought that people are not binary beings. But then what are they? There are huge problems here. If we don't put our foot down and stand our ground, we'll see the overthrow of the world in which we can live lives most worthy of humans, in which a woman is a woman, the French are French, Hungarians are Hungarian and Americans are American. There's a worldwide campaign being waged against our values. Well, this is where we must resist. (Orbán 1 04).

Humanity and a liveable life for good patriots is at risk. 'Putting our foot down' is necessary in resisting this creeping confusion about gendered and national identity, seemingly at risk of flux. Patriots have entered the transnational culture wars raging against gender ideology and 'foreign' deviant desiring bodies and practices in a series of moral panics (Bogaards & Pető, 2022; Takács, Fobear & Schmitsek, 2022; Szelewa, & Szikra, 2024). The triple peril of 'gender ideology', LGBTQ+ rights and the dangers of miscegenation¹³ must be repelled for the purity and safety of the nation's children¹⁴. It is the citizen's patriotic duty to ensure a heterosexual future for the ethnic-kin-nation repelling unnatural desires to ensure the ethnic purity of the nation and of Europe (Glass & Fodor, 2022; Rasmussen, 2023). This speaks to how concepts of patriotism are deployed strategically in the construction and maintenance of illiberal democracy. Themes of dystopian monsters, boundary flux and cultural demise frame the vivid imaginary of a conjured disgust (Ahmed, 2004). The patriot is constructed via what they are not, by what is absent. But this in turn requires much discursive graft in maintaining fraying and anxiety-ridden boundaries guided by utopian-dystopian haunting potentialities.

D) Patriotism, utopias and dystopias

¹³ In a July 2022 speech in Băile Tușnad, Transylvania, Orbán warned about the perils of racial mixing between Europeans and non-Europeans suggesting that where 'races' mix, the nation's existence is eroded. This echoes the Great Replacement theory voiced by transnationalist and US Far Right groups. See: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/07/27/viktor-orban-mixed-race-cpac/>

¹⁴ Fidesz policy has long been antagonistic to LGBT rights on the grounds that this is a corrupting influence on the nation's children. This anti-LGBT strategy has taken the form of a range of legal measures curtailing rights, from the 2021 Child Protection Law restricting media content on LGBT issues and banning their depiction in schools, a referendum focusing on the LGBT threat in 2022 and, more recently, outlawing Pride events (March 18th 2025). Such measures have been critiqued by the European Commission and advocates for the European Court of Justice

Do not quote without
permission – Draft version
for publication in Politics in
Central Europe- March 2026

Utopias and dystopias have long captivated sociological, political and literary imaginaries. Kafka, Orwell, Krasznahorkai and Atwood's alarming depictions of dystopic worlds contain cultural currency as frightening visions of an imagined future. Dystopia especially seems to lend itself to framing existing real-time crises: climate change, Covid-19, multiple wars, cultural, economic and political breakdown. Populist politicisations of dystopia simultaneously arouse and frame utopian desire and longing and have a metaphorical relationship with perceived social conditions and change. Utopias are screens "... *for modernity's self-consciousness*" (Beilharz, 1989, 151), defining a "... *politics which wishes to change the system radically...*" (Jameson, 2004, 35). Orbán's utopias, emerging at a time of political and economic crisis, express radical desires for a 'patriotic' world of peace and prosperity free of accumulated liberal detritus. However, it is not simply the content or object of utopia that is important, rather the form of its desire; utopians "... *have a radical implausible desire to negate something in the world*" (Rose, 2022, 27). That negation is intended to shape a society depicted in terms of how it *should* be. We encounter expressions of such desire throughout these interviews and speeches.

For Orbán, the 'great dystopia' undermining Hungarian patriotism can be traced to the pre-1989 period. "*The communist ravages eliminated the very environment that makes this patriotic lifestyle possible, taking responsibility for oneself and one's community... the communists ... wanted to force down our throats that the nation is not a value, there is no God, and the homeland, like everything else, is for sale*" (Orbán S 31). In this account communist tyranny was later supplanted by a liberal-imperialist European Union dramatically epitomising fresh dystopia that all patriots oppose. However, Brussels has become "... *the liberals' last bridgehead, stronghold or citadel – to which they've been pushed back... the land of Mordor, the Dark Lord has withdrawn behind his battlements here, and now it's the only place where liberals can be found*" (Orbán I 24). The reference to 'the land of Mordor' may be read as a reflection of far-right politicians' (Giorgia Meloni and JD Vance, are examples) contested capture of Tolkien's 'Lord of the Rings' narrative (Eaton, 2024, Wren, 2024), a mythologised traditionalist world, a potent symbol of unambiguous ontologies and pure identities allegedly almost eradicated through (liberal) modernity's claims to progress. Orbán's narrative hints at a kind of Nietzschean tragedy, the loss of a mythic homeland (see references in the previous section) and desire for return to a simpler, better and, perhaps for him, rather more *enchanted* world. Earlier references to civilisational struggle and change

Do not quote without
permission – Draft version
for publication in Politics in
Central Europe- March 2026

align with this. References in some interviews ^{15, 206} “... *notorious Hungary-hater, pro-war* [in Ukraine], *pro-migration person...*” (Orbán I 03) may also cast the anti-patriot Weber as the powerful manipulative Dark Lord, Morgoth or Sauron. In this respect, Weber doubtless competes with Soros. Though suggesting the potency of myth, these references may also acknowledge Orbán’s place in a transnational patriotic political constituency (including Meloni and Vance), an imagined community holding shared myths of dystopia/utopia codified through explicit references to Tolkien’s fantasy novel.

In an interview with Austrian Television, Orbán skilfully juxtaposed dystopic and utopian narratives, suggesting that Hungary is already a utopian space that threatens liberal European politics because “...*we are successful*”. Patriotic Hungary is compared with liberal, progressive (dystopic) ‘Europe’. Hungary has no migrants, therefore “...*there is no terrorist threat... because migration always goes hand in hand with crime and terrorism. Migration also means higher levels of anti-Semitism, which we do not have in Hungary... [and] no homophobia in Hungary either, and the threat to women's equality is also a problem of migration: this is not the case in Hungary either*” (Orbán I 13). This politicised (and imagined) utopia/dystopia dyad framed as Hungary/Europe, is a potentially powerful narrative form that relies on simple binaries and ambiguous yet appealing signifiers. Its imputed *patriotic* themes are consistent throughout: the primacy of homeland, anti-migration, anti-war, pro-peace, anti-gender, family-friendly, Christian, Europe of nations are grounded in a politics which will, according to Orbán, instigate a utopia, “... *a change within Western civilisation... of historic proportions: moving our lives from war to peace; from a world of economic misery, suffering and high inflation to economic success; from a sense of insecurity to security; from a world of gender madness to a world of protecting families; from a policy of supporting migration to a policy of protecting borders instead of a demented policy*” (Orbán I 23). During the EU Council Presidency period, and despite disavowal “... *President Trump isn't our saviour, but our brother-in-arms, a patriot who's fighting for the same values in his world as we're fighting for here in Hungary*” (Orbán, I 25), Orbán depicted Donald Trump as the messianic agent of political and civilisational change. His unquestioning faith in Trump’s election, signalling the “*the biggest victory of the patriots over the liberals*” (Orbán I 24), reappears throughout these interviews and speeches. Trump

¹⁵ Leader of the EU’s European People’s Party Group, a competitor group to PFE and with whom Orbán has had a long-running hostility.

Do not quote without
permission – Draft version
for publication in Politics in
Central Europe- March 2026

“...has made it clear that he’ll end this war within twenty-four hours. So if he wins there will be a ceasefire at the very least.” (Orbán I 01). Trump is the key to civilisational transformation, the co-agent and catalyst for new utopian times. As Mannheim long ago observed, a *“...state of mind is utopian when it is incongruous with the state of reality within which it occurs* (1936; 1979, 173). Desire, it seems, often wins out over reason.

Concluding discussion

In this article we have explored Orbán’s use of patriotic discourse in his speeches and interviews during his Presidency of the European Union Council. Our work suggests that patriotism was used to underpin and legitimise an illiberal worldview to both domestic and transnational audiences. Importantly, patriotism was often deployed antagonistically, instrumentalised against the imputed ‘left-liberal’ EU. The irony here was striking as it suggested that the Prime Minister of an EU member-state, as rotating President of the EU Council, used a central institution of the (liberal) EU to castigate the EU itself in the pursuit of illiberal ends.¹⁶ This warrants further research.

We acknowledge the methodological limitations of the work and we cannot claim to be able to generalise directly from the Hungarian case. Nevertheless, analysis of patriotic discourse’s emergence and political use in Hungary and its dissemination through illiberal and far-right alliances sheds light on its importance in transnational contexts. Patriotism, as we have shown in Hungary’s case, and we believe elsewhere, is a powerful, flexible and appealing political signifier. Allegedly innocent of the accusations levelled at nationalism, it has considerable potential for legitimating populist illiberal politics.

The Hungarian Presidency had mixed policy outcomes including some acknowledged successes. However, and more importantly, Viktor Orbán exploited the opportunity to draw from and use the symbolic capital that accrues to the Presidency to disseminate his worldview, emphasising his political identity domestically and transnationally and strengthening relationships with other illiberal politicians. We have shown that the Presidency gave Orbán a platform to further his populist-patriotism, in effect to promote his *“...ideal preferences”* outlining a world of patriotic politics and contrasting that with a dystopian imaginary of a liberal order. The Presidency provided opportunities for Orbán to

¹⁶ In Hungary’s 21 years of EU membership, it has received some 68 billion Euros in EU funding (although currently frozen), contributing annually up to 3.5% of GDP (GKI, 2025). Orbán’s deployment of patriotic discourse during a high profile period offers an interesting example of a Prime Minister seemingly biting the hand that feeds them.

Do not quote without
permission – Draft version
for publication in Politics in
Central Europe- March 2026

further his criticism of The EU and ‘Brussels’, for Orbán the ‘Land of Mordor’,¹⁷ in the context of launching the Patriots for Europe group in the European Parliament. Patriotic discourse was used to condemn EU institutions, facilitated by the institution of the Presidency itself. As such, and reflecting Durkheim and Bellah, for example, patriotism forms a shorthand for commitment and allegiance to a shared yet imagined *national* community which, in Hungary and for Orbán, is the ethno-cultural nation on which patriotism relies.

Orbán’s Presidency can also be understood as an example of the *paradoxical* retreat from global liberalism into local nationalism/patriotism which is discursively and strategically mobilised *transnationally* via local deployment of ‘global culture wars’. As Orbán demonstrates, the patriot remains curiously parochial yet discursively global. This productive tension between local and global/transnational ‘patriotism’ is also highlighted in the PpE group. Our data analysis suggests that patriotism seems to act as a kind of ‘code’ adopted by these actors, representing what they share, ignoring or glossing over what is not shared and differentiating the content and mode of their politics from other political perspectives. However, as patriotism relies on underlying discourses of a bounded nation, one wonders how stable this code, its associated community and its politics might be beyond the single nation. This may have implications for the PpE group and warrants further research.

We have shown that patriotism as discourse has potential as a powerful and enduring political tool. Theoretically, we share the analysis that understands patriotism and nationalism as being languages of political practice. Patriotism is important as a language through which popular, and especially *populist*, politics is conducted, framing “...*political arguments by appealing to the patria, the fatherland, the country, the Nation*” (Brubaker, 2004, 120). Its historically embedded appeal to spiritual unity and the preservation of nation’s common culture carries deep emotional resonance (Viroli, 1995, 114) and is readily amenable to political exploitation. Its capacity as a language to create identification and solidarity, understood as morally virtuous, is mirrored by its ironic facility for initiating and furthering political conflict, implying patriotism’s exclusionary potential. Thus, and paradoxically, patriotism is often currently deployed antagonistically, making and marking political boundaries between, for example, a *patriotic* Hungary and (in Viktor Orbán’s estimation) a

¹⁷ Orbán’s appropriation of Tolkienesque intertextual references can be read as a possible signalling, an acknowledgement of shared membership in the transnational illiberal imagined political community.

Do not quote without
permission – Draft version
for publication in Politics in
Central Europe- March 2026

'left-liberal' globalised EU. Transiting between virtue and vice, patriotism can simultaneously exploit the language and practice of inclusion and exclusion. We have identified numerous examples of Orbán using this language in the effort to inspire or incite. As we have seen, the boundary between patriotism and nationalism is blurred and porous due to the inherent ambivalence of both. Orbán apparently recognises that "... *patriotic feeling...[is]... also called nationalism. There are two kinds: the good and the bad.*" In this he echoes much of the literature, but the point here is that patriotism and nationalism imply both inclusion and exclusion. Virtuous ('good') patriotism always has the potential for transformation to something sinister.

The patriot (and patriotism) as an ideological vessel is overloaded with shifting and multiple meanings, constituting it as a floating signifier absorbing and disseminating meaning ('signifieds') across the political field. We teased out how its discursive strands were mobilised in attempts to legitimise Orbán's local and transnational political ambitions during the Hungarian Presidency. Our analysis of Orbán's recent use of nationalist patriotic-political discourse suggests that patriotism is freighted with contextual meaning yet is perpetually slippery. Understanding patriotism's emotional loading is vital. In his discussion of the nation-state's successful emergence as central to modernity, Eagleton suggests this "... *is not least because it harnesses the most tenaciously 'imaginary' sentiments, in the name of which men and women will readily surrender their lives, to the impersonal symbolic order of law, commerce, justice and citizenship.*" (2009, 52). So, it is with patriotism. It can best be understood as shifting and pliable, absorbing and reflecting meaning and, as we have noted, almost anything can be placed under the rubric of patriotism and designated patriotic: elements from gender, to ethnicity, to peace, to landscapes, to traditions, to religion and so on can apparently be shaped and used as patriotic symbols. Patriotism's power derives from its ambiguity, matched by its capacity for irony and paradox, its status as a floating signifier denoting a symbol sufficiently flexible and open to multiple contextual interpretations yet concrete enough to enable it to be used to political advantage. Thus, the patriot becomes a figure both curiously static yet perpetually in flux. It is constantly made and re-made, its relation to the nation-state partly determined by the re-formulation of old and newer binary borders and foes. Indeed, the certainty and proximity of the constructed *other* is vital in shaping the patriot and patriotism. Populist politicians, it seems, need their monsters to mark boundaries.

Do not quote without
permission – Draft version
for publication in Politics in
Central Europe- March 2026

Patriotism matters because it has great political utility. As discourse it is versatile and flexible. It underpins aspects of the organising logic of contemporary illiberal democracy within and across transnational contexts, nourished via connection and contrast with the pervasive dystopian other whilst expressing aspects of a contrasting utopian desire. Yet whether destiny, tradition, religion, common-sense or patriotism forms the legitimising power, utopian desire's shadow is ever-present in the face of contingency and the evident impossibility of realisation. Disappointment emerges in the space between an imagined utopian future and the constraints of the empirical 'here and now'. The rapid growth in support for the political opposition in Hungary, for example, at the time of writing ahead in the polls, suggests growing popular disappointment with both Fidesz's political achievements and its utopian ambitions. Of course, the anxieties and uncertainties that emerge in late modernity reflect real human concerns and needs, experiences and questions surrounding 'home' and 'homeliness', for example. However, utopian fantasies of radical 'civilisational change' as response, though seductive for some, seem illusory and destined to further disappoint. When accompanied by radical populist interventions in the economy, as in Trump's United States or Milei's Argentina, for example, it is difficult to see how these can offer a stable reflection or resolution of 'the people's' real interests or needs. Despite this, iterations of 'new' utopian patriotisms are emerging globally, presently exemplified by 'Patriots for Europe', and in some places seem to lead to political success. The reshaping of the transnational or global 'patriot' as symbolic carrier of populist discourse is a vital area for further research in understanding and re-imagining the cultural fabric of illiberal and authoritarian states.

Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful for helpful comments on the article made by two anonymous reviewers.

Declaration of Interest Statement

The authors indicate there are no conflicts of interest to report.

References

Abrahamsen, R. et al. (2024), *World of the Right: Radical Conservatism and Global Order*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ahmed, S. (2004). *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Edinburgh University Press

Do not quote without
permission – Draft version
for publication in Politics in
Central Europe- March 2026

Anderson, B. (1991) (revised edition), *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso.

Bacchi, C. (2012), Introducing the ‘What’s the Problem Represented to be?’ approach, in Bletsas, A. & Beasley, C. (eds), *Engaging with Carol Bacchi: Strategic Interventions and Exchanges*, Adelaide: University of Adelaide Press, 21-24.

Barna, I., & Koltai, J. (2019). Attitude changes towards Immigrants in the turbulent years of the 'migrant crisis' and anti-immigrant campaign in Hungary. *Intersections. East European Journal of Society and Politics*, 5(1).

Bauman, Z. (2007), *Liquid Times, Living in an Age of Uncertainty*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Beilharz, P. (1989), ‘Utopia and its Futures’, *Thesis Eleven*, 24.

Bellah, R. (2006), ‘Citizenship, Diversity and the Common Good’, in Robert M. Bellah and Steven M. Tipton, (eds), *The Robert Bellah Reader*, Durham: Duke University Press,

Berend, N. (2001), *At the Gate of Christendom: Jews, Muslims and 'Pagans' in Medieval Hungary c. 1000- c. 1300*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Billig, M. (1995), *Banal Nationalism*, London: Sage Publications.

Bogaards, M., & Pető, A. (2022). Gendering de-democratization: Gender and illiberalism in post-communist Europe. *Politics and Governance*, 10(4), 1-5

Bradford S. & Cullen, F. (2021), ‘Populist Myths and Ethno-Nationalist Fears in Hungary’, in Melody Devries, Judith Bessant and Rob Watts (eds), *Rise of the Far Right. Technologies of Recruitment and Mobilization*, Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield. 41-62.

Bradford S. & Cullen F.J.C.(2022) ‘The Advantages of Chaos: Myth-making and Covid 19 in Hungary’, *Populism*, 5 (2022) 1-27.

Bradford, S. & Cullen, F. (2025), ‘No migration, no gender, no war’: contradictions and paradox in Hungarian migration discourse’, *Politics in Central Europe*, 21 (5), 1-30, DOI: [10.2478/pce-2025-0001](https://doi.org/10.2478/pce-2025-0001)

Brubaker, R. (2004), ‘In the name of the nation: Reflections on nationalism and patriotism’ *Citizenship Studies*, 8 (2) 115-127.

Caiani, M. (2018). Radical right cross-national links and international cooperation. In J. Rydgren (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of the radical right* (pp. 394-411), Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Caiani, M. & Eren, B. (2025), The Transnationalisation of Illiberalism (and Democratic Resistance) in Europe, in *Institute of Development Studies Bulletin*, 56 (1).

Do not quote without
permission – Draft version
for publication in Politics in
Central Europe- March 2026

Camus, J. (2022), 'The Transnational Networks of the European Radical Populist Right and the Beacon of Hungarian Illiberal Democracy' *Journal of Illiberal Studies*, 2 (1), 47-54.

Daniel Kovarek (2025): Elite defection and opposition realignment in Hungary: Respect and Freedom Party (TISZA) in the 2024 European Parliamentary elections, *East European Politics*, DOI: 10.1080/21599165.2025.2468693

De Cleen, B. (2017), Populism and Nationalism. In C. Rovira Kaltwasser, P. Taggart, P. Ostiguy, & P. Ochoa Espejo (Eds.), *Handbook of populism* (pp. 342-362). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Durkheim, E. (1915), *Germany Above All, The German Mental Attitude and the War*, Paris: Librairie Armand Colin.

Durkheim, E. (1982), *The Rules of Sociological Method and Selected Texts on Sociology and its Method*, ed. Steven Lukes, New York: The Free Press.

Eagleton, T. (2009), *Trouble With Strangers. A Study of Ethics*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Eaton, P. (2024). Fascism and Fantasy: How the Reaction to Diversity in Rings of Power Exposed Virulent White Nationalism in Tolkien's Audiences. *The Macksey Journal*, 4(1).

ECA, (2025), *Hungary's Presidency of the Council: a Confusing Six Months*, <https://ecamaastricht.org/blueandyellow-zoomingin/hungarys-presidency-of-the-council-a-confusing-six-months> accessed June 27th 2025.

Enyedi, Z. (2024), Concept and Varieties of Illiberalism, in *Politics and Governance*, 12, article 8521.

EPRS (European Parliamentary Research Service), (2025), *Priority dossiers under the Hungarian EU Council Presidency*, Brussels: European Union.

Ettlinger, N. (2025). Far-right transnationalism, digital affordances, and the specter of a new geopolitics. *Human Geography*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/19427786251318633>

European Council, (2025), *The Council of the European Union*, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/> accessed June 27th 2025.

Fairclough, N. (1995). *Media Discourse*. London: Arnold

Fangen, K., & Weisskircher, M. (2024). Reaching out beyond the national border? How far-right actors in Germany and Norway evaluate transnationalism. *Nations and Nationalism*, 30(4), 683-699

FEOL (2021), 'Orbán Viktor: a legfontosabb a hazaszeretet!' (Orbán Viktor: the most important thing is patriotism!) *Fejér Vármegyei Hírportál*, 2021 11 26,

Do not quote without
permission – Draft version
for publication in Politics in
Central Europe- March 2026

<https://www.feol.hu/orszag-vilag/2021/11/orban-viktor-a-legfontosabb-a-hazaszeretet-video>
accessed September 6th 2023.

Flyvbjerg, B. (2001): *Making Social Science Matter. Why social inquiry fails and how it can succeed again*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Föld, S. P. (2024), 'Orbán, a hazafi' (Orbán the Patriot), *Hírklikk*, July 2nd, 2024
<https://hirklikk.hu/kozelet/orban-a-hazafi/434128/>

Foucault, M. (1983), 'The Subject and Power', in Hubert, L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, (eds), *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, second edition, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Foucault, M. (2016). *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974–1975*. United Kingdom: Verso.

Freud, S. (2003). *The Uncanny*. United Kingdom, Penguin Books.

Freund, D. (2025), <https://danielfreund.eu/balance-sheet-hu-presidency/?lang=en> accessed June 27th 2025.

Gellner, E. (1983), *Nations and Nationalism*, Ithaca.

GKI, Gazdaságkutató Zrt. (2025), Without EU funds, Hungary's Economy would struggle to stay afloat, <https://gki.hu/language/en/2025/05/08/without-eu-funds-hungarys-economy-would-struggle-to-stay-afloat/> accessed October 20th 2025.

Field Code Changed

Glass, C., & Fodor, É. (2022). Risk, reward, and resistance: Navigating work and family under Hungary's new pronatalism. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, 29(4), 1425-1448.

Glaser, B. and Strauss, A. (1967), *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, Chicago: Aldine

Gonzatti, D. & Völker, T. (2025), Far-right agenda setting: How the far right influences the political mainstream, *European Journal of Political Research*, 1-23.

Habermas, J. (1988), *Legitimation Crisis*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Hall, S. (1997), 'The Work of Representation'. In *Representation, Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed S. Hall, 13-64, London: Sage Publications in association with the Open University.

Hochschild, A. (2016), *Strangers in their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*, New York: New Peress.

Jameson, F. (2004), 'The Politics of Utopia', *New Left Review*, 25, 35-54.

Do not quote without
permission – Draft version
for publication in Politics in
Central Europe- March 2026

Kalmar, I. (2020). Islamophobia and anti-antisemitism: the case of Hungary and the ‘Soros plot’. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 54(1-2), 182-198

Körösényi, A. (2018) ‘The Theory and Practice of Plebiscitary Leadership: Weber and the Orbán regime’, *East European Politics and Societies: and Cultures*, 33 (2), 280-301.

Laclau, E. (2005) *On Populist Reason*, London: Verso.

Lánczi, A. (2015), *Political Realism and Wisdom*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Magyar Nemzet (2024), Orbán Viktor: Brüsszel mindig is kormányváltást akart Magyarországon (Brussels has always wanted a change of Hungarian Government) (<https://magyarnemzet.hu/belfold/2024/12/orban-viktor-interju-patriota>, accessed May 28th 2024.

Mannheim, K. (1979), *Ideology and Utopia*, London: Routledge.

Moffat, B. (2017), Transnational Populism? Representative Claims, Media and the Difficulty of Constructing a Transnational ‘People’, in *Javnost- The Public*, 24 (4), 409-425.

Molnár, M. (2001), *A Concise History of Hungary*, Cambridge: University Press.

Mos, M. & Piozevan, I.M. (2024), Leadership in international populism: How Viktor Orbán’s Hungary shows the way, in *New Perspectives*, 32 (4), 329-346.

Mudde, C. (2004) “The Populist Zeitgeist” in *Government and Opposition*, 39 (4), 541-563.

Orbán, V. (2021) Orbán Viktor, véleménycikkben értekezett az új német kormányról és Merkel politikájáról (In an opinion-piece Viktor Orbán discussed the new German government and Merkel’s policy), *Alfahír*, https://alfahir.hu/2021/12/08/nemetorszag_orban_viktor_angela_merkel_olaf_scholz accessed November 21st 2022.

Orbán, V. (2024, I 01), interview with Victor Orbán, M1 public service television, July 1st 2024.

Orbán, V. (2024, I 03), interview with Victor Orbán, Kossuth Rádió, “Good Morning Hungary!” July 19th, 2024.

Orbán, V. (2024, I 04), interview with Viktor Orbán in Nemzeti Sport, daily newspaper, August 24th, 2024.

Orbán, V. (2024, S 06), Victor Orbán’s speech, Lega National Assembly, October 10th 2024.

Orbán, V. (2024, S 12), Victor Orbán’s speech, Press Conference at Slovak/Hungarian/Serb Summit meeting, October 22nd 2024.

Orbán, V. (2024, I 13), interview with Viktor Orbán, Austrian AUF1, television, October 31st, 2024.

Do not quote without
permission – Draft version
for publication in Politics in
Central Europe- March 2026

Orbán, V. (2024, I 14), interview with Viktor Orbán, Servus Television, October 31st, 2024.

Orbán, V. (2024, I 20), interview with Victor Orbán, Kossuth Rádió, “Good Morning Hungary!”, November 22nd, 2024.

Orbán, V. (2024, I 22), interview with Victor Orbán, Kossuth Rádió, “Good Morning Hungary!”, December 6th, 2024.

Orbán, V. (2024, I 23), interview with Victor Orbán, Kossuth Rádió, “Good Morning Hungary!”, December 13th, 2024.

Orbán, V. (2024, S 31), Victor Orbán’s commendation, award ceremony, Foundation for Civic Hungary, December 16th 2024.

Orbán, V. (2024, I 24), interview with Victor Orbán, Patrióta YouTube channel, December 18th, 2024.

Orbán, V. (2024, I 25), interview with Victor Orbán, Mandiner Weekly Newspaper, December 19th 2024.

Orbán, V. (2024, I 26), annual assessment interview with Victor Orbán, M1 public service television, December 21st 2024.

Orbán, V. (2024, I 27), interview with Victor Orbán, Mediaworks newspaper group, December 24th 2024.

Orbán, V. (2025), ‘Speech by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán at the Conference of Speakers of European Union Parliaments’, <https://miniszterelnok.hu/en/speech-by-prime-minister-viktor-orban-at-the-conference-of-speakers-of-european-union-parliaments/> accessed June 23rd 2025.

Orsi, D. (2018), *The ‘Clash of Civilizations’ 25 Years On. A Multidisciplinary Appraisal*, Bristol: E-International Relations Publishing.

Osborne, T. (2020), Civil Society, Populism and Liberalism, *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 34(2), 175-190.

Pendenza, M. (2014), “Merging the National with the Human Ideal”: Émile Durkheim on Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism, in Massimo Pendenza, (ed), *Classical Sociology Beyond Methodological Nationalism*, Leiden: Brill.

Pew Research Center (2018), How do European countries differ in religious commitment? <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/12/05/how-do-european-countries-differ-in-religious-commitment/> accessed February 12th 2023.

Political Capital (2022), The building of Hungarian political influence. The Orbán regime’s efforts to export illiberalism. Aims, instruments, actors, results, https://politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC-Boll_HUNfluence_Study_ENG.pdf accessed May 15th 2025.

Do not quote without
permission – Draft version
for publication in Politics in
Central Europe- March 2026

Political Capital (2025), Hungary's EU presidency in review: remembered more for its unorthodoxy than its policy achievements, https://politicalcapital.hu/news.php?article_read=1&article_id=3487 accessed May 15th 2025.

Puar, J. K., & Rai, A. (2002). Monster, terrorist, fag: The war on terrorism and the production of docile patriots. *Social text*, 20(3), 117-148.

Rasmussen, C. (2023). Fertile ground: the biopolitics of natalist populism. *ACME*, 22(3), 1069-1092.

Ripley, T. (2011), Some Pragmatics of Data Analysis, in Silverman, D. (ed), *Qualitative Research. Issues of Theory, Method and Practice*, London: Sage Publications, 273-290.

Rose, E. (2022), *Disappointed Utopia*, <https://disappointed-utopia.decasia.org/pdf/Disappointed%20Utopia.pdf> accessed May 29th 2024.

Said, Edward, W. (2001), 'The Clash of Ignorance', in *The Nation*, <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/clash-ignorance/> accessed May 15th 2025.

Sata, R. (2023): Performing crisis to create your enemy: Europe vs. the EU in Hungarian populist discourse. *Frontiers in Political Science*, 5, 1–13.

Scheffer, J. (2024), 'Hungary Delivers One of the Most Successful Presidencies in EU History', in *Hungarian Conservative*, <https://www.hungarianconservative.com/articles/hu24eu/hungary-eu-presidency-2024-concludes-assessment/> accessed June 27th 2025.

Smith, Anthony D. (2010), *Nationalism, Theory, History, Ideology*, 2nd edition, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Szabó, L.P. (2020) 'Háború járvány idején – Hogyan beszél Orbán Viktor a koronavírusról?' ('War during an Epidemic – How Viktor Orbán Talks about the Coronavirus') in A. Körösnéyi, A. Szabó and B. Böcskei, *Virusba Oltott Politika. Világjárvány és politikatudomány* (Virus Injected by Politics. Pandemic and Political Science), Budapest: TK Politikatudomány Intézet, Napvilág Kiadó.

Szebeni and Salojarvi, (2022), "Authentically" Maintaining Populism in Hungary – Visual Analysis of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's Instagram, *Mass Communication and Society*, 25(6), 812-837.

Szelewa, D., & Szikra, D. (2024). Fighting gender equality under the pandemic: The case of Polish and Hungarian anti-gender equality and anti-LGBTQ+ policies under the COVID-19 crisis. *Partecipazione e Conflitto*, 17(2), 502-521.

Takács, J., Fobear, K., & Schmitsek, S. (2022). Resisting genderphobia in Hungary. *Politics and Governance*, 10(4), 38-48.

Do not quote without
permission – Draft version
for publication in Politics in
Central Europe- March 2026

Tinsley, M. (2021), 'The opposite of nationalism?': rethinking patriotism in
US political discourse, *Identities*, DOI: 10.1080/1070289X.2021.2004739

Trundle, C., Araujo N., Khan, S. & Phillips T. (2025), Beyond the Mirror: Challenging the
Common Assumptions of Reflexivity in Qualitative Research, in *International Journal of
Qualitative Methods*, 24, 1-14.

Turner, B.S. (2019), 'Introduction', in Emile Durkheim, *Professional Ethics and Civic
Morals*, Abingdon: Routledge.

Tyulenev, S. (2023), Translation as meaning negotiator, in *Translation Studies*, 16 (2), 212-
226.

Vertovec, S (1999) Conceiving and researching transnationalism, in *Ethnic and Racial
Studies*, 22:2, 447-462, DOI: 10.1080/01419879932955

Wodak, R. & Meyer, M. (2001), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, London: Sage
Publications.

Wren, A (2024), How Lord of the Rings Shaped JD Vance's Politics , Politico Magazine,
7/19/24 at <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2024/07/19/lord-of-the-rings-jd-vance-00169372> accessed June 20th 2025.

Zúquete, J. P. (2015). The new frontlines of right-wing nationalism. *Journal of Political
Ideologies*, 20(1), 69–85. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569317.2015.991492>