

HOW POPULIST GOVERNMENTS REWRITE SOVEREIGNTY AND WHY

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Abstract

This paper outlines how state leaders use populism for the purposes of elevating themselves and marginalizing the political opposition, with the aim of consolidating a kind of permanent control over state institutions. I begin with a single case study of a populist government (post-2010 Fidesz government in Hungary), which, once in office, has undertaken to rename streets, stadiums, and squares, erect monuments, and self-consciously rehabilitate the memory of the right-wing Horthy regime from the interwar period, and hence alter the mainstream historical interpretation of Hungary's role in the Holocaust. In this analysis, I conduct a plausibility probe using computer aided text analysis (CATA) on speeches on two national holidays given by the two main contending parties in Hungary (both in and out of government from 2006 to 2015). Using structure topic models (STM), I test for whether the speeches given by the present populist government in Hungary (Fidesz) differ in predictable ways from that of their left-wing opponents and whether these differences were also apparent when the Socialist Party held power from 2006 to 2010 when Fidesz was the main opposition party. The analysis here suggests that Fidesz indeed has a unique discursive style of governance that links their political agenda with historical narratives of sovereignty. Moreover, this style varies from both the rhetorical style

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employed by Fidesz while in opposition as well as the Socialist (non-populist) party in government.

Michael Billig coined the term *banal nationalism* to refer to the ways in which everyday rituals such as the use of national currency, saluting of the flag, observing national holidays, and listening to national anthem prior to sports games—can reinforce one’s national identity.² These rituals are all the more potent for their relative invisibility. It is the unthinking repetitive reenactment of these national rituals that powerfully fortify the imagined horizontal bonds of nationalism; in this way, national bonds are continually strengthened in a kind of stealth mode.

Far from “banal,” the mobilization exercised by populist governments goes to extraordinary lengths, focusing on, even fetishizing, the “people.” Populist governance disrupts the every day solipsistic national rituals—the ordinary humdrum reenactment or performance of one’s national identity. This is replaced with narratives of national crisis and watershed moments, which, if poorly navigated, might be devastating for the future of the country. Populist governments invoke the notion of a separation between the national people and elites, charging the latter with exploiting the former. Rather than merely using nationalist symbols to mobilize the population against perceived foreign or domestic threats, populists seek to “rewrite sovereignty”—both in terms of freedom from external interference (external sovereignty) and the right to govern the people (internal sovereignty). Usually emerging during times of national crisis (debt defaults, currency crises, war, political crisis, or massive economic downturn), populist governments may come from a right-wing persuasion combining anti-elitism with laissez-faire capitalism (contemporary

² Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, Sage Publications, 1995.

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Russia and Hungary) or a left-wing bent that blends anti-elitism, anti-capitalism and anti-globalization (Hugo Chavez's Venezuela, Rafael Correa's Ecuador and Evo Morales' Bolivia). What both strands have in common is an urgent campaign to reframe the nation's sovereignty as a heroic community under siege by nefarious internal and external forces. In this sense, the real power of national leaders everywhere transcends mere agenda-setting and executive decision-making powers conferred by their office. Their real power lies in the ways in which they can rewrite the nation's sovereignty, setting a direction for the course of its people that aims to far outlast their term of office.

In this paper, I outline a theory of populist governance—illustrated with the case of Hungary—in order to investigate the nature and uses of populist rhetoric employed by government leaders. The aim is not only to understand what is happening in the countries that have populist leaders, but also to outline the etymology of populist governance and its relationship to sovereignty. The principal question guiding this inquiry is whether so-called populist leaders such as Orbán employ a distinct rhetorical style when speaking of the nation (as compared with non-populists), and what are the features and uses of this rhetorical style. In the pages that follow, I outline the link between sovereignty and populist governments and explore the features of populist governments using the case of Hungary. What I hope to show is that populist governance reconceptualizes or “rewrites sovereignty” during times of political and/or economic crisis in order to remake the political complexion of the state so as to achieve overwhelming political victories and/or prepare the country for radical reforms.

A New Wave of Populist Governance

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Over ten years ago, Mudde wrote that we were now living in a “Populist Zeitgeist,” in that a populist discursive style had permeated the flow of political life in countries around the world.³ Indeed, the fortunes of populist parties and political forces appear bright as ever in the early twenty-first century, beginning with the stunning political achievements of Jörg Haidar’s Austrian Freedom Party, and including Jean Marie Le Pen’s National Front (France), Carl Hagen’s Progress Party (Norway), Umberto Bossi’s Lega Nord (Italy), Pim Fortuyn’s Pim Fortuyn’s List (PFL of Netherlands), and Pia Kjaersgaard’s the Danish People’s Party (Belgium). Elsewhere in the world—particularly Latin America—left-wing populist governments were now ascendant, including the late Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, Evo Morales of Bolivia, Rafael Correa of Ecuador, and Cristina Kirchner of Argentina.

Mudde puts the apparent explosion of populist parties and politicians down to a range of possible factors, including a growing economic divide between the rich and poor, a growing social distance between ordinary people and a moneyed political class, and the emancipation and empowerment of ordinary people due to the growth of social media and the spread of communications, information, and attendant networking capacities.⁴ This has led leaders of all political stripes to engage in more direct appeals to people, both symbolically and programmatically; in this climate, populist messaging is particularly potent during times of national upheaval. In Central Europe, the past decade has witnessed the twin trends of rising populism and democratic backsliding—including the left-wing populist movement Smer (Direction) in Slovakia and the right-wing Law and Justice party (PiS) of the

³ Cas Mudde, “The Populist Zeitgeist,” *Government and Opposition* (2004): 541-563.

⁴ Ibid.

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Kaczyński brothers in Poland.⁵ Jacques Rupnik argued that the rise of populism in both new and old EU member states was largely due to the ways in which EU integration has “emptied” mainstream parties of their programmatic distinctions and empowered political forces that argue forcefully that national interests should come before EU mandates.

The question then arises: once formerly marginal populist parties (or discourse) come to occupy the main corridors of power, what follows? Do their populist credentials play a role in governance? A skeptic, Rupnik concluded that although populism “thrives on transgression in its discourse...once in power populists tend to resort to some of the policies and practices that they once denounced. Cooptation, clientelism, and state capture tend to be the pattern rather than the pursuit of radicalization.”⁶ That populist governments can range from the far left to far right suggests that populism is best conceptualized narrowly as a distinctive discursive style, based on a hard-line Manichean worldview that the people (or nation) are victimized by set of elites (be it institutions, people or a class), and that a battle must be waged to free the people from the predations of elites. This “thin-centered” ideology, as Mudde put it, is capable of accommodating widely-varying political programs, making left- and right-wing populism two sides of the same coin—what is distinctively populist is not the policies themselves, but the logic and style of governance.

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⁵ Jacques Rupnik, “From Democracy Fatigue to Populist Backlash,” *Journal of Democracy* 18.4 (2007): 17-25.

⁶ Ibid., 24. Reinhard Heinisch argues that in fact populist parties are ill-equipped for governance, and fare better in the opposition. Heinisch, “Success in Opposition—Failure in Government: Explaining the Performance of Right-Wing Populist Parties in Public Office,” *West European Politics* 26.3 (2010): 91-130.

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In an excellent review of the scholarship on populism, Gidron and Bonikowski outline the different strands of the literature that study populism as ideology, a discursive style, and a political strategy.⁷ When populists take over the reigns of state power, I argue that these features are combined, as the full potential of populism (particularly discursive style and political strategy) is harnessed by power-seeking leaders both to vanquish threats to their power (political opposition) and to chart radically new domestic and foreign policy pathways in turbulent times. Their much-touted popularity with ordinary citizens is in fact their main claim to political legitimacy.

Indeed, populist governments routinely circumvent institutional constraints by asserting that their legitimacy derives from their popular mandate, which can be seen in mass attendance of pro-government rallies and generally positive showing in elections. They claim an inside track on the wishes of the people and therefore do not require liberal democratic institutions to divine these wishes, nor to defend or champion them.⁸ The argument follows that liberal democracies are at once too porous and too prone to capture by moneyed interests to reliably represent the people. Because of this, some populist leaders may argue for a “true” or legitimate democracy, the establishment of which may require extraordinary measures that go beyond the bounds of liberal democracy.⁹

The story of Viktor Orbán’s third government in Hungary is illustrative of each of these tendencies. Backed by a 2010 election victory that gave it a two-thirds constitutional majority in Hungary’s monocameral parliament and a Supreme Court packed with party

⁷ Noam Gidron and Bart Bonikowski, “Varieties of Populism: Literature Review and Research Agenda,” Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, Working Paper Series, No. 13-0004 (2013).

⁸ Margaret Canovan, “Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy,” *Political Studies* XLVII (1999): 2-16.

⁹ Steven Levitsky and James Loxton, “Populism and Competitive Authoritarianism in the Andes,” *Democratization*, 20.1(2013): 107-136.

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faithful, the Orbán government has fundamentally rewritten the constitution, introduced restrictions on independent media, implemented electoral rules that consolidated the power of Orbán's ruling Fidesz party, and engineered significant policy reforms in all areas of the government. As a preparatory step, this paper outlines the general features of populist governance evinced by the Hungarian case—a kind of “pathway case” that illustrates all the principal features of populist governance.

Rewriting National Sovereignty:

Much of the earlier wave of populism research focused on left-wing populist *policies* based on the examples of twentieth century Latin American regimes. These regimes used import substitution industrialization (ISI) to advance their economies, sheltering them from competition from more advanced economies; such policies were thus seen as a distinct stage in capitalist development.¹⁰ Following the debt crisis and decline of ISI in the 1980s, right-wing populist governments swept the region with Alberto Fujimori in Peru, Carlos Menem in Argentina, and Fernando Collor in Brazil—combining populist rhetoric with neo-liberal market reforms.¹¹ In more recent years, researchers have placed greater emphasis on investigating the political *style* that is common to both right- and left-wing populism. Populist leaders of today share with nation-builders of the past an interest in creating a national history that supports a given political agenda. Unlike historical nation-builders, however, today's populist

¹⁰ See, for instance, Kenneth Roberts, “Neoliberalism and the Transformation of Populism in Latin America,” *World Politics* 48(October 1995): 82-116; and Rudiger Dornbusch and Sebastian Edwards, “The Macroeconomics of Populism,” in Dornbusch and Edwards (eds.) *The Macroeconomics of Populism in Latin America* (University of Chicago Press, 1990): 7-13. See Kirk Hawkins for an excellent critique of these overly specific definitions of populism based in the unique experience of Latin American populism. Hawkins, “Clarifying a Contested Concept: Populism in the Study of Latin American Politics,” *Comparative Politics* 34.1(2001): 1-22.

¹¹ Kenneth Roberts, “Latin America's Populist Revival,” *SAIS Review* 27.1 (2007): 3-15.

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leaders tend to be longer on symbolism than on programmatic policy (which tends to be haphazard and reactive).

Invoking Internal Threats to the Nation

Populist governments often obliquely refer to classes of citizens or residents of the state as threats to the nation. In most cases, ethnic minorities have occupied this role, particularly those with powerful external lobbies (ethnonationalist groups with external homeland states). These groups, long marginalized and distrusted, are sometimes cast as fifth columns in populist narratives. Groups that occupy a crucial economic or political niche may also be styled as an internal threat. Historical examples include Jewish minorities in Tsarist Russia and elsewhere in Eastern Europe, who were targeted by local mobs (sometimes with the backing of governments) due to their presumed control of financial and other economic institutions, particularly from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. Contemporary examples include Chinese or Indian minorities throughout Southeast Asia, who have been targeted by ethnic majorities who begrudged them their economic successes.

In contemporary Hungary, a small (largely non-religious, assimilated) Jewish population lives in harmony with Hungary's non-Jewish population. Despite this, the government has framed certain segments of the Jewish population as an implicit threat to the nation, lumping them in with the "left-liberal intellectuals" that have dominated Hungarian society, burdening it with the decades-old myth that Hungary was responsible for the death of half a million Jews. Under Orbán's guidance, the government has sought to rewrite Hungarian national history, most notably with the controversial "German occupation monument," which was erected in the center of Budapest in 2014 on the 70th anniversary of the Nazi occupation of Hungary. The

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monument downplays Hungary's role in the extermination of Jews during World War II, implying that Nazi Germany was responsible for the victimization of *both* Hungary *and* the Jews. In light of the international criticism attracted by the monument, Orbán has said that it was not a Holocaust memorial, but instead marked [Hungary's] "loss of state sovereignty."¹²

Invoking External and Fifth Column Threats

Populist governments are perhaps most fond of invoking powerful *external* threats to the nation. In this framing, previous governments are denigrated for their negligent inattention to the ways in which outside interests subjugated the nation's right to self-determination and ability to exercise sovereignty. Attention is drawn to colonial experiences or foreign subjugation, and to the complicity of former regimes in assisting rapacious outside interests in appropriating and exploiting the resources of the nation. In a speech given to commemorate the anniversary of the 1848 Hungarian Revolution, Orbán distanced himself from the former socialist government, which he charged with serving foreign interests: "We will not be a colony!" and "Hungarians will not live as foreigners dictate it, will not give up their independence or their freedom."¹³

Predictably, the government has sought to link the aforementioned fifth column elements—left-liberal intellectuals or (a phrase used by the extreme right Jobbik party) *idegenszívu* (foreign-hearted)—to civil society organizations who threaten the discursive dominance of Orbán's movement in Hungary. "We're not dealing with civil society members but paid political activists who are trying to help foreign interests here," Orbán said. "It's

¹² Sam Sokol, "German Occupation Statue in Budapest not a Holocaust Memorial, Orban Says," *The Jerusalem Post*, June 11, 2014, <http://www.jpost.com/Jewish-World/Jewish-Features/German-occupation-statue-in-Budapest-not-a-Holocaust-memorial-says-Orban-355939>

¹³ Ian Traynor, "Hungary prime Minister Hits Out at EU Interference in National Day Speak," *The Guardian*, 15 March 2012.

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good that a parliamentary committee has been set up to monitor the influence of foreign monitors.”¹⁴ The government has, accordingly, gone after civil society organizations that appeared to have links with foreign donors and states, leading in some cases to their demise.

Rewriting Heroic National Discourse

Populist governments are also strongly inclined to appropriate national heroes as a means of legitimizing radical reform. In doing so, populist leaders routinely appeal to storied revolutionary leaders who are widely regarded as the “fathers” or founders of the nation or to those who presided over the nation during its heyday, suggesting a direct lineage from the vaunted historical visionary to the populist leader in question. Russian President Vladimir Putin has deliberately cast himself as “father of the people,” in multiple small ways hearkening back to the Russian tsars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Macedonian Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski has played on parallels between himself and Alexander the Great, and the late Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez styled himself as the latest incarnation of anti-colonial Latin American revolutionary, Simón Bolívar.

Likewise in contemporary Hungary, Viktor Orbán and his associates have invited comparisons between the prime minister and St. Stephen, the first king and patron saint of Hungary. Speaking at a St. Stephen’s Day celebration, Lajos Kósa, deputy chairman of Fidesz and mayor of Debrecen, noted that St. Stephen had used “unusual methods to convert his country from a pagan tribal society to a Christian state,” and that Viktor Orbán had likewise chosen to use “unorthodox methods” to change Hungary.¹⁵ Comparisons have also been made between Orbán and the

¹⁴ Zoltan Simon, “Orban says He Seeks to End Liberal Democracy in Hungary,” *Bloomberg News*, July 14, 2014.

¹⁵ “Another St. Stephen’s Day in Hungary,” *The Hungarian Spectator*, August 21, 2012, <http://hungarianspectrum.org/2012/08/21/another-st-stephens-day-in-hungary/>

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“Greatest Hungarian” (*legnagyobb magyar*), István Széchenyi, a nineteenth century leader who enacted numerous national reforms. Having established this heroic lineage, the stage is set for altering the political complexion of the country as a precursor to significant policy changes—in the case of Hungary, to “finish” what Orbán calls the “unfinished revolution” of 1989.

Countering the Opposition and Silencing their Discourses

When rewriting national sovereignty, populist governments nearly always encounter oppositional discourses that contest the government’s more controversial politico-historical claims. Populist governments tend to be hyper-aware of the need to appropriate heroic frames and rewrite sovereign history, if for no other reason than that they can thereby justify radical deviations from the political status quo. Putin, for example, has invoked the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact that divided Poland between Russia and Germany, as a model for the peaceful division of Ukraine between Russia and the West.¹⁶ These efforts may lead the opposition to propagate an equally heroic national narrative that runs directly counter to the government’s version—recasting the government’s national heroes as villains, and its villains as heroes.

In Orbán’s version of national history, for example, Admiral Miklós Horthy, Regent of Hungary during the interwar period, was a strong conservative, traditional leader who was ruined by Nazi Germany’s invasion and the attendant destruction of Hungary’s sovereignty. He heroically attempted to save the beleaguered Jews who were threatened with evacuation and eventual extermination—stalling and buying time from both Nazi invaders and the interim proto-fascist Hungarian Arrow Cross

¹⁶ Tom Parfiti, “Vladimir Putin says there was nothing wrong with Soviet Union’s Pact with Adolf Hitler’s Nazi Germany,” *The Telegraph*, November 6, 2014.

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Party. These heroic acts, so the narrative goes, saved countless Jewish lives. The oppositional discourse, by contrast, casts Horthy as an unambiguous fascist leader, who failed to stand up more strongly against the predations of the Jews. Resurrecting Horthy's legacy has been critical to Orbán's goal of reconfiguring the Hungarian state as a Christian nation that rejects western, secular liberal traditions and celebrates Hungarian leaders (such as himself) who fight against foreign dictates of much more powerful states and organizations (such as the EU). Countering this discourse has been an important goal of the opposition.

Creating a "True" Democracy

As noted earlier, populist governments base their sovereignty in the support they claim to enjoy from the people. Populist leaders may demonstrate their popularity in the results of (fair or unfair) elections or by citing pro-government rallies or favorable opinion polls. In fact, most populist leaders decide early on that they need to control the media message, which often involves intensive organization of pro-government individuals who engage in counter-protests at anti-regime rallies. Putin created the *Nashi* youth movement to attack regime dissidents; likewise, the *chavistas* attempted to silence the critics of Hugo Chavez.

Populist governments also tend to compare themselves invidiously with their enemies or rivals—often states or organizations that criticize the populist regime. In an interview with the *Franfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Orbán observed, "I was elected, the Hungarian government was elected, as well as the European Parliament...But who elected the European Commission? What is its democratic legitimacy? And to whom is the European Parliament responsible? This is a very serious problem in the new European architecture."¹⁷ Orbán has

¹⁷ "Viktor Orbán im Gespräch: 'Es gibt ein verborgenes Europa,'" *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 4 March 2012.

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used this line of argument to reject the penalties and criticism of his anti-liberal policies (most notably from the US and the EU) by suggesting that liberal democracy bankrupts the people, the society, and the nation. He has suggested, by contrast, that the “illiberal democracies” of Putin’s Russia, Tan’s Singapore, Xi Jinping’s China, and Erdogan’s Turkey provide a useful political and economic model for twenty-first century Hungary.¹⁸

Hypotheses and Research Design

In this initial exploratory analysis, I seek to identify a *style of populist governance* as distinct from populism as a movement or party politics, which has been covered extensively elsewhere. The argument here is that populist parties or populist are expected to retain their basic features while in government, but should also display themes discussed above. Namely, I expect populist state leaders to employ their “elites versus people” discourses in while government just as they did while out of government. While in office, however, I expect populist leaders to reframe a state’s sovereign identity quite openly in the service of a given political agenda. I expect the style of populist governance to differ from that of nationalist governance, which puts the interests of the putative “nation” above those of individuals, groups or entities outside the state. Populist governments may or may not be openly “country-first” in their rhetorical style; what is distinct about them is that they attempt to reformulate or redefine the sovereign identity as one that is continually under threat by elites (*both* internal and external). This rhetoric is then used to split the population and entities both within and outside the country in the service of a given political agenda. With this in mind, I have derived the following hypotheses for the purposes of testing (comparing the following

¹⁸ Rick Lyman and Alison Smale, “Defying Soviets, then Pulling Hungary Toward Putin, *The New York Times*, November 7, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/08/world/europe/viktor-orban-steers-hungary-toward-russia-25-years-after-fall-of-the-berlin-wall.html?_r=0

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categories: populists versus non-populists (H1) and populists in government versus populists out of government (H2):

***H1:** Populist leaders (both in and outside of government) are more likely than non-populists to attempt to justify their policies as a defense of the people/nation against elite predation and to link their current policies with the goals of past vaunted national leaders.*

***H2:** Populist leaders are more likely to adapt their political rhetoric to their political position; thus we are more likely to see different topics emerge in the speeches of populists depending on whether they are in or out of power.*

Method and Data

I conduct a first-cut test of these hypotheses using data from the the case of Hungary, which since 2010 has been widely recognized as having a populist government led by Fidesz Party Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. This exploratory method compares three sets of speeches given by Fidesz leaders (nearly all Orbán) for four years leading up to the party's victory in 2010, and five years after that time. Doing so allows for a comparison of the types of themes that come up in Fidesz speeches while in opposition (2006-2009) and then while in government (2010-2015). At the same time, left-wing politicians are also analyzed, with a focus on the Socialist (MSZP) Party, as the most important opposition party. In the case of the left-wing parties, the speeches of multiple people are analyzed, as there was more leadership turnover in the Socialist Party. The principal speakers on the left are Ferenc Gyurcsány (Socialist Party leader from 2007 to 2009 and Hungarian Prime Minister from 2004 to 2009), and Attila Mesterházy (Chairman of the Socialist Party and leader of the opposition from 2010 to 2014).

To ensure comparability of speeches of both populist versus non-populist and government versus opposition, the selected corpus of texts includes speeches given by both government and opposition leaders on universally recognized annual events that call for reflection on the country and its politics as a whole. Since these events occur annually, there

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should be a certain homogeneity to the speeches given by both government and opposition leaders, thus controlling for context. Speeches for two events are included in this corpus: two of the three most important Hungarian national holidays—October 23, which commemorates the failed revolution against Soviet occupation by Hungarian “freedom fighters” in 1956; and March 15, which celebrates the failed Hungarian revolution against Austrian-dominated Habsburg suzerainty in 1848.¹⁹

The technique used to evaluate these texts for content is structural topic models (STM) (Roberts et al. 2013, 2014a, 2014b). STM is a method of computer-assisted text analysis that involves machine-reading texts. This technique utilizes what is known as the “bag-of-words” assumption. This means that each document is treated as a collection of words in which the order is ignored—each document is treated as a vector equal to the number of unique words within the text. In doing so, common “stop words” (words that are very common in language but are unrelated to the subject of interest) are removed from the text. The remaining words are “stemmed,” meaning that conjugations and plural forms are removed for the purposes of identifying all occurrences of each word of interest.

Under topic models, each document is modeled as a mixture of topics from a set thereof. The structural topic model is closely related to the popular ‘correlated topic model’ (CTM) (Blei and Lafferty 2007). The main difference is that topic prevalence is modeled with a logistic-normal linear model, which allows the researcher include document-level covariates in the model—the speaker or author of the text, the specific speech event or the year. In the present case, the following are included: (i) the anniversary (15 March or 23

¹⁹ The third important national holiday, St. Stephen’s Day on August 20, celebrates the putative birth of the Hungarian state in 1083 AD by St. Stephen, the first Hungarian king and founder of the Hungarian kingdom. Political speeches on this holiday were excluded from the analysis because it is in the middle of summer when people are on vacation; government and opposition leaders do not, therefore, give significant speeches on this day.

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October), (ii) the year of the speech, (iii) whether the speaker was a member of the opposition or the government, and (iv), whether the speaker was from a center-left or center-right party. The analysis was performed using STM (structural topic model) package (Roberts et al. 2013, 2014a, 2014b) for the R language. To prepare the texts, they were first run through google translate to generate English versions. This was done for two reasons—first, the stemming of words is more complicated in Hungarian. Second, this will ultimately be a comparative project, in which the models will be applied to cases beyond Hungary. For the purposes of interpretability and efficiency, this will require that all texts be translated into a common language, and English is an obvious common language to use for this. Going forward, I will be using an R package, *translateR*, which can be used to translate large corpuses of text from the original language to English (see Lucas et al. 2014, for a discussion of such techniques as well as comparative politics applications).

An objection might be raised that automated translation tools yield translations from the original language that are of questionable quality. However, the overall quality of the translated texts is less important in STM modeling because what matters is frequency of unique words in each document rather than the semantic structure of the sentences. All that matters for this analysis is that words in the original Hungarian are translated correctly; ultimately, a robustness check will be conducted in Hungarian to see if the words were in fact translated correctly and that the same topics emerge.

The corpus of texts analyzed here consists of 29 speeches from 2006 to 2015, sixteen related to 15 March, thirteen to 23 October; eleven were made while the speaker was a prime minister, and eighteen while in opposition. Fourteen were made by members of center-left and fifteen of center-right parties. Therefore, there was a good spread across the three main covariates of interest. Following translation, the text was cleaned (stop words removed) and

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stemmed, resulting in a collection of 25,180 instances of 2,104 stems. The shortest document was 236 stems long, and the longest 1,329 stems. The median length was 1,002 stems, and the mean was 868 stems.

The first covariate is the speech event. Altogether, speeches from two events were included. It makes sense to study the main covariates of interest (populist versus non-populist, government versus opposition) separately for two speech events--October 23 versus March 15. This is because the circumstances surrounding the respective national events differ significantly. At the same time, they have certain things in common. For instance, they are both failed revolutions against foreign oppressors; in both cases the Hungarian "nation" was dealt an historic defeat, suffering significant casualties as well as decades of subsequent national oppression. Further, both events are central to the Hungarian national identity, and both featured national heroes/martyrs as well as traitors.

However, there are important differences as well that factor importantly into how politicians talk about them. For instance, the October 23 event is more divisive politically, because it is still a living memory for many older Hungarians, and there is a direct lineage from the political players in the October 23, 1956 revolution and the main political forces in Hungary today; moreover, although the Soviet Union is no more, the successor state of Russia remains relevant in Hungarian politics due to the country's outsize dependence on Russian gas as well as the threat it appears to pose to small former satellite countries on its western flank. By contrast, the March 15, 1848 revolution is not a living memory. Not only is the Habsburg Empire ancient history to Hungarians today, but Austria poses no conceivable threat to Hungary; therefore, the March 15 event is not a divisive holiday within Hungary and

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is thus less prone to demagoguery.²⁰ Nonetheless, its placement close to election periods in Hungary (usually held in April) means that politicians often use the March 15 event as an extension of election campaigning.

By contrast, the October 23 event contains unique sensitivities for both the Socialists and Fidesz Parties. Because Hungary's pacted transition meant that there was no clear break between the communist leadership, Imre Nagy, who led the failed revolution (leading to Nagy's execution on charges of treason two years after the Soviet crackdown) and today's Socialist Party, the failed revolution may also be said to be a failure of the Hungarian left. Meanwhile, both parties have had cozy relations with contemporary Russia while in power—leading to charges from the party in opposition that the party in office had not learned the lesson of '56, which is that nothing good can come of too-close alliance with Russia.

Figure 1 and Table 1 below should be read together. The STM model was run for six discrete topics across the corpus of speeches. The topics are based on distinctive words that cluster together within a given speech; the topics themselves were named based on the words associated with them (see Table 1) as well as a reading of individual documents that had 100 percent coverage of that particular topic (e.g., Gyurcsány's Oct. 23, 2008 speech for topic 2). The percentages in Figure 1 indicate the degree of overlap or coverage of each of the six topics within that document (otherwise referred to as topic proportions). Each document is assumed to represent a mixture of topics with the rows adding up to 100 percent. Thus, Figure 1 shows that 13 percent of Orbán's March 15, 2009 speech covers economics (topic 1), 33 percent anti-imperialism (topic 4) and the remaining 54 percent revolutionary struggle

²⁰ In the early years of the post-Cold War period, however, commemorations of the March 15 event have sparked conflict between Hungarian communities and ethnic majorities in neighboring countries, as seen in the ethnic riots in Transylvania in 1990.

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(topic 5). By contrast, 100 percent of Mesterházy's March 15, 2014 covers the economics topic (topic 1).

The value of the analysis for hypothesis-testing comes from incorporating the document meta-data into the models. Thus, one can observe the degree of coverage of a given political topic in politician A's speeches relative to politician B's speeches and whether topic proportions vary depending on whether the speaker was, for example, in government at the time or in the opposition, the year the speech was given, or whether the speech commemorated March 15 or October 23.

After experimenting with models with four or five models as well as models with over ten topics, the six topic model was chosen as the most informative in terms of showing varying degrees of overlap between the speeches of different actors on different occasions and discrete "topics." Models with fewer topics showed an almost uniform topic overlap across speeches of different actors; therefore, little could be said about how different actors employ different topics in different circumstances (for example, whether the speaker was the prime minister or leader of the opposition). On the other hand, models with too many topics yielded results that were too unique, such that a single topic corresponded with (or overlapped completely with) a single speech, again yielding little in the way of comparative opportunities. The six-topic model showing the most informative clustering—showing that certain topics were associated with certain speakers and that this varied depending on whether that party was in or out of government.

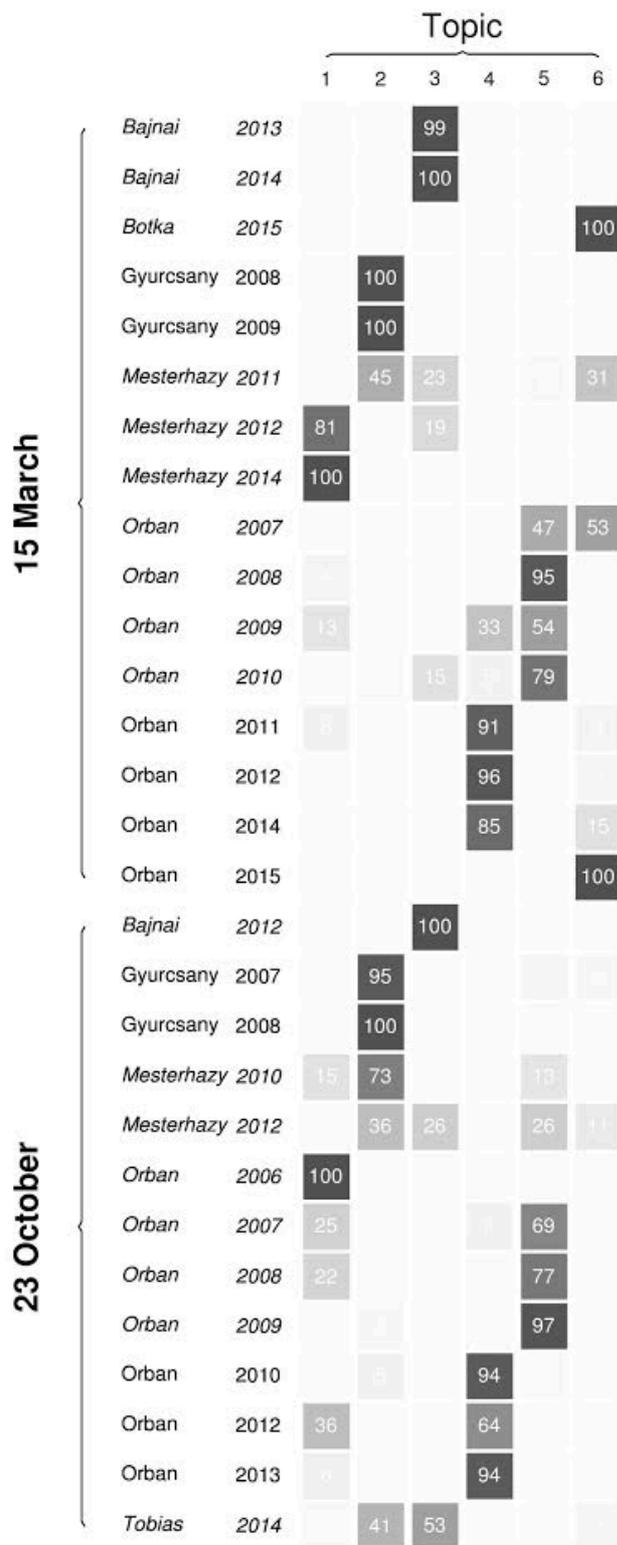
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Table 1. Six Topic Model for Socialist/Fidesz Speeches, 2006-2015

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Words</i>
Topic 1: Economics (opposition party leaders, both sides)	price, social, money, pension, crisi, socialist, lie, three, bankruptci, instead, small, asid, control, accept, econom, western, ideolog, miracl, ancient, system
Topic 2: Freedom, Democracy (Socialist leaders)	nagi, imr, republ, think, talk, symbol, say, coup, dream, politician, dare, memori, belief, tradit, institut, person, dictatorship, festiv, sometim, democrat
Topic 3: Criticizing Fidesz (mostly Bajnai, Socialists post-2010)	vote, tell, polit, orban, solidar, viktor, regim, govern, must, fidesz, chang, era, safe, agre, common, april, afraid, goal, home, current
Topic 4: Anti-imperialism (exclusively Orbán in government)	soviet, written, debt, gentlemen, foreign, book, oath, ladi, twenti, communism, find, fighter, renew, christian, welcom, empir, gave, hero, slowli, look
Topic 5: Revolutionary Struggle (Orbán in opposition)	histor, flag, howev, old, success, overcom, realli, win, restor, order, referendum, victori, voic, imposs, trip, feel, ladi, parliament, alway, situate
Topic 6: Lajos Kossuth (some Orbán, some left-wing parties)	lajo, privileg, spring, szege, kossuth, exclus, loser, knew, equal, homeland, meaning, shoulder, democraci, pride, march, constitut, citi, major, point, press

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Figure1. Document proportions of topics under the six topic model*



*Values are in rounded percentages, shaded according to amount. Speeches made by members of the opposition are labeled in italics.

Discussion of Results

I group the most salient themes that emerge from this analysis into two categories—populists versus non-populist leaders and position in government versus the opposition (mapping onto Hypothesis 1 and 2, respectively). Figure 1 and Table 1 show that Orbán, leader of the populist Fidesz Party, gave speeches that were dominated by topics 4 and 5 (anti-imperialism and revolutionary struggle, respectively), whereas left-wing politicians (primarily Socialists) gave speeches dominated by topic 2 (freedom, democracy), and to a lesser extent 3 (criticizing Fidesz), which was mostly the province of Gordon Bajnai, Hungarian prime minister from the Socialist Party from 2009 to 2010, who took over when a deeply unpopular Gyurcsány resigned. Both in and out of government, Orbán offered speeches for October 23 and March 15 that were much more characterized by conflict, revolutionary struggle and fighting against foreign oppressors, whereas the left-wing Socialists offered speeches characterized by themes of freedom and democracy. The topical coverage of the speeches of left-wing parties did not differ substantially depending on whether they were in government or the opposition. However, Orbán's speeches placed greater emphasis on revolutionary struggle while in the opposition (before 2010); however, his speeches emphasized anti-imperialism and foreign aggressors while in government (after 2010). There is considerable coverage of Topic 1 (economics) in the speeches of both parties when they were in opposition, suggesting that the theme of economics is a common political instrument used to criticize the party in power. Finally, the event itself made little difference in the topical coverage of speeches across speakers. I now explore Hypotheses 1 and 2 in greater detail below.

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Populist versus Non-populist Governments

As expected, the populist Fidesz leader Viktor Orbán speaks in more visceral detail about the details surrounding the March 15 and October 23 failed revolutions. Of the six topics considered in the model, the two that most characterize Fidesz speeches are Topic 4 (anti-imperialism) and Topic 5 (revolutionary struggle). In his speeches, what stands out most are the hyperbolic language and the repeated linkages between the national events in question and parallel struggles facing Hungary today. In his speeches, Orbán easily and naturally appropriated these historical events to buttress the political legitimacy of his party and his government. The following excerpt from a speech given on October 23, 2013 (94 percent of which covered the anti-imperialism topic):

First, we know that among the Hungarian freedom fighters were not only heroes, but also traitors. We know that all of our revolution was beaten down abroad. We also know there have always been some who have helped the external enemy... We also know that in 2006, after 16 years of democracy hunting rifles were fired at us in the streets of Pest. We also know that this may have happened because they were in the hands of the government, who also used the armed state bodies against their own people without inhibition.

Here, a clear connection is drawn between the freedom fighters of 1956 and the protestors rallying against the Socialist government in 2006 fifty years later. Note also the allusion to internal traitors (the Soviet supporters in 1956, and the Socialist government in 2006) that were purportedly aligned with external oppressors; the language of fifth column threats is a hallmark of populist governance, as argued above.

Orbán has also compared his coming to office in the 2010 election with 2/3 of the seats as a revolution akin to both the 1848 revolution and the 1956 revolution, saying that today Hungarians will finish the revolution that they started long ago. Orbán as prime minister has also offered comparisons between the foreign oppressors of 1848 and foreign entities deemed hostile to Hungary today. Thus, in a speech commemorating the 1848 revolution in 2012 (96 percent of which covered the anti-imperialism topic), he said:

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The European bureaucrats still look at us suspiciously, because we say new roads are needed. We say we need to get to the prison of debt, and I say that only strong nations can make Europe great again. Already in March [1848] the young men saw what is now Europe...So [of the 12 points of the Hungarian Revolution] the one indispensable requirement was to avoid a national bank. Although the March [1848] youths were neither board members nor bankers, they recognized the seriousness of the problem of national banks....The independence of the national bank gives the nation's economy to foreign interests. They also knew, and we also know, that common people do not give the key to their chamber to their neighbor!...Some may ask whether in such difficult, crisis-ridden times...it would not be better to somehow wait quietly in the shadows? But such reasoning...preserves his subjection, and blocks the path of successful liberation...So it was in '48, and so it is today. Glory to the brave! Go, Hungary, Hungarians go for it!²¹

Here, Orbán aligns his campaign against foreign banks since coming to office in 2010 with the opposition of the 1848 Hungarian revolutionaries to a national bank; in the same speech, he also fingered the Brussels as one foreign (elite) interest that has undermined Hungary's efforts to become independent, self-sufficient and prosperous.

By contrast, the Socialist (non-populist) leaders' speeches have used much less colorful language. They have consistently expressed their commitment to democracy, encouraging their listeners to hew to Hungary's long struggle toward prosperity. The speeches were also short, relatively standard homages to the revolutionaries of the past—appearing to call on the population to reflect on the sacrifices of past Hungarian heroes and to recognize the ambiguity of these events. Little was done in these speeches to harness heroic symbols for the purposes of justifying Socialist policies or to improve their popularity. They instead exhorted the Hungarian public to stick to the path and remain patient. In a 2007 speech commemorating the October 23 revolution (95 percent of which covered the democracy topic), Prime Minister Gyurcsány offered the following muddle:

Dictatorships have lots of claims and few questions, if any. A democracy does not make a lot of claims, but it respects those. But it asks a lot. My claim, our claim regarding the Third Hungarian Republic, is the support for freedom, the support for democracy, the support for human dignity. The acceptance that the county is made of people who are not perfect—though we are striving to become—and that very power is coming from us. That is not too many sentences. And from this comes questions.

To some extent, Socialist Party leaders *have* sought to put forward a version of these national events that put their side in a favorable light—for instance, suggesting that Nagy and others

²¹ Perhaps fittingly, most of Orbán's speeches in this corpus conclude with this mass rallying cry. By contrast, Socialist speakers were more likely to end their speeches by thanking the audience for their attention.

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represent a “leftist revolutionary past” (making the contemporary Socialist Party their worthy heirs); however, in their speeches they tend to emphasize the complex, ambiguous nature of these events, in contrast to the straightforward one-dimensional depiction of the 1848 and 1956 revolutions by Orbán as a testament to the evil and treachery of leftist forces. Such ambiguity can be seen in Mesterházy’s 2010 speech commemorating October 23 in Kaposvár, Hungary (73 percent coverage of the democracy topic):

Our parents and grandparents, who lived through these historic days, nearly without exception, have their own personal stories. Nearly all Hungarian families were directly or indirectly affected by the events. For them, 1956 is not simply history, but also a personal story. The true face of 1956 comes from the mosaics of their personal stories. This picture is not black-and-white, but multicolored, as history itself.

As expected, Hungary’s non-populist leaders have been more likely to give relatively bland commemorative speeches focused on the events themselves, without offering policy parallels with the present, much less definitive support for a given policy agenda (in stark contrast to Orbán’s populist speeches). When connections to the present are made, they are often flat and uninspired. Thus, Gyurcsány’s 2009 speech commemorating March 15 follows (74 percent of which corresponds to the democracy topic):

In the past twenty years, we built 100,000 new flats. In the past few years, there were more than 100,000 new cars. You may ask: how is it connected to the celebration of ’48? I would say: this is what we can celebrate. This is the proof of freedom, independence, growth.

Gyurcsány went on to say that during this period of Socialist rule (in the mid-2000s), the country became “free and independent; a member of the world’s strongest military and political alliance; an equal member of the European Community,” which was what the 1848 revolutionaries had sought to achieve.

Populists in Government versus the Opposition

Because populist leaders are more inclined—or perhaps better able—to harness historical figures in the service of a given political agenda, they are also more likely than their non-

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populist counterparts to change the interpretations of these events depending on whether they are in government as opposed to the opposition. Indeed, Figure 1 suggests that Orbán emphasized revolutionary struggle (Topic 5) while in opposition, but anti-imperialism (Topic 4) while in government. By contrast, the left-wing non-populists (particularly Socialists) stuck to familiar themes (democracy, Topic 2) in their speeches, regardless of whether they were in government or the opposition.

Why did Orbán shift the topical proportion of his speeches after coming to power? An examination of the texts suggests that the theme of revolutionary struggle was mainly useful while in opposition. Thus, Orbán clearly aligned his fight against the Socialist government in the 2000s with that of the Hungarian revolutionaries of 1848 and 1956. In his October 23, 2007 speech (69 percent of which covered the revolutionary struggle topic), he said:

October 23, 1956...also represents the hope of victory... [I would be remiss if I did not mention] the serious crisis that is shaking the world today, and that shakes Hungary. I hear a plethora of witty and persuasive explanations of the reasons for the crisis. However, the reality is simple. The reason for the crisis is the eternal human frailty; the greed, excess and profiteering, always more and more and more money. And to this end...[the government] lied, cheated and misled the people. [Gyurcsány] denied the right to what we democrats, the heirs of 1956, fought for—the cause of independence and freedom...[The people] should be given the opportunity to freely decide the future of the reforms...A decisive reform referendum in which the people are now truly free to decide. That is why tomorrow we will submit initiatives referendum on issues of educational, health care, pensions, land issues and democratic guarantees.

This demonstrates Orbán's focus on the claimed tyranny of the Socialist government, invoking sustained parallels with the reactionary forces of 1956. Indeed, since the protests and associated police violence of 2006, Orbán has repeatedly invited comparisons between the Soviet crackdown in 1956 and the government's use of violence against protesters in 2006—claiming this demonstrates the authoritarian tendencies of the left.

Having gained political office in 2010, however Orbán executed a topical shift in his speeches from emphasizing internal revolution to emphasizing a fight for Hungarian sovereignty against foreign oppression from abroad. In his March 15, 2012 speech (96 percent overlap with the anti-imperialism topic), he stated,

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In the midst of the European financial crisis, during the rumbles of the international financial system, we have to answer the biggest question: either we accept vulnerability for life, or we build on the virtues that make Hungarians Hungarian, sovereignty sovereignty, and history history; either we choose the colonial fate, or the Hungarian life built by our best selves.

Here, then, the enemy of the Hungarian people is international banks, the EU, the IMF, and all who would constrain the choices of the Hungarian people to decide their own fate.

Brussels is another favored villain in the epic tale of good versus evil, featuring Hungarian people as protagonists. In Orbán's October 23, 2012 speech, he characterized Brussels and banking interests as foreign oppressors and as threats to Hungarian sovereignty:

In Brussels, we find many who want a return to banking capitalism in place of a renewal of the European economy, who want to resurrect a speculators' system instead of a labor-based economy, who want to place burden-sharing on the people who bear the burden of the crisis. This we can not accept! We can accept rules across the board. But we cannot accept that others say what we can and can not do in their own country. We accept a fair application of the rules of European cooperation, but we do not accept sophisticated methods by which aliens govern us.

Second, as expected, Orbán shifted his interpretation of the 1956 revolution after having come to power. While in opposition, he used his speeches to demonize the Socialists for having ties to a Russian government (implying that they had learned nothing from the Soviet crackdown of 1956). In his October 23, 2007 speech, Orbán declared that 1956 was “a revolution against the east,” proclaiming that:

Eastern politics does not allow for freedom, independence, and sovereignty. It abolishes the lines of defense of the independent life of the people. It makes us poor, vulnerable; intimidates us. Our life becomes parts in the chain dependent on the powerful.

However, after having come to power in 2010, his 1956 commemorative speeches dropped the east-west distinction and associated demonization of Russia—no doubt due to his own government's warm ties with the Russian government and dependence on Russia for supplies of gas and oil. Instead, in his October 23, 2013 speech, he played down the role of Russia, emphasizing instead the importance of maintaining Hungarian sovereignty and deciding their own future:

Freedom does not only mean that the Soviets are not here, and we are not prisoners of Comecon. Freedom does not only mean that we liberate and take back our own country. Freedom does not end here, it only starts here. Freedom means—as Attila József taught—that we can liberate and we should liberate our own lives. We arrange

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it, we decide on it, with our own responsibility and without others telling us what to do. We know that since 2010 big things happened in Hungary, like the exceptional cooperation during the last election. We have made some decisions without asking for approval or endorsement, we even made these against half the world.

This foregoing shows Orbán's populist style and rhetorical flexibility not only in rewriting Hungarian sovereignty as a means of legitimizing his party and policy agenda, but also in dropping one interpretation for another based on his political position (in this case, in or outside of government).

Preliminary Conclusions

Where does this preliminary discussion on populist governance leave us? An obvious question *not* addressed in this exploratory analysis might be how populist governments meet their end. Do the leaders simply change their tune or tactics over time as their power consolidates? Are they swept away in national calamities such as war, political transition, or economic downturn? Or perhaps they are quietly turned out of office when an unexpected structural opening emerges for political moderates?

It is perhaps premature to attempt any generalizations about the fate of populist governments, particularly given the very small number of cases to date and the fact that many of these regimes are still in office. What I have hopefully achieved in this short memo is to draw attention to the *modalities* by which populist governments rewrite history in order to justify significant deviations from the political status quo. Indeed, I hope to show that populist leaders rewrite sovereign script in very predictable ways—invoking the notion of internal enemies that have ties to powerful and hostile foreign interests, establishing a direct lineage to the nation's great and/or revolutionary heroes, and refashioning the nation as a threatened but plucky community that must engage in extraordinary (sometimes anti-liberal)

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measures to navigate the calamities facing the sovereign nation. It is profound ideological work that may have lasting consequences for the sovereign community long after the populist government has been turned out of office.

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Notes:

Schmitt—exceptional political moment, Hobbes (from David H's panel)

David Doyle—discussant APSA, 2015, text analysis and populism panel

General Comments

Ken Roberts' definition of populism less useful, good we are using Cas' def.

What's the connection between ideology and communication style (latter is communication of the former)—communication comes out of populism style

Specific comments

Good that it shows heterogeneity of populism in diff treatment effects

What is DV—governance or communication style? Government outputs are diff from communication style—should be diff between speech signal and the policy.

Develop more on opposition versus government—populists in both—develop more in paper

Is there a threshold effect—at some point does internal threat become less important after a few years of being in power

Not important google translate, it's fine. Check using correspondence analysis with Hungarian—python use Lowe's approach. Hill climbing method (he uses)

Unsupervised scaling model, to see the underlying dimension—do you see a difference between individuals and parties—are there individual idiosyncratic effects

Model topics over time—R package

What do these speeches represent—I think they are signals.

Are the signals different from the actions they take—use scaling model to look at policies

Janis tarokakis—writes about difference betw. Nat. and populism