

Populism, Nationalism, and Kin-state activism:

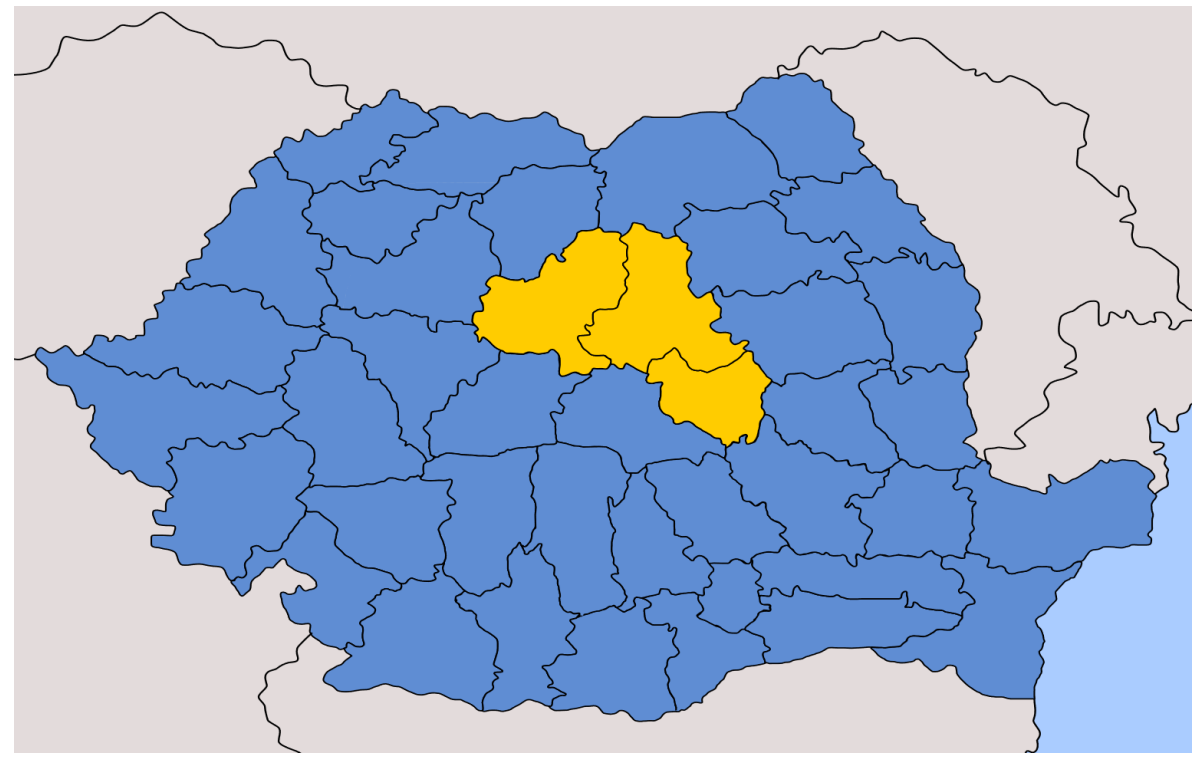
Measuring how the ethnic Széklers see
the stimuli within the Triadic Nexus

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Testing the findings from Art. 1 and Art. 2 from the Dissertation

- Chiruta, I. (2021). Challenging the Rule of Law in Romania: The Metamorphosis of Political Discourse Towards Populism. *Problems of Post-Communism*, 0(0), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2021.1958690>
- Chiruta, I (Under 2nd review). Multifaced Hungarian kin-state activism in Széklerland: Rebuilding the last 'nation' through restorative nostalgia and lieux de mémoire. *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issue in Europe*





Theoretical framework

- Brubaker's triadic nexus is known, but the ways in which nationalizing states, kin-states and national minorities have interacted changed.
- Nowadays, it is the degree to which nationalizing state politics has sometimes turned toward populism that is novel.
- This populism is sometimes "pure" i.e., politicians simply being anti-elitist, anti-media conspiratorial, rhetorically bombastic, etc.
- Sometimes it is "xenophobic" i.e., targeting either national minorities or new migrants or other minorities (e.g., LGBTQ).
- This work contributes towards updating the triadic nexus theory for the study of ethnopolitics with new empirical material from an important case in CEE.



Concepts

Ethnonationalists are “relatively large and regionally concentrated ethnic groups that live within the boundaries of one state or several adjacent states” (Harff & Gurr, 2004, p. 18)

Nationalism “a malleable and narrow ideology that values membership in a nation more than belonging to other groups, and it gives preference to political representation by the nation for the nation” (Bieber, 2020b, p. 2).

Kin-state activism – The actions of the states that reconnect with their diaspora (Waterbury, 2014, p. 6).

Populism “a mode of political practice which focuses on the rhetorical-mobilizational aspects of populism and its discourse” (Jensen, 2011, 82; Weyland, 2001, p. 14).



Data

Hypothesis: *more populist politics in either the nationalising state or the kin-state increases minority affiliation or even allegiance with the kin-state.*



CATI-type survey, in December 2021 on a representative quota sample of 617 adults from Széklerland.

Valid 95%, probability and a standard error of $\pm 4,9\%$. The age distribution of the respondents varies between 18-65+.

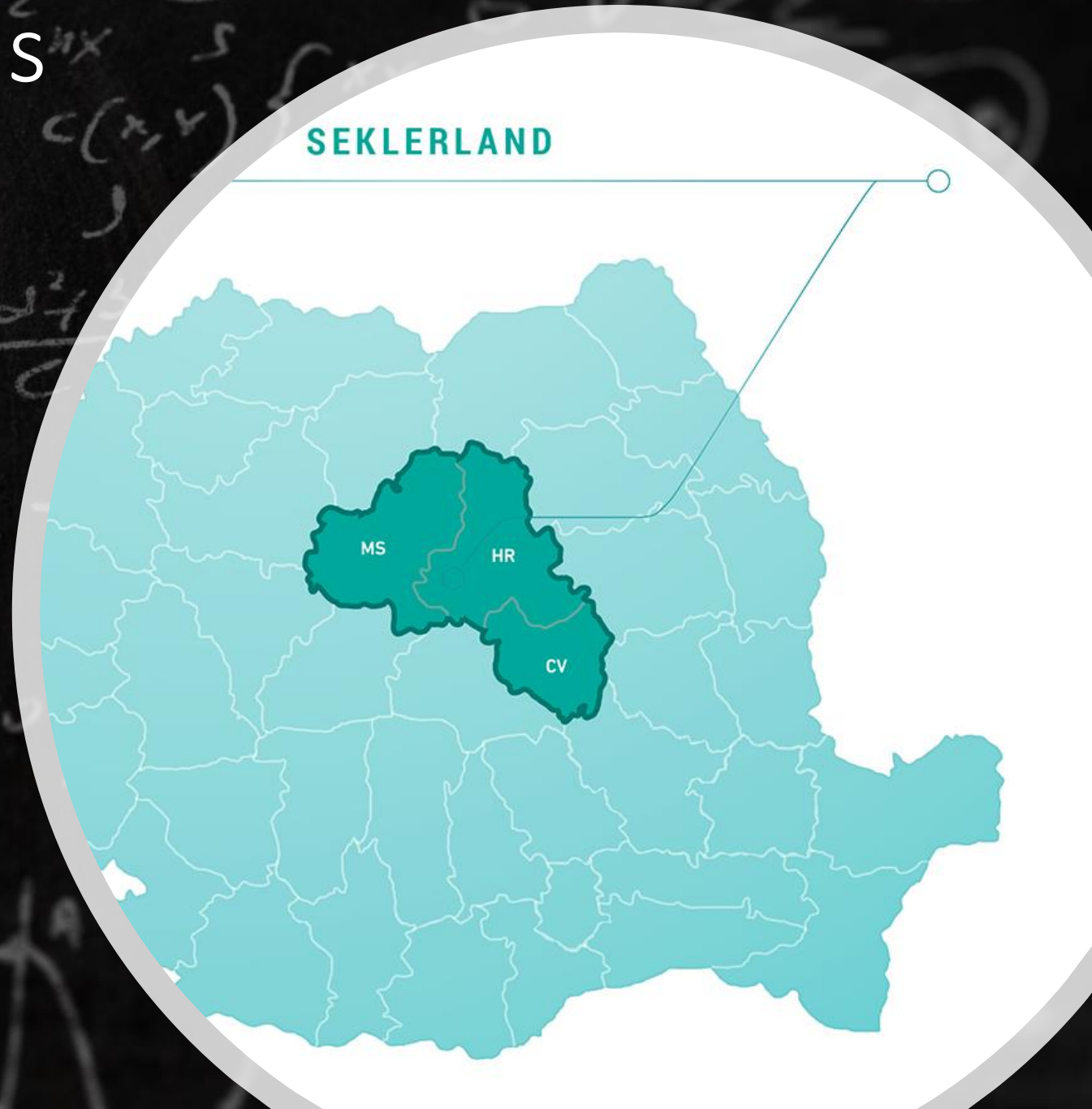
The main limitation is the nature of the sample. This study include a medium-size sample, which focused exclusively on the Széklers (i.e., 60% of Hungarians).



Data and methods

Table 1. Frequency of basic socio and economic variables

		Frequency distribution	Percentage
County	Covasna	152	25
	Harghita	255	41
	Mureş	210	34
Type of settlement	Urban	287	47
	Rural	330	53
Gender	Male	270	44
	Female	347	56
Age group	18-29	86	14
	30-49	215	35
	50-59	121	19
	60+	195	32
Educational attainment	Primary and lower secondary	68	11
	Vocational training	128	21
	Upper secondary	261	42
	Tertiary	159	26
Economic activity	Employed	298	49
	Self-employed	61	10
	Unemployed	20	3
	Student	1	0
	Housework	50	8
	Pensionary	182	29
	Other inactive	3	1
	NA	2	0
Total sample size		617	100



Measurement of Data

- Data management and statistical analyses was performed using SPSS software.
- The aim was to see how the level of positivity or negativity tilted for the Szeklers when facing the cross-directional stimuli.
- Parametric tests were used to compare the socio-economic backgrounds of the respondents to get a more nuanced perspective from the respondents' answers.
- Likert scales
- The populist and kin-state stimuli were evaluated through two different scales e.g.,
 - -1 (I haven't heard) to 1 (I have heard);
 - -2 (I completely disagree) and 2 (I completely agree).
 - -2 (Relations were considerably worse) and 2 (Relations were considerably better)
 - -2 (People's closeness with Hungary has decreased considerably) and 2 (People's closeness with Hungary has strengthened considerably)



Findings

Romanian populism stimuli

- The majority (352 / 56.9%) are not satisfied at all with the state of things in Romania



TABLE 1. FREQUENCY ANALYSIS OF THE STATE OF THINGS IN ROMANIA

All things considered, how satisfied are you these days with the state of things as a whole in Romania? Use a scale, on which 1 means you are “completely dissatisfied” and 10 means you are “completely satisfied”.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not satisfied at all	183	29.7	29.7	29.7
	2	52	8.4	8.4	38.1
	3	67	10.9	10.9	48.9
	4	49	7.9	7.9	56.9
	5	118	19.1	19.1	76.0
	6	56	9.1	9.1	85.1
	7	57	9.2	9.2	94.3
	8	24	3.9	3.9	98.2
	9	6	1.0	1.0	99.2
	Completely satisfied	5	.8	.8	100.0
	Total	617	100.0	100.0	



Romanian policies



TABLE 3. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF HOME STATE POPULISM

Question	Mean	SD	% of DK/NA
To what extent do you believe that Romanian government policies and actions toward ethnic Hungarians in Széklerland have changed in the last five years?	-.1905	.87806	11.5%
From your point of view, how would you describe the state of Hungarian-Romanian domestic relations during 2017-2019 when the PSD?	.0144	.80239	21.1%
To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement? The language used by the PSD politicians in the country turned more populist.	-.0450	1.02254	35.2%



TABLE 4. FREQUENCY ANALYSIS OF THE PLACES OF POPULIST RHETORIC

Question	Mean	SD
Populist language of PSD during electoral campaigns	.2804	.4495
Populist language in accounts of PSD political rallies between elections.	.0859	.2804
Populist language in articles or statements by PSD members in Romanian-language media	.3323	.4714
Populist language on the social media accounts of PSD politicians (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)	.1232	.3289
I have noticed the rhetoric, but I cannot remember where	.0762	.0265
I have not noticed any	.3533	.4783
Other	.0076	.0868

Most didn't notice populist rhetoric
Some notice populist rhetoric in the media and elections

Transnational populism

- Some perceived positively the Soros rhetoric
- Some agreed that the judiciary is infiltrated with Securitate

TABLE 5. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF POPULIST RHETORIC

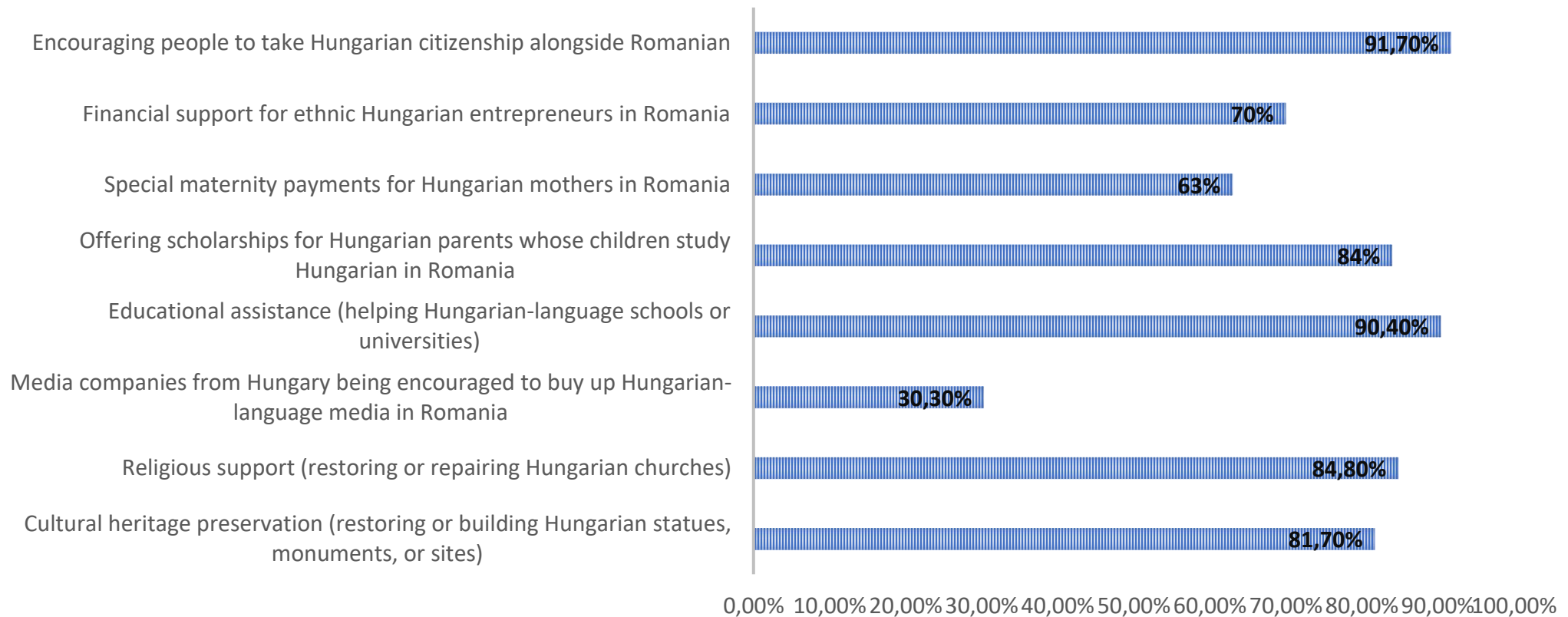
Question	Mean	SD	% of DK/NA
To what extent do you agree the PSD's skepticism toward the EU (Euroscepticism)	-.2767	1.199	43.6%
To what extent do you agree the PSD's complaints against the European Commission	-.3396	1.152	48.1%
To what extent do you agree the PSD's rhetoric against foreign companies and multinationals	-.1986	1.279	52%
To what extent do you agree with PSD's attempts to change the judicial system through emergency ordinances	-.9188	1.183	43.8%
To what extent do you agree the PSD's rhetoric against George Soros	.1368	1.416	42.8%
To what extent do you agree the PSD's claim that a Parallel State exists in Romania	-.3082	1.411	54.8%
To what extent do you agree the PSD's claims that the judiciary is infiltrated with former members of the Securitate	.4000	1.425	40.7%



Hungarian Kin-state stimuli



WHICH OF THE KIN-STATE ACTIONS DID YOU HEARD?



The harvest of kin-state activism

TABLE 7. FREQUENCY ANALYSIS OF THE KIN-STATE INFLUENCE ELEMENTS

Question	Mean	SD	% of DK/NA
As you may know, the prime minister of Hungary, Viktor Orban, has visited a couple of times Tusnádfürdő/Băile Tuşnad, and criticized the way democracy currently works. He has called for an 'illiberal' democracy that would protect traditional family values	1.226	1.002	11.7%
Do you think the same kind of protection of traditional family values and Christianity (illiberal democracy) would be good for Romania?	.6634	.5899	.8%
Last year, the commemoration of the Treaty of Trianon took place, remembering the partition of Greater Hungary to the neighboring countries. To what extent did this anniversary influence your Hungarian national identity?	.6308	.7881	8.4%



Source: Wikimedia CC BY 2.0



Summary Hungarian Kin-state stimuli



Image 14 – The Zalan monument, which incorporates the map of Greater Hungary, the Hungarian cross, the Hungarian and Székler flag, and the Turul bird. Source: author

Economic measures are the most known among the Szeklers

Cultural measures consolidated the Hungarian cultural heritage and constructed an ethnic parallelism that associated the name of Fidesz

Since 2015, the closeness to Hungary of Szeklers has increased considerably for most because of economic and cultural policies

Cultural bonds have been developed under Fidesz, thereby these are the most treasured by the minority

Memory issues (Trianon) did not change the closeness to Hungary

The majority adhere to Orban's Illiberalism and most think that this model is suitable for Romania, too.

Conclusions

The slide to populism worsened the state of things in Romania for the Szeklers (i.e., policy implementation, migration, closeness to H, etc.).

Evidence of transnational populist rhetoric imported and adjusted to the socio-cultural milieu of the country – underlined by the minority from two sources

Provision of cultural measures brings transborder Hungarian closer to kin-state and associates the name of Fidesz with the the preservation of the H cultural heritage

Conspiracy narratives are intertwined with populism, provided that the latter and the former are consistent

Provision of economic measures persuade transborder Hungarians to adopt the Fidesz's illiberal model





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Thank you!

Looking forward to hearing your suggestions and feedback

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More about the Fatigue Project: <https://populism-europe.com/fatigue/>



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