The Party Realignment and the Success of the Populist Right in Eastern Europe
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What explains the proletarization of the radical right vote in the countries of post-Communist Europe? In this paper, I argue that the electoral success of the populist and radical right parties is explained by the centrism shift of the post-Communist left parties along the economic axis. The programmatic shift of the post-Communist left parties opened up their traditional working-class constituencies for the redistributive appeals of the populist and radical right parties. On the cross-country level, using the European Social Survey I analyze the post-Communist transitions to show that the implementation of the pro-market reforms by the post-Communist left parties launched a realignment process that lead to the working-class voters switching to the right of the political spectrum. On a set of observational and experimental studies, I show that in Hungary the working-class status over the years has been increasingly associated to the support for the populist Fidesz and radical right (MIEP/Jobbik) parties. My argument contributes to the understanding of the dynamics of political systems, and the rise of the radical right parties in Europe.

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2) Theory

   In the above chapter, I introduced the key tenets of my theoretical argument. I stressed that in the post-Communist countries where the left parties moved to the center of the political spectrum (to become more of a typical western Social democratic party), as in Hungary, the left parties discredited themselves in the eyes of their traditional constituency (workers, lower middle class), a constituency which was ultimately incorporated by the radical right parties. Hence, in such countries the radical right parties are strong.

   The purpose of this chapter is to lay out the specific hypotheses tested in this dissertation and to present the theoretical arguments underlying each of them. The Chapter consists of five sections. In the first section, I formulate the key argument and the main concepts it relies upon. In the second section, I discuss such key theoretical concepts – cleavages and realignment process. In the third section, I focus on the strategies of the left parties that led to the economic policy switches. I also address the potential endogeneity in my argument (the same factors might underlie the economic policy switch of the left-wing party and the rise of the radical right) by explaining that the western institutions (such as the IMF) were often an external factor behind the left policy choices. Finally, in the fourth section, I explain why the key constituency most susceptible to the left policy switch was the working class groups.

Main Argument

   My argument focuses on the party realignment process brought about by the market reforms in the post-Communist countries. I argue that specific policy choices of the left post-Communist parties played a decisive role in this process. In particular, in the countries where the left post-Communist countries switched to the center of the economic policy spectrum (Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland), the party realignment took place faster. In these countries, the traditional left constituencies felt abandoned by the left parties (especially as the post-Communist
parties abandoned their protectionist policies), and eventually switched to embrace the parties on the right of the political spectrum. In such countries, the right parties adopted the anti-market populist agenda to challenge the left.

In other words, I argue that in the countries where the post-Communist left parties implemented the policy switch, one should observe the right parties adopting the redistributionist agenda, and the electoral success of the radical right parties. I instrument the economic policy switch by the market reforms policies introduced in the post-Communist countries in the 1990s.

In the countries where the left switch did not occur, the alignments of the political groups and parties stayed more along the traditional lines. Examples of such countries are Czech Republic and Slovakia. Hence, I expect in such countries the working class constituencies to be more likely to support the left parties, and the radical right generally to be weaker.

The below picture that combines the analysis proposed in Arzheimer (2013) and Kitschelt (1995) shows a simplified representation of the respective trajectories of the left and the radical right parties.

![Figure 1. European Party Systems, the Left Parties Providing a Political Opening for the Radical Right.](source: modified Arzheimer (2013), Kitschelt (1995))

To sum up the above analysis, my general theoretical arguments are:

- The working class constituencies are the social groups particularly vulnerable to the industrial misbalances, globalization, and export of low-skilled jobs outside of Europe.
- As the left parties became more economically centrist, the blue-collar constituencies were increasingly switching to embrace the populist/radical right parties.
- In the countries where the left parties became more economically centrist sooner, the realignment process are likely to occur faster.

Given my theoretical expectations, I make the following predictions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explanatory Variable</th>
<th>Outcome Variable</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theory</strong></td>
<td><strong>Left party shits to the center of the economic policy</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Traditional constituencies (lower middle class, blue-collar workers) abandoned ↓</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Radical Right adopts redistributionist platform ↓</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Radical Right targets the ex-left constituencies ↓</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Radical Right is electorally successful</td>
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In this dissertation, I specifically focus on the example of Hungary to explain my argument in more details, which I combine with overview of similar dynamics in for Vyshegrad countries (see Chapter 4). As I show in the historical overview section, Hungary’s post-Communist left party MSzP was historically associated to a more pro-market economic policy, which offered the Hungarian rightwing parties an opportunity to oppose it from a
more redistributionist populist economic platform. Therefore, following the implementation of tough austerity policies by the MSzP (which took place around 1995-6) the voters’ alignment along the economic policy axis started shifting in Hungary with those with more redistributive preferences (working class) gradually moving to the right. As the Communist successor left embraced the pro-market policies, the right wing parties became increasingly pro-redistribution oriented in their economic policies and capitalized on the reforms dissatisfaction among the Hungarian people. I demonstrate that the first shift of the blue-collar working constituency in Hungary away from the left MSzP towards the right-wing Fidesz party occurred around 1995-6. The next wave followed another round of the neoliberal reforms by MSzP around 2006-10. The blue-collar workers’ dissatisfaction with mainstream parties in Hungary over the years kept pushing them further to the right, leading to their increasing support for the radical right Jobbik party.

Below I explain how my theoretical expectations may be converted into the empirically testable hypotheses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Analysis</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
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| Cross-Country     | Regression analysis, Probit model | - *Hypothesis I*: The working class status is decreasingly associated to the center left parties towards the radical right parties.  
- *Hypothesis II*: The working class status is increasingly associated to the center left parties towards the radical right parties.  
- *Hypothesis II*: This shift correlates to more pro-market economic policy choices of the left parties. |
| Case Studies, Pairwise comparisons | | - *Hypothesis I*: In the countries where the post-Communist left parties implemented the austerity reforms and shifted to the economic policy center, the working class constituencies are more likely to support the right parties and the radical right parties are stronger.  
- *Hypothesis II*: In the countries where the right parties implemented the reforms, the alignments of the political groups stayed more along the traditional lines; the working class constituencies are more likely to support the left parties and the radical right parties are weaker. |
| Constituency-Level | Multilevel (?) regression | - *Hypothesis I*: The constituencies that supported MSzP in the 2006 election were more likely to embrace the radical right Jobbik in the 2010 election in Hungary. |
| Individual-Level  | Probit model | - *Hypothesis I*: In Hungary, after 1994 (period of the market reforms implementation) the working-class vote has been decreasingly associated to the support for the center-left MSzP.  
- *Hypothesis II*: In Hungary, the working class status over the years has been increasingly associated to the support for the populist Fidesz and radical right (MIEP/Jobbik) parties. |
| Experimental Survey | | - *Hypothesis I*: the convergence of the mainstream parties on the economic platform decreases support for the Hungarian left MSzP among blue-collar workers.  
- *Hypothesis II*: the convergence of the mainstream parties on the economic platform increases blue-collar workers’ radicalization to the right. |

In the remaining parts of my dissertation, I test my hypotheses on different levels of analysis: cross-country observational and quantitative comparisons, the individual-level and the experimental surveys.

Cleavages and Realignment Process

I argue that the populist and radical right parties often enjoy electoral success in the countries where the post-Communist left parties shifted to the center of the economic policy scale and created a political space for the radical right. In other words, the economic policy switch (such as the implementation of the market reforms) during the period of transition and the formation of the socioeconomic cleavages by the Communist successor parties launched the realignment process in which the traditional supporters of the left parties (blue-collar voters) shifted to embrace the populist and radical right. I also show that the economic policy choices of the left parties
were largely a function of the exogenous push that came from the international institutions in the early and mid-1990s.

The term “cleavage” refers to a particular type of conflict in democratic systems created by the social structural transformations triggered by country-wide processes such as nation building, industrialization, marketization, and post-industrialization (Bornschier, 2009: 1). The introduction of the market economy (marketization) has produced several major cleavages in the countries of the post-Communist region. Scholars debate which particular types of those cleavages emerged in the newly liberalized post-Communist space: urban-rural, workers-owners, religious-secular, traditionalists-modernists, democracy-communism, national-cosmopolitan, protectionist-free market, libertarian-authoritarian etc. (Kitschelt, 1992; Berglund et al., 2004; Arvanitopoulos, 2009) However, one particular category that, as most authors agree, plays an important role in the post-Communist countries is the socioeconomic cleavage.

The socioeconomic cleavage is reflected in the economic division between the ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ of the post-communist transition (Markus, 1996: 13-14; Arvanitopoulos, 2009: 260). The formation of the socioeconomic cleavage did not take place simultaneously in all countries of the region. In those countries that implemented the fiscal austerity policies immediately in the early 1990s, it took place sooner, while in the others the cleavage formation has been delayed. For the Easter European case, Gijsberts and Nieuwbeert (1998) show that in the years when the first general democratic elections occurred (around 1991-92) there were hardly any significant differences in voting behavior of different social strata. This suggests that at the beginning of the market transition, the socioeconomic cleavage in most post-Communist countries has not yet formed. It was not until the start of the market reforms implementation (particularly, the fiscal austerity reforms) that such cleavage began to form. The socioeconomic cleavage tended to be more accentuated in more modernized countries with an advanced class structure and a class-based party politics, such as the Czech Republic (Kitschelt et al., 1999; Zajc & Boh, 2004). Less modernized countries (such as Romania or Bulgaria) delayed the implementation of the market reforms by adopting the strategy of partial reforms instead, and hence the formation of the socioeconomic cleavage in those countries has been postponed.

In his 1992 analysis, Kitschelt suggested that the party alignments in post-Communist Europe would reflect different combinations of their positions on the economic policy dimension (political or market redistribution) and the non-economic dimension (cosmopolitan/libertarian to authoritarian/particularist) (Kitschelt, 1992, 1995). Eventually, the socioeconomic dimension became the key ideological dimension in the post-Communist space. Pop-Eleches and Tucker (2010: 2) demonstrated that post-Communist citizens are more likely to rely primarily on their economic attitudes in placing themselves on a left-right scale, while the citizens elsewhere tend to bring a combination of economic and social attitudes to bear on their left-right self-placement. This observation is key to my theoretical argument, as I show that the party realignment process to a large extend resulted from the mainstream parties economic policy choices during the market reforms implementation.

The transition from a state-controlled to free market economy in post-Communist Europe, a so-called “Third revolution”, created the distinction between the winners and the losers of transition. For the party competition at the elite level, the severest divisions appeared to be related to positions on market reform, and were mirrored in similar bases for partisanship among voters (Evans and Whitefield, 1998). The most obvious social divisions underlying partisanship stemmed from divergent economic interests: social class and occupation, benefits, wealth and life-chances; economic sector, especially between agriculture, industry, services, and resources; between state and private ownership and control - and a variety of possible intermediate property forms; in employment status - between the employed, unemployed, those working at home, and those on pensions; in the area of consumption, between forms of housing ownership and tenure, access to goods and services and so on (Evans and Whitefield, 2002). Hence the economic liberalization launched the struggle about differences over the economy, distribution of resources, state versus private property, collective versus individualist strategies for economic advancement, the role of the state in redistributing income, merit versus need based conceptions of justice and so on (Evans and Whitefield, 2002).

The above division between the transition winners and losers deepened after the “Fourth revolution” – namely, globalization (Kriesi, et al., 2012; Kriesi et al., 2008). The combination of both “Third” and “Fourth” revolutions exacerbated the existing discontinuity between the reforms’ winners and losers. The literature refers to this phenomenon as a “cleavage leap” - a specific pattern of the post-Communist cleavage formation, which featured a quick switch from the unfinished industrial cleavage formation of Lipset-Rokkan type into a new cleavage configuration generated by transition and globalization (Saarts, 2015: 30). Kriesi (1998: 180) pointed out “the emergence of yet another cleavage – the cleavage opposing the new middle class winners of the
transformation of Western European societies to the group of losers of the very same process... These losers are first and foremost to be found among the unqualified members of the working class, who are about to constitute the core of a new underclass”. Those winners and losers have distinctive social-structural characteristics: “Two of the most important groups on the winners’ side, highly educated people and socio-cultural specialists, are far more supportive of opening borders than are those with lower levels of education and those who are unskilled workers” (Kriesi et al, 2012: 73).

A subsequent party realignment process – changing of parties’ electoral coalitions followed. The parties that implemented the reforms tended to appeal to reform-winners (including middle class and white-collar groups), the parties that opposed the reforms tended to appeal to reform-losers (primarily, the retirees, the unemployed, and the unqualified working class groups). Depending on whether the post-Communist left parties chose to implement the market reforms or not, they were more or less likely to retain their traditional support groups – the working class constituencies. In cases where the left parties implemented harsh austerity reforms, the populist and radical right parties (which campaigned on reactionary anti-reform agenda) were more likely to gain electoral advantage in next electoral rounds.

Most scholars focus in their analysis on the impact of economic openness and globalization on Western European political systems. In what follows, I show that in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe the dynamics was very similar if we adjust for higher speed of socioeconomic transformation that took place in these countries during the period of the economic transition and market reforms.

Post-Communist Left and the Market Transition

In this dissertation, I argue that the rightward shift of the post-Communist parties following the collapse of Communism played an important role in the party realignment process. Grzymala-Busse (2002) and March and Mudde (2005) find that following the collapse of Communism, majority of former ruling parties in Central and Eastern Europe transformed into full-fledged social democratic parties. Such was the choices made by the Hungarian Socialist Party and the Democratic Left Alliance that became proponents of privatization and integration into the European Union.

What were the reasons behind the post-Communist parties’ reinvention? In light of the collapse of the Communist system, the reinvention was driven by the aim of regaining democratic access to governmental power by winning elections and entering democratic government (Grzymala-Busse, 2017: 3). Because of the hostility towards people associated to the previous regime, the old party members often saw the reformed Communist party as the only potential protector of their interests, and therefore were willing to tolerate their party policy switch without abandoning it entirely (Grzymala-Busse, 2002). Programmatic transformations were hence of great importance to the communist successor parties, as it was the only real mean these parties absent patronage networks and populist leaders could now sway the democratic electorate (Grzymala-Busse, 2002). In an effort to reject their Communist legacy, such parties often tended to become holier than the Pope. Tavits and Letki (2009) show that reformed post-Communist parties were much more likely to implement more coherent fiscal austerity programs, as opposed to the right parties.

By contrast, some post-Communist parties remained loyal to their original programmatic commitments. Such orthodox successor parties survived in the Czech Republic, East Germany and in Slovakia (along with a transformed but shorter-lived communist successor party). For example, the Czech Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM) retained much of its former appeals in terms of redistribution, connection to labor unions, and anti-market stance (Hanley, 2001). This made KSČM largely a protest party, which was able to preserve a relatively orthodox stance and retain the loyal support of a constituency of the so-called ‘globalization losers’. This eliminated a potential political opening for the radical right parties and delayed the realignment processes. Another example of a more traditional left party is the largely unreformed Moldovan Communist Party (The Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova), which was able to combine an original Leninist Communist doctrine with electoral success. This party that positions itself as a "lawful successor and heir of the Communist Party of [Soviet] Moldavia both in terms of ideas and traditions", has not changed much following the collapse of the USSR (Tismaneanu, 2009). Post-Communist Slovenia and Romania represent similar cases (see the analysis provided in the country case-study section).

Why did the leftwing parties choose to implement the pro-market reforms? If they chose the strategies of promoting austerity for the same reason that the radical right parties were subsequently likely to arise, then I might have an endogeneity problem. In other words, both the choice of the left wing party to promote austerity and the rise of the radical right might be driven by the same factor. For example, if the economic crisis was more
severe in the cases where the left chose the austerity reforms, both the choice of the policies by the left parties and the emergence of the radical right parties may be spurious to some other third factor, such as the pre-existing economic conditions in a given country.

To counter this important objection, I rely on the argument advanced by Stone (2002). She argues that the IMF was an external factor that frequently defined the choices of the left parties in power during the transition by pushing them into adoption of the austerity programs. The early post-Communist governments indebted from the Communist period dependent on the IMF’s continuous debt restructuring and aid, and this provided the IMF with a leverage to push the parties in power to implement the painful pro-market reforms. Some post-Communist governments were more pro-reformist and hence more compliant (Poland, Hungary), others more traditional and less compliant with the IMF conditionality (Bulgaria), but this variation had more to do with specific cabinet compositions rather than structural economic shocks experienced by the left governments. In fact, by the start of the reforms, Poland, one of the pioneers of the IMF-induced adjustments, had one of the smallest budget deficits in the socialist bloc (Roaf et al., 2014: 10).

Despite the general pro-market orientation of the Polish government, the strong impetus for neoliberal reforms still came from the IMF. While the Polish government generally was ideologically committed to reforms, the international institutions imposed specific incentives to ensure its strict adherence to the reform plan. Three times in 1991, 1993, and 1994, the international institutions used the opportunity to restructure the Polish debt to push the Polish government into further implementation of the painful reforms. The governing coalition therefore had no choice but to swallow its policy preferences and to implement the reforms prescribed by the IMF-imposed constraints (Stone, 2002: 114). In line with this argument, Bonker (2007: 119) shows that in Poland the post-Communist SLD-led government, which took power in 1993, greatly benefited from the IMF’s insistence on fiscal constraint. The new government aimed to defy critics and demonstrate its respectability by not losing the support of the IMF. In addition, conflicts with the IMF threatened to endanger a substantive reduction of Poland’s foreign debt in 1994, as Poland’s 1991 agreement with the Paris Club had made the second tranche of the Polish debt relief conditional on the adherence to an IMF-supported reform program. The reliance on the IMF-imposed policy standards strengthened the Polish Finance Minister Borowski’s position in the negotiations on the 1994 budget and helped him to fend off the demands for further spending increases. Bonker (2007) stresses that the Polish post-Communist government’s desire not to risk the IMF support also became visible after Borowski’s resignation in February 1994 (Vinton, 1994: 5-7). While the Minister of Finance’s position remained vacant for three months, the government managed to prevent the budget renegotiation throughout this period.

Hungary is quite similar to the Polish case. As I show in the next Chapter, the relationship between Hungary’s post-Communist left and the IMF was established in the late 1970s, as a direct consequence of Hungary’s indebtedness that followed Kadar’s reforms. The threat of insolvency and the economic collapse (Csizmadia, 2008: 11) pushed the Communist Hungarian government in mid-1980s into becoming the IMF member conditional on restarting the reforms. The collaboration between the Hungarian reformed post-Communist party MSzP and the IMF continued in the 1990s. The strong indebtedness of Hungarian economy made the left MSzP government consistently dependent upon the IMF support. Ziblatt (1998) illustrates Hungary’s left government adherence to the IMF-imposed constraints with the following episode. In 1995 the MSzP government under Bokros and Horn pursued its extensive austerity program aiming to receive a special “stand-by” three-year loan from the IMF as a reward for its efforts at budget cuts, social state reduction and control of inflation. Instead, the IMF commended the MSzP austerity efforts but demanded further cuts in social security and accelerated privatization (Szilagyi, 1995, p. 64). This pushed Bokros and Horn into announcing an even deeper budget deficit reduction in January 1996, and finally win the IMF loan by February 1996. Therefore, the pro-reformist orientation of Hungary’s left MSzP also was largely imposed by the external factor – dependence on the IMF loans.

It is important that an economic crisis per se was not a decisive factor for the reforms implementation. Countries that experienced the economic crisis prior to the reforms, were still overwhelmingly pushed into implementing the austerity policies by the IMF. This case can be illustrated on the example of the Bulgarian left government, which was forced to implement the pro-market reforms largely as result of the IMF-imposed prescriptions in light of the 1997 economic crisis. Having initially attempted to implement quick reforms, Bulgaria subsequently slowed down its progress due to rising economic and social challenges. Stone (2002: 232) shows that throughout the 1990s the left-leaning Bulgarian governments were never truly committed to the reform effort, but rather were dragged along by the market pressures and the need for the international aid. Only as result of the intense crisis in 1997, the IMF has finally been able to reclaim the leverage strong enough to push the left
Bulgarian government into fully implementing the IMF program. But even then the persistent opposition to the structural reforms frequently threatened to jeopardize the reform outcomes.

The above analysis has shown that the IMF often forced the post-Communist successor parties to alter their preferred economic policy. This suggests that the economic policy choices of the left parties in the post-Communist world were exogenous to other political calculations of these parties (such as competition from other political actors), and were predominantly a result of an exogenous IMF push. Exogenity of the choices of the left parties suggests that their policy choices were not imposed by or related to the competition from the right. This claim allows me address the endogeneity-related concerns.

Role of the Working Class

The new cleavages created an opportunity for the parties to mobilize new voters because of the realignment process that was ongoing at the same time. Because of the policy choices by the established parties during the transition, the previous links between the parties and their traditional constituencies weakened, and the voters who suffered most from the transition became available to the mobilization efforts of the new actors (Bornscheir, 2009: 4). Eventually this created incentives for some social groups to abandon the parties they originally supported (Martin 2000, Lachat 2007) and gradually switch to embrace new political actors.

The groups that suffered more from the transition (the transition losers) typically belong to one of the following social categories: the unemployed, the retirees, and the blue-collar workers. The particular focus of this paper is the working class or blue-collar workers\(^1\) category, a constituency that proved to be more susceptible to the party realignment processes and hence more likely to switch to a different party block (Fidrmuc, 2000). Due to the industrial imbalances in the post-Communist states and the globalization process that accelerated the export of low-skilled jobs outside of Europe, this segment of population suffered particularly strongly from the transition and the fiscal austerity reforms. Such reforms tended to weaken the worker sodalities, and dramatically shrink their power, prestige and opportunities in post-Communist Europe (Kalb, 2008: 17). It hence should come as no surprise that in the countries where the left parties actively participated in introducing the reforms, the blue-collar workers’ support for the left parties has consistently declined. Instead, this constituency was switching to embrace the populist and radical right parties.

Why are blue-collar constituencies likely to switch to the radical right? Historically, workers (typically blue-collar, manual workers) and lower middle class more broadly were the primary constituency of the left. In the recent years, however, scholars talk about the increasing ‘proletarization’ (Ignazi, 2003) of the western radical right parties, i.e. the increasing affinity of the working class to the radical right parties. Arzheimer (2011) finds that the odds of the blue-collar workers’ radical right vote have risen considerably since the 1990s. Norris (2005) and Rydgren (2007) point out that the working class voters are the core of the right-wing constituencies in Europe. Kalb and Halmi (2011) argue that globalization and neoliberal capitalism disrupted the old, working-class communities and rendered workers more dependent on the whims of capitalists. Right-wing populism offers a panacea for the insecurity of the world and the everyday struggle to make a decent living. Feischmidt, following Kalb and Halmi (2011), stresses that neonationalism offers responses to the global and local crises generated by semiPeripheral capitalism (Feischmidt et al, 2014: 46).

Hence the growing ‘proletarization’ of the radical right parties came as a result of a double process of the working class abandoning the left parties and their realignment towards the populist and radical right (Gougou and Mayer, 2013). The radical right parties appeal to these groups from the left side of the state-market dimension (Bale et al, 2010; De Lange, 2007; Van Spanje and Van der Brug, 2005). The populist rhetoric falls on a fertile ground among the low-skilled, blue-collar constituencies with low wages and lack of job protection (Betz, 1994).

Over the last decade, as globalization has been eroding many traditional factory-based jobs, the median real income in Europe has stagnated or declined and the gains of the economic growth have gone to the higher income groups (Piketty, 2014). Growing automation and jobs outsourcing, rising capital mobility, the erosion of blue-

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\(^1\) In this paper, I use the terms ‘working class’, ‘blue-collar worker’, physical worker, and manual worker as interchangeable to denote a working class person performing non-agricultural manual labor. Bain and Prince (1972) enumerate the characteristics pertaining to white collar as opposed to blue-collar work: intellectual as opposed to manual activities; differing functions (administration, design, analysis and planning, etc. vs. actual production) as opposed to routine; proximity to the authority etc. One problem with such classification has to do with the categorization of the ‘service workers’ (cooks, domestic servants, janitors, waiters, barbers, firefighters, police officers etc.), since their work activity tends to include both manual and non-manual activities. Unless otherwise specified, in my analysis I excluded ‘service workers’ from the blue-collar workers’ category.
collar labor unions, and liberal austerity policies made traditional blue-collar workers particularly vulnerable to the populist appeals (Bornschier, 2010; Inglehart & Norris, 2016) and further fostered these processes.

In what follows, I show that the post-Communist countries generally follow the dynamics described above. By particularly focusing on the case of Hungary, I trace the process of workers’ alienation from the left parties and their subsequent embrace of populist and radical right. I complement this analysis with a Case Study section in Chapter 4, where I depict the policy choices of the left parties and their subsequent electoral fortunes in six different CEE countries.

5) Cross-Country Analysis

In the below section I test my argument using the analysis of observational and experimental data on a cross-country and within-country electoral data. First, I overview the experiences of six post-Communist Central and Eastern countries - Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia - by applying my theoretical framework. Second, I look at the relationship in the electoral fortunes of the radical right parties and the post-Communist left parties’ policy positions via a quantitative analysis on the European Social Survey data.

Typically, the cross-country comparative studies are implemented to compare a selected number of countries in light of the same concept with the purpose of generalizing or gaining a better understanding of the analyzed phenomenon (Hantrais and Mangen, 1998) while controlling for the countries’ different sociocultural setting. In terms of its strengths, the cross-country approach provides important sources of variation to the phenomenon in question. Hantrais and Mangen (1998) argue that cross-country analysis can lead to a deeper understanding of the most critical issues that are of central concern in different countries and help sharpen the focus of analysis by offering new perspectives. Specifically, in this paper the application of the cross-country approach allows me to test my theory on a different set of cases, and hence to extend its external validity.

Yet such an approach has a number of important limitations. One particular pitfall is to ensure the rigorosity of the research, given the variability of the cross-country data and a high degree of a researcher’s discretion in (cherry-) picking the suitable explanations. Another problem has to do with the nonequivalence of the key concepts in a cross-country comparison and the use of divergent data sources (Mangen, 1999; Gharawi, Pardo, Guerrero, 2009). In my case, this limitation, for example, applies to defining as radical right different parties in different countries: scholars disagree whether to categorize a given country as radical right or not depending on context. To overcome this problem, I used my own definition of the Radical Right the parties (see Chapter 2, ‘Definitions of the Radical Right’) and categorized as radical right only the parties commonly labelled as such in the literature and reputable datasets.

Another limitation of the cross-country studies is difficulty in maintaining a high level of matching among the analyzed countries (Milliman, 1998). Although I attempted eliminating the sources of external variation by focusing only on the countries of Central and Eastern Europe that are similar by their geography, Communist experience and timing of market transition (instrumental for my theory), there is still substantive variation in these countries’ culture and history that can impact the results. A similar concern refers to the timing of data collection, which may affect the comparability of the data analyzed. This issue becomes more important as the time gap increases. For example, since different radical right parties emerged in different countries in varied periods and contexts, this discrepancy may have to do with divergent explanatory factors unrelated to my theory (Milliman, 1998, p.139; Milliman & Glinow 1998). I attempt to handle this issue by limiting the time discrepancy across my country cases so that the data and the events analyzed are within 10-15 years of observation. Moreover, I specifically address the different timing of the emergence of the radical parties in my sample by explaining how my explanatory factors (the timing of formation of socioeconomic cleavages in a particular country, and the shift of the post-Communist left parties to the center of the economic axis) play a decisive role in this time discrepancy.

While the cross-country analysis has its fair share of limitations, it provides a great opportunity to test the external validity of my theory and its ability to explain the success of the radical right parties in a larger number of countries outside of Hungary alone. Below I present and discuss my main empirical findings in more details.

Cross-Country

The qualitative analysis above has demonstrated that the left parties in the post-Communist region tended to alter their positions on the economic dimension and move to the center of the economic axis, which later led to the success of the radical right parties able to attract new voting constituencies by using a redistributionist paternalistic platform. But how did the working-class respondents react to such programmatic repositioning of the center-left parties? In this section I address this question.
In Chapter 2 I argued that the blue-collar respondents (traditional constituencies of the post-Communist left parties) were more likely to switch to embrace the radical right parties as result of the programmatic shift of the left parties. Hence in light with my theoretical expectations, I make the following empirical predictions:

1) **Hypothesis I:** There is an overtime exodus of the working class respondents from the center left parties towards the radical right parties.

2) **Hypothesis II:** The chosen positions of the center left parties on the economic policies play a significant role in this trend: the more pro-market the left party is – the more likely a switch of the working class respondents to support the radical right parties.

Below I ran a simple baseline model following Arzheimer (2013). In this model I use the data from the eight rounds of the European Social Survey by limiting the sample to semi and unskilled manual occupation respondents only (using the ISCO08 data) who voted for either a post-Communist left party (0) or a radical right party (1) in the respective years of observations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Working Class Vote for the Radical Right vs post-Communist Left, %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CZ</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HU</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td>7.76</td>
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<tr>
<td>RO</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>SI</td>
<td>5.83</td>
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<tr>
<td>SK</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. The working Class Respondents and Voting for the post-Communist Left (0) vs Radical Right (1) Parties over Time. European Social Survey, I-8 Waves, Selected Central and Eastern European Countries

The above table shows the proportions of blue collar votes received by a given radical right party in respective wave of the European Social Survey. As the data shows, the support for the radical right parties is not equally distributed across different years. For example, there are few observations for such countries, as the Czech Republic or Slovakia.

I then proceed to measuring the model on this data. Since my dependent variable “party” is a binary variable (with ‘1’ indicating the blue-collar vote for the radical right and a ‘0’ a blue-collar vote for the post-Communist left), I used the regular probit model with country fixed effects and robust standard errors. The model also included a single socio-demographic control (gender) to account of the fact that male respondents tend to be more likely to support the radical right parties and a linear time trend with two-year lags between the respective ESS rounds ("trend") to account of the time effects of the eight rounds of the ESS.

I merged the ESS data with the Chapel Hill dataset and introduced the variables measuring the post-Communist left parties’ positions on the economy and the immigration policy. I used the lagged Chapel Hill data assigning to each ESS observation a CHES value from a previous electoral round. The following variables were included:

- **Immigrate Policy** – is a variable that reflects a given party’s position on immigration policy with a ‘0’ reflecting a strong opposition to a tough immigration policy, and a ‘10’ – being in favor of a restrictive immigration policy.

- **Deregulation** - is a variable that reflects a given party’s position on deregulation with a ‘0’ reflecting a strong opposition to market deregulation, and a ‘10’ – strongly supporting deregulation of markets.

- **Spending** - is a variable that reflects a given party’s on improving public services vs. reducing taxes with a ‘0’ reflecting a strong support for improving public services, and a ‘10’ – strongly favoring tax reduction.

- **Redistribution** - is a variable that reflects a given party’s position on redistribution with a ‘0’ reflecting a strong support for redistribution, and a ‘10’ – strongly opposing redistribution.
Additional controls from the World Bank data included the country-level unemployment rates, annual GDP growth rates, and a share of the asylum requests per year (adjusted to the size of a country’s population) to reflect the refugee influx into a given the country.

All variables were standardized to account of their different scale. The results of the analysis (marginal probit for easier interpretation) are presented in the below table.

The results generally go in line with my initial expectations. First, the time trend variable shows that the odds of a radical right vote have risen substantively over the years. For example, from a simple baseline model (1), taking the estimates at face value a one unit change in the trend (a two-year shift) increases the probability of a working class respondent voting for the radical right by 0.0248. The results are robust to alternative model specifications and inclusion of additional variables (see models (1) – (7)). Overall, these findings suggest that the post-Communist left parties are losing support among the working class respondents in favor of the radical right parties. This confirms the main theoretical expectation that the blue-collar constituencies in the post-Communist region tend to behave in a pattern that their counterparts follow in the western European countries as well – to

<table>
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<td>0.0387***</td>
<td>0.0389***</td>
<td>0.0376***</td>
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<td>(4.55)</td>
<td>(4.72)</td>
<td>(4.72)</td>
<td>(4.58)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Left: Strongly favors</td>
<td>0.126***</td>
<td>0.148***</td>
<td>0.0855***</td>
<td>0.049***</td>
<td>0.054***</td>
<td>0.029*</td>
<td>0.013 (1.85)</td>
<td>0.027***</td>
<td>-0.021*</td>
<td>-0.021*</td>
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<tr>
<td>reducing taxes (Y-1)</td>
<td>(8.10)</td>
<td>(6.25)</td>
<td>(2.86)</td>
<td>(6.95)</td>
<td>(7.53)</td>
<td>(2.00)</td>
<td>(2.00)</td>
<td>(3.46)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Left: Strongly opposes</td>
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<td>Asylum Requests (Y-1)</td>
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<td>-0.166***</td>
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<td>0.533***</td>
<td>0.127***</td>
<td>0.098***</td>
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<td>0.173***</td>
<td>0.363***</td>
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<td>(5.46)</td>
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<td>0.200***</td>
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<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>0.197***</td>
<td>0.211***</td>
<td>0.266***</td>
<td>0.130*</td>
<td>0.161***</td>
<td>0.110***</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>0.131***</td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td>-0.036</td>
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<td>4860</td>
<td>4860</td>
<td>4860</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001
abandon the center left parties in favor of the radical right. In other words, these findings go in line with the realignment Hypothesis I.

The share of the refugee asylum applications per country is negatively correlated to the radical right vote, which is somewhat counter-intuitive. The unemployment rate tends to be negatively correlated to the working class radical right support, which again goes against the expectations. But the negative relationship between the economic growth rates and the support for the radical right is in line with the theory: worse economic situation tends to fuel the support for the radical right parties. The center-left parties’ position in the immigration policy is strongly related to the radical right vote but again against the expectations: the tougher the position of the left on the immigration policy the stronger the vote for the radical right, which might suggest that the left parties attempt to (unsuccessfully) compete with the radical right on the immigration positions.

Finally, the results of the analysis also generally confirm the expectations for the economic positions of the left parties. Most of the coefficients of the economic variables (deregulation, spending, redistribution) included in the model are positive and statistically significant, which suggests that a more pro-market position chosen by a given post-Communist left party increases a probability of the working-class vote for the radical right party. For example, according to the model (5) a one unit change in the left parties’ position on the deregulation policy towards a stronger support for deregulation increases the probability of the working-class vote for the radical right parties by 0.049. Similarly, according to the model (3) a one unit change in the left parties’ position on the spending policy towards a stronger support for tax reduction (at the expense of improving public services) increases the probability of the working-class support for the radical right parties by 0.148. Ultimately, in the model (9) a one unit change in the left parties’ position towards favoring less redistribution increases the probability of the working-class support for the radical right parties by 0.027. While the results for the redistribution variable are not robust to the inclusion of additional controls, overall these findings confirm my Hypothesis II.

When it comes to the country fixed effects, one notices a negative association between country fixed effects for the case of the Czech Republic and blue collar voting for the radical right. This goes in line with my earlier finding regarding the preservation of the traditional alignments for the Czech case: I find a consistent and stable over time association between a working class status and voting for the (post-Communist) left parties.

Overall, the above results confirm my theoretical expectations. I show that the exodus of the voters from the left parties to the right is a cross-country phenomenon in Central and Eastern European countries, and that the chosen positions of the post-Communist left parties on the economic scale play a role in this process.

One possible reservation may to do with the fact that the trend variable absorbs some of the variation in my dependent variable. Since the realignment process happens over time, the ‘trend’ variable may be consuming some of the effect of the voting for the radical right parties. To account of this possibility, I run the identical model excluding the ‘trend’ variable; the results of the analysis are presented below.

<table>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0.042***</td>
<td>0.040***</td>
<td>0.040***</td>
<td>0.038***</td>
<td>0.039***</td>
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<td>(4.56)</td>
<td>(4.73)</td>
<td>(4.73)</td>
<td>(4.56)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Left: Strongly favors reducing taxes (Y−1)</td>
<td><strong>0.100</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>0.137</strong>*</td>
<td>0.086*</td>
<td>0.040***</td>
<td>0.039***</td>
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<td>-0.034**</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>(5.96)</td>
<td>(2.51)</td>
<td>(5.31)</td>
<td>(4.22)</td>
<td>(1.46)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Left: Strongly supports deregulation of markets (Y−1)</td>
<td>0.054**</td>
<td>-0.031</td>
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<td>-0.059*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Left: Favors tough policy on immigration (Y−1)</td>
<td>0.036***</td>
<td>-0.010</td>
<td>0.00194</td>
<td>-0.017</td>
<td>0.025*</td>
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<td>-0.004</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unemployment (Y−1)</td>
<td>-0.129***</td>
<td>-0.131***</td>
<td>-0.137***</td>
<td>-0.139***</td>
<td>-0.137***</td>
<td>-0.136***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Growth (Y−1)</td>
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<td>0.139***</td>
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<td>0.444***</td>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>0.153***</td>
<td>0.127***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asylum Requests (Y−1)</td>
<td><strong>0.153</strong>*</td>
<td>0.178***</td>
<td>0.355***</td>
<td>0.133***</td>
<td>0.139***</td>
<td>0.324***</td>
<td>0.136***</td>
<td>0.139***</td>
<td>0.444***</td>
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11
As the above table suggests, the results remain largely similar. Yet again I find a consistent positive association between the indicators of the left parties’ pro-market economic policy positions and blue-collar voters shift to the radical right parties. If anything, excluding the ‘trend’ variable slightly diminishes the coefficients of some of my variables. But the signs and significance of the coefficients stay largely the same. This confirms the robustness of my results.

Case Studies

How do other Eastern European cases fit in my theory? Below I review the relationships between the post-Communist parties and the radical right parties in six Central and Eastern countries - Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

What are the constituent elements of my theory? Analysis of different country cases reveals that the radical right parties often emerged in response to the shock therapy/radical austerity reforms that form the socioeconomic cleavages in a given country. However, these parties’ ability to sustain the electoral success depended on the presence of a strong competitor on the left with a redistribution platform and labor union links. All of the ‘successful’ cases of the centrist-left parties presented in the below description (the Czech Republic, Romania and Slovenia) – were the parties able to sustain a continuous relationship with the labor unions and promote a successful labor policy (including jobs and welfare protection). That ensured the preservation of the traditional party alignments within a political system and more of traditional roles played by the left and right parties in this political setting.

In the countries, where the left parties shifted to the center of the economic spectrum, implemented drastic market reforms and abandoned pro-labor policy, their disenchanted supporters felt abandoned. The radical right parties filled in this vacuum appealing to those constituencies on the redistribution platform traditionally associated to the left pole of economic spectrum and gained electoral success.
Czech Republic

Historical Legacy and Transition Period

The programmatic choices of Czech’s post-Communist left were largely shaped by the party’s historical legacy during the Communist period. KSČM is a direct heir of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (Komunisticka Strana Ceskoslovenska - KSČ), the ruling party of Czechoslovakia from 1948 until 1989. Unlike Hungary where the 1956 resulted in a victory of a pro-reformist wing, the 1968 revolution had a different impact on the Czech Communist party (KSČ). The reformist wing was heavily purged out of the Party apparatus, and those left among the nomenclature were the most rigid, ossified, and most resistant to programmatic change (Stolarik, 2016). This trend was further propagated by the Communist leadership: the respectability and career growth of high-ranking party functionaries depended on their activities during the 1968 Prague Spring: politicians complicit in the suppression of dissidents in 1968 had higher odds of being nominated for a seat in either legislative chamber (Rizova, 2012: 152). As result, Czech Communist party accumulated very rigid and anti-reform-oriented cadres and was not in a position to embark on democratic reforms during the democratization period.

Following the transition KSČM gradually supplemented Leninism with a more Marxist democratic left stance, but its image continued to carry some reflection of its past (Hanley, 2001). The party leadership has opted to keep the label ‘Communist’ even in the party name, against a decision to change the name to ‘social democratic’ made by the majority of other post-Communist parties in the region (Lach et al, 2010): KSČM stayed ‘the least social democratized and least organizationally like other European left parties’ (Ishiyama, 2006). One explanation for the KSČM ability to survive in a relatively unchanged capacity after the Velvet revolution is that comparing to other post-Communist parties the KSČM managed to largely preserve its membership. The departing members of the KSČM did not attempt to create a specific secessionist party (as did Hungary’s MSzP or KSC Slovakian wing); and therefore, KSČM avoided early competition with a party of a European leftist type as it happened in Poland or Hungary (Lach et al, 2010: 368-369). Holubec (2015) lists several other reasons for the resilience of the KSČM communist identity: 1) its reform wing, which was purged after 1968, was relatively weak; 2) unlike Baltic and Romanian Communist parties banned in 1989-1991, the legal existence of KSČM was relatively secured so the party didn’t need to reinvent its identity; 3) given a strong anti-Communist public sentiment in the Czech Republic, KSČM was concerned that taking on a social-democratic identity would disrupt the existing support base without bringing a new one. KSČM’s inability to move closer to the political center was also a consequence of a boycott from the mainstream parties, which tried to punish KSČM for its Communist past. Every time KSČM was elected to the Czech National Parliament, other parties avoided forming coalitions and alliances with it, contributing to the preservation of its anti-establishment and ideologically conservative platform.

The lack of governmental responsibility ended up helping KSČM: having not participated in government for 20 years it could then claim an outsider status of the uniquely ‘clean’ party in a corrupt political system (Lach et al, 2010: 369). This made KSČM largely a protest party, which was able to preserve relatively orthodox positions on the economic issues and attracted the support of blue-collar workers, ‘globalization losers’, and those dissatisfied with the status quo. Lach et al (2010: 321) show that regional unemployment levels and crime rate were among the top predictors of KSČM vote. By the 2006 Czech Election Study, KSČM voters had the highest dissatisfaction with the functioning of democracy, highest distrust in the institutions, and prioritized crime reduction over civil liberties (Stegmaier and Vlachova, 2009:808–10).

Reflective of the party’s ideological rigidity, KSČM platform consistently stressed some of the Marxist dogmas, for example, identifying capitalism as the main disease afflicting world’s population, and offering to combine the Marxist collectivist goals with democratic objectives (Lach et al, 2010: 375). A particular sub-session of the party platform was devoted to creating new jobs, increasing social protection, fighting the unemployment, the unfavorable conditions of the young, disabled and elderly people. Interestingly, KSČM also addressed the cultural policy: it offered specific economic assistance to the Roma groups, and opposed the Czech accession into ‘the US- and Germany-dominated’ NATO and the EU. In other words, KSČM largely used a populist platform.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year(s)</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Coalition</th>
<th>Year(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1993-7</td>
<td>Democratic Left Alliance (SLD)</td>
<td>+, PiS</td>
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</table>

Table 4. Correspondence between the Left Parties Transition Choices and the Electoral Success of the Populist Right

Another centrist left party in Czech Republic, CSSD, was also able to maintain a traditional left platform and did not engage in the market transition reforms. CSSD, which dates back to the period of Austro-Hungarian Empire, reappeared after the Velvet Revolution in 1989 and remained one of the two largest political parties in the country. CSSD assumed a party platform of a typical western European social democratic party, supporting mixed economy, strong welfare state, progressive taxation, and European integration. Since 1993, when CSSD was headed by Milos Zeman, its left-wing orientation started to be more clearly pronounced.

Since the Czech post-Communist parties did not attempt to embark on reforms trajectory, the center-right parties took on that endeavor. The right-wing alliance between the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) with the Christian Democratic Party (KDS) that won the majority of votes in 1992 launched privatization and European integration. These policies were continued when the alliance won the consecutive 1996 parliamentary election. The CSSD criticized the specific form of transformation chosen by the right-wing government, and also exploited the KSČM orthodox-communist background to position itself as the only acceptable party for the voters dissatisfied with the results of the economic transformation. The emerging division between the left and right reflecting the socioeconomic cleavage became the most important indicator of the positions of the individual parties around that time (Hlousek, Kopecek, 2008: 10).

In this sense, the traditional left-right parties’ alignment along the economic axis has been preserved in the Czech Republic. The formation of the socioeconomic cleavage took place around 1992-96 elections during the reforms implementation period (Kitschelt et al 1999: 226-231, 244-260; Hlousek, Kopecek, 2008: 10), and its effects on voting in the Czech Republic remain stable or slightly increased over time (Smith, Matějů 2011; Linek, Lyons 2013). The main policy issues concerning this division included wealth redistribution, state regulation, and public welfare (Linek, 2015: 4).

Social class remained the primary cleavage, separating the left-wing parties (the traditional left KSČM and the center-left CSSD) from the liberal and conservative right-wing parties (ODS, ODA, US, TOP09). Linek (2015) finds a strong and consistent association between belonging to a particular social group and a party choice in 1990-2013. The right-leaning ODS has consistently received high support among entrepreneurs (around 50%), higher and lower professionals, and gained lower support among the manual workers and the retired (below 20%). By contrast, the CSSD support was the strongest among the manual workers (above 35%) and the retired. KSČM also retained a large share of blue-collar workers and the retired voters. In 1996 KSČM received 10% of all workers’ support (Grzymala-Busse, 1996), in 1999 its membership structure included a disproportional share of blue collar workers (14.2%) (Strmiska, 2002), and in 2016 working class voters were overrepresented among KSCM voters (34.2%).

The Czech left parties’ collaboration with labor unions (Avdagic 2005) and implementation of more pro-labor policies also explain their ability to retain higher support of the working class. While KSČM and CSSD did not pursue a coalition, they collaborated with Bohemian-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions (CMKOS) and frequently voted together on issues relevant to Czech labor, which created a relatively more pro-labor climate in the Czech Republic compared to Hungary or Poland (Bazay, 2015). On several occasions, CSSD and KSČM independently lined up to the left, including the period of CSSD-led government of 2002-06 when the Czech Labor Code was passed. Under Jiri Paroubek, who served as CSSD Prime Minister in 2005-06, the CSSD and KSČM jointly worked on revisions to the Labor Code and other issues (Sil, 2017).

Overall the presence of a viable left party (or set of parties) resisting efforts to undercut trade union rights and the social protection of workers coming from the reformist right parties strengthened Czech workers’ support for the left (Sil, 2017).

Individual-Level Surveys

For the Czech case the data allows to test the argument regarding the consistency of the alignments. As explained above, I expect the left-right political alignment to be largely maintained in the Czech case, and the support of the blue-collar workers for the left parties to stay positive over time.

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2 Czech Median 2016 MML-TGI survey accumulates the data on 15,000 of Czech respondents per year. Data available upon request.
3 KSČM preserved strong links to trade union activists: in 1992 57% of KSČM supporters were drawn from union members, and in 1996 - 38%. In 2000 about 20% of trade union members were supporters of the KSČM and 17% of ČSSD (11% and 22% in 2001 respectively).
I used the data from the Comparative Study of the Electoral System dataset for the following years: 1996, 2002, 2006, 2010, and 2013 to test this hypothesis. CSES dataset allows for two alternative specifications of the blue-collar working status:

- “Main occupation: worker” (“D2011”). The variable, which I recoded as a dummy, takes a value of “1” for all of the physical work/ labor related occupations.
- “Socioeconomic status (white, worker, farmer, self-employed): working” (“D2012”) I recoded this variable as a dummy, which takes a value of “1” for the “worker” category.

The below graph maps the differences in party support between Hungary’s blue- and white-collar respondents.

![Graph showing differences in party support between blue- and white-collar respondents](image)

The findings seem to confirm my expectations: the blue-collar status is positively associated to the support for the Czech left parties over time. The above graph reports a consistent positive association between the physical worker status and a probability of supporting the center and traditional left parties in the Czech Republic.

Overall, in line with the expectations of my theory in the Czech Republic the political alignments of the right and left have been preserved. Moreover, the Czech physical workers are still overwhelmingly voting for the left parties, unlike in, say, Hungarian or Polish cases. I illustrated this pattern by looking at the marginal probabilities of supporting the left parties while belonging to the blue-collar working group in the Czech Republic.

**Hungary**

In what follows I trace the trajectory of the post-Communist Hungarian Socialist Party to illustrate how its political strategies determined the success of the populist and radical right in Hungary.

In the next chapter I will extend my theory to the analysis of other post-Communist cases by focusing on six additional countries of the Central and Eastern Europe – Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia (see Chapter 4).

**Historical Legacy and Transition Period**

Following the collapse of the Communist systems, the post-Communist parties had two alternative strategies to pick. The first and overwhelmingly popular among the post-Communist parties strategy was to embrace the market reforms and austerity, and shift to the center of the ideological spectrum, particularly in the economic policy scale (as did the post-Communist parties in Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria or Slovakia) (Grzymala-Busse, 2002). Hungary’s left represents a canonical example with regards to the aforementioned programmatic shifts of the left parties.

The economic left-right divide started shifting in Hungary prior to the transition and largely had to do with the reformed nature of Hungary’s Communist party. The 1956 Hungarian Revolution launched a new period of reforms in the country. Those reforms were led by Janos Kadar, the General Secretary of the Hungarian

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4[http://www.cses.org/electionstudies.htm](http://www.cses.org/electionstudies.htm) Unfortunately, CSES data is only available for the Hungarian case for the years 1998 and 2002.
Socialist Workers Party (Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt, MSzMP). In 1966 the Party’s Central Committee approved the “New Economic Mechanism” (NEM) aimed at boosting Hungary’s economy, increasing productivity, and creating prosperity to ensure political stability in the country. Kadar increased consumer expenditures and reintroduced some market mechanisms into the Hungarian market and pursued a foreign policy that encouraged more trade with western countries. Although the reforms proved quite successful and transformed the country into ‘the happiest barrack of the Communist camp’, they also dramatically raised Hungary’s public debt – which later ended up delaying the country’s economic reform during the transition years (Csizmadia, 2008).\(^5\)

As a direct consequence of the NEM reforms, by the end of the 1970s, Hungary was one of the countries with the highest per capita debt in the world. The situation kept worsening so that by the 1980s the country had serious insolvent issues and was on the border of a financial and economic collapse (Csizmadia, 2008: 11). Given the deplorable state of most other countries of the Communist system at the time, Hungarian government had to look for the funding elsewhere and launched discussions about joining the IMF and the World Bank, where Hungary applied in 1981. Having been granted the IMF membership, Hungarian government restarted the reforms and adjusted the economic policy. However, a new approach led to a large-scale increase in prices and, currency devaluations that negatively affected the Hungarian population (Bogel, Edwards, Wax 1997: 11).\(^5\) In this sense, in the eyes of Hungarians, the Communist party was associated to a more pro-market economic policy prior to the start of the transition. In late 1980s, the right parties used this as an opportunity to challenge the post-Communist left from an opposite side of the economic policy spectrum – by using a more redistributionist, populist agenda. Eventually the limitations of reforms in a non-free economy and a worsening economic situation launched the democratization process in Hungary. In mid-1980s a series of round-table discussions was held, where the reformist wing of the ruling Communist Party and Hungary’s dissidents were able to agree on a new constitution. The first limited multiparty elections took place in 1985.

Following the transition, Hungary’s Socialist Party (MSzP, Magyar Szocialista Párt) became a reform wing of the ruling socialist Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party, which chose to split from the old Communist party and move to the ideological center. In the early years, the party represented a cross-class coalition of former nomenclature elites and blue- and white-collar workers (Evans and Whitefield, 1995: 1191).

Since 1990, the Hungarian general elections were held in a mixed, dual-ballot system, which created incentives for strategic voting and a moderate amount of desertion of the “third parties” (Prinz, 2013). Hence, the newly created electoral system favored nation-wide parties and incentivized formation of a two-party system. Small or regional parties on the left side of the spectrum had difficulties gaining the electoral support, and the New Left and the Hungarian Workers’ Party (MSzMP, a small Communist faction that opposed the reformist orientation of the MSzP and broke away from it) were unable to mobilize enough support and get past the 5% electoral threshold. Instead, the reformed post-Communist MSzP has taken the lead in the representation of the Hungarian “left” (Palonen, 2009: 14).

These developments explain why the alignment along the economic policy axis has been shifting in Hungary since the early years of transition. While the post-Communist left tended to embrace the neoliberal reform agenda, the right-wing parties were quite non-rightist in their economic policies. The first post-Communist government in Hungary after 1990 election, which included three right wing parties: the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), the Independent Party of Smallholders (FKgP), and the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP), was reluctant to undertake difficult economic reforms despite the country’s dire economic conditions. The right-wing parties came to power by criticizing the economic reforms implemented by the Socialists (Racz 2000) and employed the populist rhetoric with promises to protect the common people from the ‘antisocial reforms’ pursued by the MSzP (Morlang 2003). While in power, instead of implementing the reforms, the right government attempted “to calm public dissatisfaction by increasing government spending” (Morlang 2003: 70). This approach served as the best survival strategy for the newly emerged, fragmented and poorly politically organized rightist parties (Bakke and Sitter 2005; Fowler 2004).

**First Wave of Realignment**

Starting 1989, the MSzP rejected the old Communist Party image and adopted a pro-European program, which combined a universalist welfare state and acceptance of the market economy (Toth, 2015). This strategy,

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\(^6\) The Polish story is somewhat similar in this regard.
which echoed the approach chosen by many western European left parties (Berman, 2016), aimed to preserve the party’s nature as an organization of left-leaning reformist technocrats from the middle ranks of the former regime (Toth, 2015). Embracing the market and pursuing reforms seem to provide the MSzP with the only viable long-term strategy for party development (Grzymala-Busse 2002; Morlang 2003). In addition, the reformed wing of the Communist party already had the legacy of reform implementation, and established relations with the international economic institutions.

The market economic orientation was later reinforced by MSzP entering a coalition with the liberal and reformist Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ) party in 1994-1998 and again in 2002-2008. The coalition with the liberal Alliance of Free Democrats (SzDSz) and the MSzP self-portrayal as the original initiator of liberal economic reforms in 1989 further reinforced the party’s liberal free market-oriented image (Tavits and Letki, 2009: 559). MSzP also made a strong emphasis on European integration, democracy, political correctness, human rights and multiculturalism.

Initially, the rebranding strategy worked very well. In the 1994 parliamentary election, MSzP won an absolute majority and entered a coalition with the liberal SZDSZ. Having won the 1994 election with absolute majority, MSzP joined an alliance with liberal Free Democrats party (SZDSZ) and launched far-reaching economic reforms needed in light of Hungary’s dire economic conditions, and a danger of a financial crisis and national bankruptcy due to the country’s extensive debt. The right-wing Magyar Democrat Forum’s government that was in power in 1990-1994 before MSzP failed to implement those reforms (Racz 2000).

While MSzP government accelerated the privatization of Hungarian state-owned companies, the key element of the reform was the so-called Bokros Package. Announced in 1995, the Borkos package included a series of austerity measures, such as the gradual devaluation of the forint, reduction of social benefits and real wages. Designed to avoid the national bankruptcy, the Bokros package devalued the forint to counterbalance the deficit while also limiting social benefits and reducing real wages. In other words, the Bokros package combined the short-term stabilization measures with economic and social restructuring. Such policies brought on strong criticism from right wing and labor union forces that argued for more gradual stabilizing policies (Köves 1995, Boros-Kazai 2005). At the forefront of opposition was right-wing Fidesz party that deemed the package catastrophic.

While the Bokros package proved to develop stabilizing economic growth by 1997, it also reinforced the cleavage along the socioeconomic policy by introducing a visible economic divide now defined the right and left. The latter now has been economically defined based on its more pro-market, conservative austerity measures, and taking advice from international institutions (aka the IMF or EU for structural assistance). The former has embraced more paternalistic and pro-redistribution socialist policies, focusing on internal growth of smaller scale private ownership, social mechanisms of redistribution and welfare (Fowler 2004). While the populist side of such initiatives became more pronounced further down the road with Fidesz criticizing the IMF and EU policies as encroaching on the freedoms of the Hungarian people (Saltman, 2014: 33), the key dividing lines were created back in 1995.

Although Hungary’s economic situation improved after Bokros package, the population was reluctant to accept such huge costs of transformation. The stabilization policies were followed by a sharp increase in social dissatisfaction and a loss of social support for the ruling coalition (Kubas, 2013). The reform resulted in a sharp decline in the living standards of the majority of Hungarians (Greskovits, 2000). The major cuts in public spending (unemployment benefits, education, pension and healthcare) led to an increase in mortality and fertility reductions (Kando, 2001; Gaal, 2011).

Although successful in the short term, the MSzP strategy put a strain on its relationship with the blue-collar constituencies and labor unions, and over time led to the increasing frustration with the left among the social groups that historically supported MSzP. In Chapter 6 I analyze the individual-level surveys in Hungary to trace the dynamics of the working-class support for the MSzP. I show that while the blue-collar working status is positively and significantly associated to the odds of supporting MSzP in 1994 (prior to implementation of the Bokros package), the turnaround occurs in 1998 election, when the working-class status for the first time becomes negatively associated to the support for the left party. By contrast, following the 1998 election, I find a consistent positive association between the working-class status and probability of voting for the right Fidesz party. Hence the blue-collar workers initially turned to Fidesz to oppose the MSzP neoliberal policies and also being attracted by Fidesz’ populist appeals. In the following years, however, those constituencies became increasingly disappointed with Fidesz as well (Eszter-Tóth András, 2015) and continued radicalizing by shifting further to the right of the political spectrum.
Second Wave of Realignment

The Bokros package and its welfare cuts eventually cost MSzP support in the 1998 election. The right parties used the increase of dissatisfaction among the Hungarian people to capitalize on it. Agh (2002) draws a parallel between MSzP and Blair’s government, which implemented similar policies (such as privatizing the British National Health Service) in the UK (Agh, 2002; Cohen, 2000; Wilkin, 2016). In both cases such strategies contributed to the electoral success of the radical right parties in both the UK and Hungary.

The Hungarian Justice and Life Party (Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja, MIÉP) founded in 1993, a radical nationalist party, managed to enter the parliament with 5.47% of votes. The party used an anti-Semitic platform (which was also an anti-left platform due to the existing tradition in Hungary to frame the Communist/left government as a benefactor of Hungary’s Jewish community), and campaigned against Hungary’s accession to the European institutions.

Most importantly, rightwing Fidesz used the opportunity to alternate its platform from a cosmopolitan liberal ideology by reconstructing itself as a conservative party with populist elements, and combining rightwing attitudes on public and Christian-conservative morality with left-wing attitudes on economics. Committed to state-led economic development Fidesz advocated the defense of Hungary’s national interests and domestic employers against foreign influences and rejected the takeover of state companies by foreigners through privatization (Toth, 2015). The strategy proved winning - the support for Fidesz, which has not been in power before, rose from around 9 percent in 1990 to 26 percent in 1998.

Having won the 1998 election, Fidesz’s leader Victor Orban became Hungary’s new prime minister by forming a government with MDF and FKGP parties. While in power, Fidesz continued to criticize the neoliberal policies of the previous MSzP-SZDSZ government, especially those related to the industry privatization and the welfare cut-offs. In a series of his public speeches, Orban referenced neoliberalism as a western ideology, which was not to be entirely trusted due to its tendency to prioritize the market and abstract individual before the culture and society in which it was embedded (Orban, 2015; Wilkin, 2016 :61). Yet Fidesz was constrained in its use of the populist policies due to the need to ensure Hungary’s accession to the European Union (and hence to comply with the restrictions imposed by the EU). Hence, its rhetoric notwithstanding, Orban’s government undertook a series of reforms aimed at cutting the existing budget deficit and public-sector debt, and largely continued the MSzP track.

However, the populist appeals became an important electoral component in Hungarian politics from now on. Fidesz’s rhetoric became more aggressive and populist over time with Victor Orban attacking the elites, the banks and the multinationals while emphasizing the country’s national symbols and traditions (Enyedi, 2016; Palonen, 2009; Vegetti: 2016). To avoid defeat in the 2002 elections the Fidesz government implemented massive stimulation of consumer demand, by raising public sector wages by 75 per cent, the minimum wage by 60 per cent and implementing a lavish program in support of mortgage lending. Through such appeals and because of its association with a less controversial economic policy than MSzP, Fidesz almost managed reelection in 2002. And even despite Fidesz losing the 2002 election, Hungary’s economic policy-making took a new direction: both Fidesz and MSzP sought to outbid one another calling for a ‘new social system’. Attempting to outbid Fidesz, MSzP promised wage rises in the public sector, a 13th-month bonus, the abolition of income tax for the low paid and an ambitious investment program in infrastructure (Lehndorff, 2014: 236). And when the MSzP-SzDSz coalition returned to power, its economic policy became subordinated to reelection purposes. While the expansive spending program gave a boost to Hungary’s economy, the increase in public debt now became a permanent problem.

The relevance of the socioeconomic issues was evident in the 2006 campaign, which focused on economic issues and the convergence with the Maastricht criteria after the recent accession of Hungary to the EU (Korkut, 2007; Sitter and Batary, 2006). The 2006 elections continued the populist cycle of both the MSzP and Fidesz competing on who was to promise the voters more, largely ignoring the budget deficit of over 9% at the time (Batory, 20107). Concerned with losing votes in the forthcoming elections in 2006, the MSzP government led by new prime-minister Ferenc Gyurcsány returned to an expansive deficit-financed spending policy.

Although the MSzP-SzDSz coalition managed to secure the reelection, the new government suffered a massive popularity drop few months later, largely due to its economic policies. Having returned to power in 2006, Gyurcsány had to comply with the European Commission’s request to curb new debt in accordance with the Maastricht stability criteria. But the majority of Hungarians were not prepared to a sudden change of course in

the direction of public spending cuts (Lehndorff, 2014: 236). The situation escalated when Gyurcsány’s private comment that the state of Hungary’s economy was much worse than any party had admitted was leaked on the national radio. The admission sparked a wave of riots dramatically dropping the popularity of the left government. In response, Fidesz accused the MSzP of election fraud and demanded new elections, but the MSzP government refused and instead switched to a quasi-neoliberal reform program. So much public criticism followed that Fidesz’s campaign for a referendum on the reforms was supported by the population. The referendum, which was held in spring 2008, dramatically reinforced Fidesz as the party that promised to defend the welfare state against the neoliberal deregulation (Lehndorff, 2014: 236). As if that wasn’t bad enough, the onset of the 2008 global economic and financial crisis dealt the final blow to the MSzP. The Hungarian economy stalled, GDP plunged by 6.8 per cent in 2009 and Hungary turned to the IMF for financial assistance, which in turn demanded the implementation of harsh austerity measures (Lehndorff, 2014: 237) including cuts of social and unemployment benefits (Vegetti, 2016: 4). The crisis got exacerbated by the legacy of a government spending driven growth as the anticyclical measures were now off the agenda, and Hungary’s high foreign indebtedness.

In the meantime, Fidesz continued a campaign against the MSzP government attacking the measures demanded by the IMF and the European Commission and portraying itself as the spokesperson of a general discontent. Fidesz argued that once the neoliberal and corrupt politics of the post-communist left was stopped dead in its tracks a new period of strong growth could begin (Lehndorff, 2014: 237). As result, Fidesz won the 2010 election with a landslide victory securing a two-thirds majority in parliament. MSzP lagged far behind, while the right radical Jobbik secured a third place with 16.7% of vote. Following the 2010 electoral defeat, the MSzP has never been able to recover and continued to lose votes over time. New left parties that subsequently emerged in the Hungarian politics were also unable to gain substantive levels of popular support.

This period illustrates the continuous shift of the dissatisfied Hungarian voters along the right dimension. Along with populist right Fidesz, on the wave of frustration with the establishment the radical Jobbik rose to capitalize on social grievances. Jobbik’s focus on the economy explains substantive share of its electoral popularity. Varga (2014) shows that the electoral success of Jobbik can be explained not only through its attempts to mobilize the anti-Roma sentiment, but also by its ability to present itself as a party taking considerable interest in the economic issues of poverty and inequality triggered by capitalism. For example, an attack on MSzP and neoliberalism played a strong role in Jobbik’s 2010 electoral platform (Volford, 2012). Jobbik’s program portrayed the MSzP as being responsible for most of Hungary’s problems. According to Jobbik, MSzP’s policies and attachment to the EU - a ‘corrupt capitalist organization’ - Hungary lost its sovereignty and got stuck in the economic crisis. Negative references to MSzP featured in each section of Jobbik’s 2010 program contrasting it with a polar opposite stance of Jobbik (Volford, 2012). Yet Jobbik also attacked globalization and multinational corporations allegedly responsible for the destruction of economy and pushing Hungarian businesses to the state of bankruptcy.

After the 2009 European parliament election (where Jobbik received 14.8 percent), a Budapest polling firm ‘Perspective Institute’ ran a survey to discover that large shares of the left-wing voters were turning toward Jobbik. They concluded that Hungary’s radical right primarily recruited its supporters from the leftist camp disappointed with the governmental performance of MSzP, not from the center-right camp (Phillips, 2010). In a 2009 survey of Jobbik voters about their 2006 party preferences, Median discovered different results. Of those surveyed 9% did not remember or refused to answer; 25% voted for Fidesz-KDNP, and 14% came from the MSZP camp (Balogh, 2009). The difference in findings may have to do with voters’ proclivity to forget their previous voting choices.

In some cases, Jobbik doubled its nationwide share of the votes in cities that had been Socialist strongholds (Phillips, 2010). In the analysis conducted in Chapter 5, I find similar results for Hungary’s district-level constituencies: there is a consistent positive association between the vote for MSzP in the 2006 election and the vote for Jobbik in the 2010 election on constituency level.

The anti-establishment backlash of disaffected voters was exacerbated by the economic recession, unemployment, and demand for protectionism in light of globalization (Taggart 1995; Norris 2005). That such anti-establishment backlash took the form of a radical right voting in Hungary may be understood in terms of dealignment process. In Hungary the left parties increasingly came to be associated with the neoliberal economic policies. Hence Hungarian voters disappointed by such policies were increasingly shifting to the right parties, which in turn adopted a more protectionist paternalistic rhetoric. The economic factors, such as global economic crisis, high levels of unemployment (particularly, in Hungary’s north-east regions which became Jobbik’s
strongholds), and Jobbik’s own rhetoric that accused the governing parties, international capital and the Roma minority ensured the success of the radical right (Sitter, 2011).

The effort of Jobbik to reach out to the disaffected blue-collar constituencies paid off. Eszter-Tóth András (2015) who conducted a series of the interviews with workers at Hungary’s factories, discovered that workers who supported MSzP and/or leaned to the left in their political preferences constituted a minority among the interviewed. Instead, while few explicitly embraced the radical right Jobbik, many indirectly confirmed that Jobbik would be their preference in the next elections. By some estimates, up to a third of the factory employees were ready to vote for the radical right, due to the earlier disappointment with Fidesz and MSzP. Recent studies also show that a significant segment of the electorate that is disappointed in Fidesz do not support the left but opt for the radical right party Jobbik instead (Guyri, 2014: 14).

In other words, the political dealignment in Hungary’s politics opened up a political space for the radical right Jobbik to reach out to the former MSzP constituencies, which it has been successfully appropriating in the consecutive years.

The Left and Labor Policies

The success of the radical right parties may also be explained by the fact that they offer new possibilities of political expression and mobilization and substitute the patronizing function for the social groups previously catered by socialist or communist parties (Minkenberg, 2001: 397; Perrineau, 1997). Therefore, the weakening of trade unions, which traditionally served as networks intended to integrate workers into the left-wing support base, might have given an extra boost to the popularity of the radical right parties among the working class (Pappi, 2002). Social disorganization and weakening of the unions is theorized to make workers subject to political alienation and more attracted to new channels of political expression and mobilization offered by the radical right that substitutes the function traditionally implemented by the left parties (Minkenberg, 2001: 397; Perrineau, 1997).

However, the conditions of the post-Communist countries make one skeptical about how applicable the unions’ explanation may be in this context. Here the alliances between political parties and trade unions have traditionally been weaker than in western European countries (with a possible exception of Poland) because the Communist rulers manipulated trade unions and replaced them with fictitious structures. Eventually, as most other quasi-independent Communist institutions, the unions only existed to conduct pro-Communist policies often at the expense of the workers.

In the post-Communist Europe, the historical weakness of the unions made them of little importance to the workers and politics in general. The left parties predominantly failed to lead the radical workers’ protests and for the most part mass left organizations did not emerge in the post-Communist countries. Most trade unions avoided structured political alliances except for several alliances with more moderate forces, such as the social democratic successor parties of Poland and Hungary.

Hungary is a canonical case to illustrate the trade union situation in the post-Communist world. As shown by Andras Toth (1994: 88), during the Communist period the unions were transformed into subordinate dummy organizations of the Communist dictatorship. Their goal was to serve a ‘transmission belt’ conveying central economic policy from the decision-making Communist bodies to workers. This made the unions detached from their original social functions - collective bargaining and social rights protection. As result, the interests of Hungarian trade unions and workers diverged. Toth (1994) speaks of a double history of the official trade-union hierarchy on one hand, and a separate history of workers’ attempts to defend their own rights outside the trade unions. As an outcome, the unions have not played a particularly influential role in Hungarian politics. Hungary’s fragmented union structure with “partial links with political parties” led to partial successes but mostly failures in enacting pro-labor policy (Avdagic, 2004; Sil, 2017).

The independent anti-communist Hungarian unions (particularly LIGA and MOSZ) have never been particularly strong. However, some ties between the unions and political parties developed, as described by Avdagic (2004). MOSZ established links with the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) and its chairman entered the first parliament on the MDF ticket (Bruszt 1995). LIGA developed strong informal links to the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ). MSZOSZ, one of the descendants of the old official union center SZOT, established a formal alliance based on the common “leftist values” with the Socialist Party (MSZP) (Rácz 1993: 662).

In the first years of transition, unions often signed tripartite agreements mostly limited to the income policy. Matthes (2004) argues that Hungarian unions have played a crucial part in the pension reforms. When MSzP won the 1994 elections, the president of MSZOSZ, Sándor Nagy, ran second on the Socialist party list. The
new MSZP-led government started negotiations on broader social pact, which were soon abandoned. Under worsening economic situation and government conflicts, MSZP turned its back on the union and initiated a harsh austerity Bokros package, while Sándor Nagy resigned from his union post. This general trend continued under the subsequent right-wing governments.

The weakened and divided unions put little obstacle to Fidesz government which often portrayed unions as a “Bolshevik travesty”, drastically reduced the role of the tripartite council, and excluded the unions from the most important areas of economic policy-making.

The situation persists until now: Hungarian unions have little impact on the policy-making. In interviews, workers named Jobbik, as the only party which put trade unions’ rights in its program, promised to remove the trade union leaders who aligned with corrupt politicians and make the unions completely politically independent and only fight for workers’ rights (Eszter-Tóth András, 2015). However, in a private conversation with me, Jobbik’s Márton Gyöngyösi argued that trade unions played a zero role in Jobbik ability to attract working class constituencies in the unemployed regions of Hungary back in the 2010 in 2014 election. While more recently Jobbik attempted to attract support of smaller trade unions (such as teachers’ unions), this approach played a marginal role in Jobbik’s electoral success.

The Shifting Allegiances of the Hungarian Working Class

In my analysis, I focus on the working class support patterns for the Hungarian left and right parties. My theoretical expectations go in line with the party realignment hypothesis outlined above. I argue that in Hungary the working class constituencies are increasingly less likely to vote for the center-left MSzP party and increasingly more likely to embrace the populist and radical right Fidesz and Jobbik parties.

To test this hypothesis, I use the data collected in the years 1994-2014 by the Medián Opinion and Market Research Ltd, a major well-respected Hungarian polling company. Median’s monthly omnibus-type opinion polls (representative survey for the population 18+, sample size: 1,200 individuals) control for basic party preference questions. Depending on their availability, I used 7-12 surveys per each electoral year in Hungary (1994/5, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014) coding all variables identically in each case.

Belonging to the worker-class category was coded based on the variable ‘fogl’ (‘the occupation of the respondent’), a categorical variable consisting of eight categories (‘top leader’, ‘middle management’, ‘public intellectual’, ‘other intellectual’, ‘foreman, technician’, ‘workman’, ‘other physical’, ‘other’). I recorded the ‘fogl’ variable as a dummy variable, taking a value of ‘1’ when for one of the following categories: ‘foreman, technician’, ‘workman’, ‘other physical’, and ‘other’.

I looked at the crosstabs, to see whether the assumption was correct – I looked at the differences in party support between Hungary’s blue- and white-collar respondents:

The above graph confirms the expectation that the overtime support of blue-collar respondents decreases for the center left MSzP and increases for the populist and radical right parties.

Overall, the analysis in this section confirms my general theoretical expectation. The political realignment in the Hungarian cases resulted in the blue-collar workers becoming the main constituency of the right (populist
and radical) Hungarian parties, while the working class has increasingly abandoned the Hungarian center-left parties following the implementation of the austerity reforms.

**Poland**

The Polish case is one of the clearest examples of the electoral swings related to the people’s frustration with the economic reforms and longing for the social safety net of the bygone Communist era. The division into reforms’ winners and the losers in Poland fed the retroactive sentiments – longings for the times of full employment and a reliable social safety net, and eventually contributed to the emergence of political populism. The electoral fortunes of the Polish left parties reflected this dynamic quite well. The resistance to the liberal reforms in Polish context centered on a set of populist gestures associated with the emergence of a new right and the steady disappearance of the left since 1989 (Shields, 2012).

The Polish transition was launched by a free trade union Solidarity which became a broad, non-violent, anti-communist social movement and greatly contributed to the fall of communism. Eventually, the communist government of Poland was forced to negotiate with Solidarity, opening a road to the round table talks which eventually led to semi-free elections in 1989. The Polish Round Table allowed for a peaceful transition of power to the democratically elected government, and formation of Solidarity-led coalition government by the end of August 1989. In December 1990, Lech Wałęsa became an elected President of Poland, and the Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki of the first non-Communist Polish government embarked on a program of economic reform aiming to start the transition to a market-oriented economy. The key components of these reforms were those implemented in early 1990 by a team of economists headed by Leszek Balcerowicz and known as shock therapy.

In light of growing resistance to Communism, the collapse of the Polish United Workers’ Party (PUWP) became inevitable. Some of the former activists of the PUWP established the Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland (SDRP) assigned to take over all rights and duties of the PUWP, and divide out its property. The rest of the activists formed the Social Democratic Union of the Republic of Poland (UsdRP). Just prior to Poland’s first free elections in 1991, SdRP together with Polish Socialist Party (PPS), trade unions, feminists, unemployed and other groups within the working class formed an electoral alliance known as Democratic Left Alliance (SDL, the Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej). In the first 1991 election won by the liberal Democratic Union, the SDL finished second with 12% of votes (only 0.3% of votes below the winner). The newly formed five-party center-right coalition continued with Balcerowicz reforms.

The implementation of painful shock-therapy reforms contributed to the success of the left SDL in the next 1993 election (Rae, 2007: 105). Many observers were surprised that the Polish voters decidedly swung to the left and away from the reformist right embracing non-Solidarity parties (Hunter and Ryan, 1990: 172). During its electoral campaign SDL supported market reforms, but also demanded higher consideration for the interests of labor and continued ‘central intervention’ in the economy to reduce the costs of transformation (Hunter and Ryan, 1990: 172). As the popular frustration with the reforms grew, SDL gained 20.4% of votes, which allowed it to form a ruling coalition with the agrarian Polish Peasant Party (PSL), beating the Christian-Liberal Democratic Union. Two years later in 1995 Aleksander Kwasniewski, SDL candidate, was elected Polish president.

While PSL represented interests of Polish farmers and, as the party of the countryside, had a larger proportion of practicing churchgoers among its voters and drew the support of the Catholic Church, SDL voters were leaning to a more secular side. A greater share than the general electorate of SDL supporters opposed to privatization and the closure of factories (CBOS, 1993). SDL was supported by industrial and other public-sector workers and pensioners, but also employers, including many private entrepreneurs. Gibson and Ciehecka (1995: 769) found that the SDL was successful in drawing support from reform 'losers' who demanded reforms modification and greater emphasize on spending and increase in social services (Paradowska, Janicki & Markowski, 1993). Chan (1995) interpreted the results of the 1993 election as a proof that the major political cleavage in Poland has shifted from the ideological to socio-political dimension.

Having come to power in 1993, the parties in the left coalition found themselves facing two opposing demands. Their supporters expected the left parties to reduce transformation costs and increase pensions, unemployment insurance, wages, protect the farmers, limit foreign participation in the economy and raise taxes. By contrast, the government urgently needed the IMF approval to qualify Poland for the second stage of a 50% cut in its $33 billion foreign debt. A need for debt restructuring and inflow of the much-needed greater foreign investment created strong incentives to limit budgetary spending (Gibson and Ciehecka, 1993: 770). The result was the continuation of reforms. After a short oscillation, the new government announced that it would ‘push ahead with a mass privatization scheme’ and continued with the Balcerowicz’s plan of privatization, deregulation,
and sound fiscal policies (Hunter and Ryan, 1990: 172). A relatively tight budget was passed for 1994, and an increase in pensions’ indexation and social payments in that budget were well below what was promised during the election campaign (Gibson and Cielecka, 1993: 770). By 1995 when Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance Grzegorz Kolodko announced his ‘Strategy for Poland’ in 1995, it became clear that the ruling left coalition chose the neoliberal approach of controlling budget deficit, combatting inflation, cutting down expenditures and opening Polish economy to foreign investors (Bozóki and Ishiyama, 2002: 66).

Despite the four years of the economic growth and decreasing unemployment, the voters punished SLD in 1997 by voting for Solidarnosc Election Action (AWS), a right-wing coalition of Solidarnosc trade union and the Catholic parties led by the Polish trade union leader Marian Krzaklewski. In its electoral program, the SLD continued to evolve towards a more neoliberal economic platform, and openly advocated support for new and small businesses even labelling one segment of its platform ‘Entrepreneurism Above All’ (Jackson, Chlich, Poznariska, 2005: 43). By contrast, the AWS campaigned on a less liberal platform than the SLD, by offering to aid the badly lagging coal and steel sectors, which weren’t yet restructured or privatized. While AWS emphasized the economic interventionism, it also offered to continue with privatization and economic reforms. Yet despite its electoral promises, ASW formed a coalition government with the Freedom Union, a pro-market party headed by Leszek Balcerowicz, who became the deputy prime minister and the minister of finance in the new government. In turn, the new government focused on further privatization of services and industries, along with reforms directed at overhauling the state administration and welfare services (pensions, healthcare and education) (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland, 2013: 200). In other words, the Polish voters were left with no party representing a viable pro-redistribution alternative.

Perhaps, that is the reason why in 2001 they voted SLD back. The pendulum swung back, ensuring a 41% landslide victory of SLD in coalition with Labor Union. In their campaigns both parties capitalized on the economic turmoil and decline in living standards, which followed the reforms of previous center-right government. Despite the economic recovery, the unemployment remained high and a sense of social and individual dislocation spread in Poland. At the time the center-right parties, the liberal Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska, PO) and Law and Justice Party (Prawo i Sprawiedliwosc, PiS), failed to offer credible alternatives (Shields, 2012).

Yet again, the left parties were not in the position of catering to the social demands. They needed to ensure the Polish accession to the European Union, which constrained the ruling parties’ policy choices, since the European Union demanded that the government continued with the reform program. In addition, the previous AWS–UW government’s social reforms proved to be extremely costly (as well as unpopular). Therefore, when the SLD-PSL regained office in 2001, it had to focus on avoiding fiscal crisis. The government’s economic policy prioritized the interests of business, introduced a more flexible labor code, expanded entrepreneurship support and proposed a flat-income tax in Poland. To support small and medium-sized enterprises the new government also intended to make labor market more flexible and adequate to the laws of the EU. The program document of the new government “Entrepreneurship above all”, which was approved in the beginning of 2002, reflected this spirit and sought to liberalize the Polish Labor Code by making hiring and firing easier, cutting sick pay, reducing overtime pay, and limiting union consultation rights (Phelan, 2007: 313). While the program intended to decrease the unemployment, initially the already high unemployment spiked even higher.

The voters did not appreciate the policies of the new government. Having introduced large tax increases and expenditure cuts in its first budget, the left parties in power immediately saw an unusually sharp downturn in its approval rating (Szczerbiak, 2002). Several corruption scandals at the end of the SLD term helped to further weaken its support. The negative impact of the corruption scandals was exacerbated by the introduction of economic austerity measures at the end of 2003 to prevent the budget deficit from spiraling out of control (Shields, 2012). Overall, between the 2001 and 2005 parliamentary elections the SLD support fell from over 40% to 15%, and since then the party remained on the margins of Polish politics, allowing space for the populist right (Szczerbiak, 2002). In 2005 election SLD lost 30% of its voters and for the first time since its establishment entered parliament as the third party, winning only 11% of votes. This trend continued in the subsequent elections. Despite several new left-wing parties consecutively formed to fill the vacuum of left-wing reformism (Razem, the Greens and Social Justice Movement Party), none has been able to achieve substantive success. In ten consecutive years since the collapse of the SLD, the main contestation on the Polish political scene occurred between Polish right parties – populist Law and Justice and a liberal Civic Platform.

In 2005 election the decline of the electoral support for SLD came partly due to the abstention of its voters, but also because of the increasing switching of its voters to the right parties, such as Self-Defense (6% of SLD voters) and Law and Justice party (13% of SLD voters) (Szczerbiak, 2007). The right parties increasingly
capitalized on Pole’s frustration with the losses incurred by the economic transition. In a specific post-Communist context, this bitterness took the form of attack on the communists for old-regime’s repressions but also transition losses. The most powerful of these parties, the Law and Justice, capitalized on this sentiment by campaigning against corrupt government officials and ‘the elite’, promising to end corruption and inequality, to punish and exclude the communists and their agents from power (Wolchik and Curry, 2008: 175), while emphasizing the Polish traditions and Catholic religious values. This emerging populist discourse configured virtuous homogeneous national people against a set of self-serving corrupt politicians (predominantly associated to the left parties), who allegedly conspired to deprive the ‘people’ of what is rightfully theirs in terms of their economic and social standing. Using such rhetoric, PiS won the parliamentary election and its head Lech Kaczyński, won the presidential election in October 2005. In his electoral slogans, Kaczynski used a socio-conservative program and pledged not to re-nominate the reformer Leszek Balcerowicz for a further six-year term as President of the National Bank of Poland.

PiS, elected in 2005, emphasized its ‘Fourth Republic’ program of moral and political renewal of the Polish state, along with a vague pledge to build a ‘solidaristic’ Poland in contrast to Civic Platform’s economic liberalism. The party’s success was also partly due to Poland’s economic growth and falling unemployment, together with the fact that PiS was reluctant to introduce any radical social or economic reforms that might have produced negative short-term electoral consequences (Szczerbiak, 2007). In the local 2006 local elections PiS has pushed the populist slogans even further under the banner “Close to the people”, promising “to create a social order in Poland, in which good is good, and bad is bad.”(PiS Program 2006, Wysocka, 2009). Yet it pursued a fairly orthodox, pro-market economic policies by lowering income and payroll taxes, pushing through a tax relief package for families, and bearing down on the budget deficit and public debt (Szczerbiak, 2015).

A political crisis (a result of corruption allegations on the part of Andrzej Lepper, leader of the Self-Defense of the Republic of Poland) broke up the ruling coalition and led to the earlier parliamentary election called in 2007. The main competition unraveled between the right Civic Platform and Law and Justice. Interestingly, both parties moved away from the economic liberalism in their slogans, by squeezing the center-left. Civic Platform promised to bring about an ‘economic miracle’ that would pay for improved public services and infrastructure by abandoning excessive regulation. Distancing away from an open espousal of economic liberalism, CO targeted public sector workers dissatisfaction with the PiS-led government, by promising better salaries for doctors, nurses and teachers. The party argued that such policies would prevent Poles from being forced to work abroad in order to improve their standard of living (Szczerbiak, 2007: 5). By contrast, Law and Justice failed to develop an effective response to PO slogans and attempted to shift the campaign back to anti-corruption issues (Szczerbiak, 2007: 5). The election resulted in a clear victory of Civic Platform with 41.51% of the votes and 209 (out of 460) seats in the Sejm. The ‘Left and Democrats’ - an electoral alliance of four center-left parties anchored by the Democratic Left Alliance - received the third result of 13.15%. Yet this result was below the total combined vote for these parties in the 2005 election and below the 55 seats that the Democratic Left Alliance won on its own in the previous election.

The 2011 election saw a clear victory for the Civic Platform, which became the first incumbent governing party to secure re-election for a second term of office since 1989, while the right-wing Law and Justice (PiS) party came a strong second. Yet PO support was not based on particular enthusiasm about its policies. While PO took credit for ensuring that Poland was the only EU member that avoided recession during the 2007-8 financial crisis, it did not deliver on its 2007 campaign pledge to create an ‘economic miracle’. Beware of the SLD fate, PO government also avoided more radical social and economic policy reforms. As result, the government was criticized from both sides for lack of major achievements and ambition, which led to a steady erosion in the government’s public approval ratings and satisfaction with its performance, particularly evaluations of its handling of the economy (Szczerbiak, 2011). While in the office, after 2011 the party continued departing from its market-oriented roots: it abandoned its flagship promises to reduce taxes and curb pension privileges for selected professional groups, and was accused of acting illegally in dismantling the obligatory private pension fund (Markowski, 2016: 1313). The PO moderation about further economic liberalization suggests that it was relatively perceptive to changing societal demand in Poland.

The decline of PO popularity culminated in 2015, when PiS won the parliamentary election with 37.6% of votes and gained 235 seats. For the first time in democratic Poland, a winning party was able to create a government without having to negotiate with coalition partners. During the 2015 electoral campaign, PiS and a new populist movement set up by a rock singer, Pawel Kukiz, argued that Poland was in the hands of corrupt elites; that Polish economic development was proceeding more slowly than it might have; that Poland was left
‘in ruins’ by the maladministration of previous governments. PiS also made a number of costly pledges popular among the wider public: a universal child benefit; reversing the PO–PSL government’s unpopular but necessary plan to increase the retirement age to 67 for people of both sexes; and increasing the tax-free income thresholds (Markowski, 2016: 1312).

These and other promises aimed to attract those Poles who had, if relatively, lost as a result of the Polish modernization. The strongholds of PiS support were the economically depressed rural regions of Poland’s south and east, whose sense of marginalization had a basis in economic reality (Traub, 2016). PiS electorate of PiS had a dramatic over-representation of (a) people with primary (53%) and vocational (56%) education; (b) peasants and farmers (53%); (c) people over 50 years of age (48%); (d) pensioners (49%); (e) workers and rural residents (47%). Kukiz’15, which received 8.8% of active voters, also had a disproportional representation of workers (13%) (Markowski, 2016: 1317). In other words, the societal division about the economic transformation remained a key cleavage in the Polish politics 25 years later. The more striking difference between the 2015 election and the previous 25 years was the complete absence of parliamentary representation for the left parties, as a logical continuation of the realignment process ongoing in the Polish politics.

Overall, the Polish case illustrates that the rise of the populist right PiS party was a consequence of party realignment process that followed the center-left SLD switch to the economic policy center, implementation of radical pro-market reforms and a resulting collapse.

8) Experimental Survey

Experimental Design

In the above Chapter, I show that the party realignment process that took place in Hungary resulted in the decrease of support for the center-left MSzP party among its traditional working-class constituency.

Using the case studies, constituency-level and observational studies, I have shown that the center-left Hungarian party MSzP was in fact consistently losing the support of the blue-collar Hungarian respondents since the late 1990s. While the results of the previous analysis go in line with the theoretical prediction of my paper, the methods chosen above make it difficult to establish causality since it hard to isolate the effect of the interested cause on observational data. In addition, while I have argued that the socioeconomic issues play an important role in the respondents turning away from the center-left parties to embrace the radical right in the Hungarian context, I am yet to demonstrate that quantitatively.

To address these two issues, I have run a pilot experimental survey in Hungary (which I repeat on a larger sample by the upcoming parliamentary election in Hungary). The experimental setting allows to tackle the causality issues in a more systematic way by determining whether the relationship studied in an experiment is actually caused by the manipulation (administered treatment). As a theoretical basis of my experiment, I followed the framework proposed in Brader and Tucker (2008) and Lupu (2014). Under this framework, the respondents are split into several groups which are shown various information regarding party positions. By assigning the mainstream Hungarian parties certain positions on the economic scale, I intended to show that the socioeconomic
issues contributed to the working-class constituencies’ defection to the right parties away from the center-left parties.

My main research focus is the blue-collar working constituencies, as a social group most susceptible to the radical right populism in the current political context. As I have discussed in the Chapter 2, the manual workers are more likely to be hurt by globalization, since the market liberalization has been a major force beyond the real wages decline and destruction of the low-skilled jobs. I argue, however, that this constituency is also more likely to punish the center-left parties for embracing the policies of economic openness and abandoning their traditional ‘left’ stance. Thereof my theory predicts that the disenchantment with the left parties’ centrist position along the economic scale brings a very specific response from the manual workers group: while it increases the workers’ frustration with the center-left parties (that allegedly betrayed workers’ expectations by shifting economic policy positions) and hence lowers their supports for the left, it also pushes the workers further to the right of the political spectrum (increasing their radicalization along the self-identification scale).

Hence the expectations of my theory for the case of Hungary are:

- **Hypothesis I:** the pro-market economic policy stance of the left MSzP party decreases the support for MSzP in comparison with a more redistributionist MSzP stance among the general population
- **Hypothesis I:** the pro-market economic policy stance of the left MSzP party decreases the support for MSzP in comparison with a more redistributionist MSzP stance, particularly, among the more economically disaffected groups, specifically blue-collar workers.
- **Hypothesis III:** the pro-market economic policy stance of MSzP fuels the support for the radical right Jobbik party
- **Hypothesis III:** the pro-market economic policy stance of MSzP fuels the support for the radical right Jobbik party, particularly, among the more economically disaffected groups, specifically blue-collar workers.

In February 2018, I ran an internet-based experimental survey in Hungary of a total size of 500 participants (250 respondents for two treatment groups respectively). The subjects were randomly recruited from a representative sample of Hungary’s population by a professional polling company Solid Data.

My experimental design looked as follows. I split the sample into 2 groups of equal size, each of which was shown different combinations of the information about Hungary’s largest parties’ alleged platforms in the upcoming Hungarian April 2018 election. The administered treatment provided the respondents with two alleged excerpts from a Hungarian non-partisan newspaper article, which contained the information regarding the party platforms in the upcoming parliamentary election. The respondents were told that the experiment would study the frequency of their exposure to the specific type of news. In the end they were debriefed.

To strengthen the treatment and simplify the content, the respondents were shown three pictures, first, the information about Fidesz and MSzP platforms; second, the information regarding the Fidesz and Jobbik platforms; and lastly the information of the platforms of all tree parties. This was done in order to allow the respondents sufficient time to process the data, ensure their consistent focus on the provided information, and check their response to each of the parties’ platforms. After the treatment was provided, the respondents were asked questions regarding their support for each of the respective parties. Afterwards, they were asked additional questions regarding their political and policy preferences.

The administered treatment contained the following information. Notice, that the only variable across two treatments is the information of MSzP policy stance (embracing a pro-market and economic openness policy in Treatment 1, as opposed to taking a more redistributionist policy stance in Treatment 2). The positions of both populist right Fidesz party (neutral policy stance) and radical right Jobbik (protectionist policy stance) remain constant across the two treatments. So in this experiment I measure how manipulating the center-left MSzP economic policy stance affects the respondents’ preferences towards MSzP, Fidesz and Jobbik.

**Treatment 1:**

1. Neoliberal Socialists – neutral Fidesz

*Please read the following newspaper abstract:*

“As the political parties prepare for the April 2018 parliamentary election, they are revising their political platforms and strategies.

Fidesz, the ruling party, will preserve its current policy focus as part of its electoral strategy.
MSZP will push for policies of economic openness and seek to satisfy international investors/capital in order to further integrate the Hungarian economy into global markets.”

Question: Between these two parties, which one appeals to you more?
- MSZP
- Fidesz

2. Protectionist Jobbik – neutral Fidesz

Please read the following newspaper abstract:
“As the political parties prepare for the April 2018 parliamentary election, they are revising their political platforms and strategies. Fidesz, the ruling party, will preserve its current policy focus as part of its electoral strategy. Jobbik in the meantime will maintain its focus on the protection of the Hungarian economy and propose to limit the presence of multinational companies because, as it claims, multinational companies stifle the development of Hungarian–owned enterprises.”

Question: Between these two parties, which one appeals to you more?
- Jobbik
- Fidesz


Please read the following newspaper abstract:
“As the political parties prepare for the April 2018 parliamentary election, they are revising their political platforms and strategies. Fidesz, the ruling party, will preserve its current policy focus as part of its electoral strategy. MSZP will push for policies of economic openness and seek to satisfy international investors/capital in order to further integrate the Hungarian economy into global markets. Jobbik in the meantime will maintain its focus on the protection of the Hungarian economy and propose to limit the presence of multinational companies because, as it claims, multinational companies stifle the development of Hungarian–owned enterprises.”

Question: Now imagine you had to choose among the three above parties, which one appeals to you more?
- Fidesz
- MSZP
- Jobbik

Treatment 2:

1. Protectionist Socialists – neutral Fidesz

Please read the following newspaper abstract:
“As the political parties prepare for the April 2018 parliamentary election, they are revising their political platforms and strategies. Fidesz, the ruling party, will preserve its current policy focus as part of its electoral strategy. MSZP has decided to focus on improving the living standards and will campaign for the introduction of a guaranteed basic income for all citizens.”

Question: Between these two parties, which one appeals to you more?
- MSZP
- Fidesz

2. Protectionist Jobbik – neutral Fidesz

Please read the following newspaper abstract:
“As the political parties prepare for the April 2018 parliamentary election, they are revising their political platforms and strategies. Fidesz, the ruling party, will preserve its current policy focus as part of its electoral strategy. Jobbik in the meantime will maintain its focus on the protection of the Hungarian economy and propose to limit the presence of the multinational companies because, as it claims, multinational companies stifle the development of Hungarian–owned enterprises.”
Question: Between these two parties, which one appeals to you more?
- Jobbik
- Fidesz


Please read the following newspaper abstract:
“As the political parties prepare for the April 2018 parliamentary election, they are revising their political platforms and strategies. Fidesz, the ruling party, will preserve its current policy focus as part of its electoral strategy. MSZP has decided to focus on improving the living standards and will campaign for the introduction of a guaranteed basic income for all citizens. Jobbik in the meantime will maintain its focus on the protection of the Hungarian economy and propose to limit the presence of multinational companies because, as it claims, multinational companies stifle the development of Hungarian-owned enterprises.”

Question: Now imagine you had to choose among the three above parties, which one appeals to you more?
- Fidesz
- MSZP
- Jobbik

Figure 5. The Examples of Treatment Presented to the Survey Participants: A An Article Excerpt
Along with asking the respondents about their party preferences after each treatment (as above), I used several other versions of my dependent variable designed to measure the respondents’ political and policy preferences. Among them:

**Would you participate in the national elections to Hungarian Parliament in April?**
- certainly go to vote,
- probably go vote
- probably not go vote
- certainly won’t go vote

**How would you vote if the national election took place this Sunday?**
- Demokratikus Koalíció (DK)
- Együtt
- Fidesz-KDNP
- Jobbik Magyarországért
- Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt
- Kétfarkú Kutyá Párt
- Lehet Más a Politika (LMP)
- Liberálisok (MLP)
- Magyar Munkáspárt
- Magyar Szocialista Párt (MSZP)
- Modern Magyarország Mozgalom (MOMA)
- Momentum Mozgalom
- MSZP – Párbeszéd közös lista
- Párbeszéd
- Polgári Konzervatív Párt
- Új Kezdet
- egyéb párt
- semmiképpen nem szavazna
- nem mondja meg, kire szavazna
- nem tudja, kire szavazna”

**Which party do you think would win the election?**
- FIDESZ
- MSZP, Hungarian Socialist Party (Unity), MSZP with their allied partie
- Jobbik, the Movement for a Better Hungary
- Politics Can Be Different, LMP with their allied parties
- Other

Along with the above questions, I also added two questions about the legitimacy of the Jobbik party, and support for the Jobbik joining the governing coalition. Both questions were ordinal variables, ranking respondents’ attitudes on a scale from lowest to the highest.

**In your opinion, how likely it is that you vote Jobbik (the Movement for a Better Hungary) party?**
- Yes
- Probably yes
- Probably not
- No

**How would you feel if Jobbik (the Movement for a Better Hungary) became part of the government coalition?**
- Strongly Approve
- Somewhat Approve
- Somewhat Disapprove
- Strongly Disapprove

I also addressed the respondents’ positions on the economic policy issues following the treatment exposure and salience of these issues:
How much do you agree with the following statement: “The government should strongly regulate private businesses?”
- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

How strongly do you feel about the above (government regulation) issue?
- very important
- somewhat important
- not important

I measured the respondents’ working class status in three different ways: 1) based on their professional qualification; 2) based on the respondents’ ‘working class’ self-identification; and 3) based on their educational level.

A respondent was identified as a “blue-collar worker” based on his/her professional status if he selected one of the below options from a “professional status” category:

What is your professional qualification?
- Has never worked outside the home for pay
- Small business owner (< 25 employees)
- Clerk
- Service or sales worker
- Skilled agricultural or fishery worker
- Craft or trade worker
- Plant or machine operator
- General laborers
- Corporate manager or senior official
- Professional (scientists, mathematicians, computer scientists, architects, engineers, life science and health professionals, teachers, legal professionals, social scientists, writers and artists, religious professionals)
- Technician or associate professional

A respondent was identified as a “blue-collar worker” based on his/her subjective self-identification status if he selected the ‘lower middle class’ option from a “subjective social status” category:

Which of the following social groups or classes do you personally include?
- lower class
- lower middle class
- middle class
- upper middle class
- upper class

Finally, based on the educational criterion a respondent was identified as a “blue-collar worker” if he selected the following options from the “education level” category:

The highest finished education level:
- Bachelor’s degree
- Doctoral Degree
- High School Diploma
- Less than a high school diploma
- Professional degree
- Some college, no degree

Below I present the results of the analysis in the following order: first, I analyze the impact of the treatment manipulation on the preferences among the respondents in the general sample, and then on the respondents from the working class subsamples categorized in three different ways.
General Sample

The estimation results are presented below. Treatment 1 (MSzP neoliberal, pro-market policy stance) is compared against the Treatment 2 (MSzP redistributionist policy stance), holding positions of the other parties (Fidesz – neutral, Jobbik – protectionist) constant.

As the results below illustrate, the treatment exposure has a substantive and significant effect on declining support for Hungary’s left. The below Table compares the effect of treatment 1 vs treatment 2 on the three questions asked directly after the exposure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable:</th>
<th>Treatment 1</th>
<th>Treatment 2</th>
<th>T-statistic</th>
<th>Ha, Pr(T &gt; t)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 1: MSZP (vs Fidesz) Decrease in support for neoliberal MSzP</td>
<td>.5882353</td>
<td>.484252</td>
<td>t (507) = 2.3604***</td>
<td>Ha: diff &gt; 0 Pr(T &gt; t) = 0.0093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 2: Jobbik (vs Fidesz)</td>
<td>.5333333</td>
<td>.492126</td>
<td>t (507) = 0.9289</td>
<td>Ha: diff &lt; 0 Pr(T &gt; t) = 0.1767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 3: MSZP vs Jobbik vs Fidesz</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobbik</td>
<td>.2431373</td>
<td>.2913386</td>
<td>t (507) = -1.2282</td>
<td>Ha: diff &gt; 0 Pr(T &gt; t) = 0.1100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSZP</td>
<td>.4313725</td>
<td>.3070866</td>
<td>t (507) = 2.9236***</td>
<td>Ha: diff &gt; 0 Pr(T &gt; t) = 0.0018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As one can see, the results show a substantive and significant decline in support for the left MSzP vs a strong increase in Jobbik vote following the treatments exposure.

Below table looks at the responses on other outcome questions that asked the respondents in the post-treatment section of the survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable:</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>T-statistic</th>
<th>Ha, Pr(T &gt; t)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Would you participate in the election? [1-definitely no; 4 – definitely yes]</td>
<td>3.564706</td>
<td>3.637795</td>
<td>z = -0.766</td>
<td>Prob &gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who would you vote for? MSZP party list</td>
<td>.0431373</td>
<td>.015748</td>
<td>t = 1.8293**</td>
<td>Ha: diff &gt; 0 Pr(T &gt; t) = 0.0340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who would you vote for? Jobbik</td>
<td>.1137255</td>
<td>.1811024</td>
<td>t = -2.1498***</td>
<td>Ha: diff &lt; 0 Pr(T &gt; t) = 0.0160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who will win the election (MSZP)</td>
<td>.0823529</td>
<td>.1102362</td>
<td>t = -1.0655</td>
<td>Ha: diff &lt; 0 Pr(T &gt; t) = 0.1436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who will win the election (Jobbik)</td>
<td>.1372549</td>
<td>.1496063</td>
<td>t = -0.3968</td>
<td>Ha: diff &lt; 0 Pr(T &gt; t) = 0.3458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How likely vote for Jobbik [1-definitely no; 4 – definitely yes]</td>
<td>1.823529</td>
<td>1.905512</td>
<td>z = -0.756</td>
<td>Prob &gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Jobbik joining ruling coalition [1-definitely no; 4 – definitely yes]</td>
<td>2.290196</td>
<td>2.275591</td>
<td>z = 0.228</td>
<td>Prob &gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-identification [1 – far left; 4 – far right]</td>
<td>2.615686</td>
<td>2.629921</td>
<td>z = -0.548</td>
<td>Prob &gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government should regulate business [1 – fully disagree; 4 – fully agree]</td>
<td>2.25098</td>
<td>2.311024</td>
<td>z = -0.826</td>
<td>Prob &gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How important Government Regulation issue to you? [1 – not important at all; 4 – very important]</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.271654</td>
<td>z = -0.989</td>
<td>Prob &gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

Table 5. The Impact of the Treatment Exposure on the Political Preferences (Group 1 vs Group 2), General Sample, t-test
The above results go in line with the *Hypotheses I* and *II*. Again, one notices a significant and substantive decline in the left MSzP vote, along with a significant and substantive increase in Jobbik vote. However, I do not find an effect on alternatives measures of Jobbik support.

**Blue-Collar Workers by Profession**

A more interesting question, however, how the subsample of the respondents belonging to blue-collar working class responds to the treatment. This constituency is theorized in the literature to be most susceptible to the right-wing populism.

In this section, I categorized the respondents as blue-collar workers based on the occupation-based criterion:
- craftsman or commercial worker
- skilled worker in agriculture or fisheries
- general worker
- manager or operator
- employee or employee of a service provider

The below tables summarize the main results of the analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable:</th>
<th>Treatment 2</th>
<th>Treatment 1</th>
<th>T-statistic</th>
<th>Ha, Pr(T &gt; t)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question 1</strong>: MSZP (vs Fidesz)</td>
<td>.2911392</td>
<td>.3269231</td>
<td>t (115) = 2.0184**</td>
<td>Ha: diff &gt; 0 Pr(T &gt; t) = 0.0229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease in support for neoliberal MSzP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question 2</strong>: Jobbik (vs Fidesz)</td>
<td>.6329114</td>
<td>.5576923</td>
<td>t (181) = 1.0221</td>
<td>Ha: diff &lt; 0 Pr(T &gt; t) =0.1540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Treatment 3</strong>: MSZP vs Jobbik vs Fidesz</td>
<td>Jobbik .2911392</td>
<td>.3269231</td>
<td>t (181) = -0.5153</td>
<td>Ha: diff &gt; 0 Pr(T &lt; t) =</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSZP .443038</td>
<td>.2980769</td>
<td>t (181) = 2.0345**</td>
<td>Ha: diff &gt; 0 Pr(T &gt; t) = 0.0217</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again the results go in line with the original expectations. There is a strong and substantive decline in the MSzP support and increase in Jobbik support. However, the results are not very different from the general sample, and I do not find a significant heterogeneous impact of treatment exposure on political preferences in this specification of blue-collar workers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable:</th>
<th>Treatment 2</th>
<th>Treatment 1</th>
<th>T-statistic</th>
<th>Ha, Pr(T &gt; t)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Would you participate in the election? [1-definitely no; 4 – definitely yes]</td>
<td>3.468354</td>
<td>3.471154</td>
<td>z = -0.496</td>
<td>Prob &gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who would you vote for? MSZP party list</td>
<td>.0379747</td>
<td>.0192308</td>
<td>t = 0.7674</td>
<td>Ha: diff &lt; 0 Pr(T &gt; t) = 0.2219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who would you vote for? Jobbik</td>
<td>.1392405</td>
<td>.2019231</td>
<td>t = -1.1033</td>
<td>Ha: diff &lt; 0 Pr(T &lt; t) = 0.1357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who will win the election (MSzP)</td>
<td>.0759494</td>
<td>.1442308</td>
<td>t = -1.4357*</td>
<td>Ha: diff &lt; 0 Pr(T &lt; t) = 0.0764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who will win the election (Jobbik)</td>
<td>.1772152</td>
<td>.1634615</td>
<td>t = 0.2444</td>
<td>Ha: diff &lt; 0 Pr(T &gt; t) = 0.4036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How likely vote for Jobbik [1-definitely no; 4 – definitely yes]</td>
<td>2.075949</td>
<td>1.980769</td>
<td>z = 0.889</td>
<td>Prob &gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Jobbik joining ruling coalition [1-definitely no; 4 – definitely yes]</td>
<td>2.481013</td>
<td>2.307692</td>
<td>z = 1.104</td>
<td>Prob &gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I also measure the responses on other outcome questions that asked the respondents in the post-treatment section of the survey. I do not find a particularly strong impact of my treatment on any of my other outcome variables, except for the salience of the redistribution policy (the last line in the above table).

The results slightly improve when I look at the subsample of politically informed blue-collar workers (those who correctly answered a pre-treatment question regarding a party that was in power in 2003. The correction on political knowledge may be necessary to measure the impact of the treatment, since it allows to disentangle the respondents who are more likely to respond to the treatment in an expected way. In this specification of politically informed blue-collar workers, I discover an overall more pronounced treatment effect on respondents’ political preferences, a stronger rejection of the MSzP party and a stronger embrace for the radical right Jobbik. However, again the heterogeneous impact of the treatment in this subsample is not strongly pronounced (the response to treatment is not significantly different from the general sample).

**Self-Identified Workers**

An alternative way to measure the working class status is by asking the respondents to place themselves in a specific class category. In this section I focus on the subgroup of my respondents who chose to identify themselves as the ‘lower middle class’.

I provide the results of the analysis for this subgroup below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable:</th>
<th>Treatment 2</th>
<th>Treatment 1</th>
<th>T-statistic</th>
<th>Ha, Pr(T &gt; t)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 1: MSZP (vs Fidesz) Decrease in support for neoliberal MSzP</td>
<td>.6547619</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>t (166) = 2.0435**</td>
<td>Ha: diff &gt; 0 Pr(T &gt; t) = 0.0213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 2: Jobbik (vs Fidesz)</td>
<td>.5833333</td>
<td>.5357143</td>
<td>t (166) = 0.6186</td>
<td>Ha: diff &lt; 0 Pr(T &gt; t) = 0.2685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 3: MSZP vs Jobbik vs Fidesz</td>
<td>Jobbik</td>
<td>.1904762</td>
<td>.2857143</td>
<td>t (166) = -1.4496*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MSZP</td>
<td>.5357143</td>
<td>.3571429</td>
<td>t (166) = 2.3523**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this specification of blue-collar constituencies, the response to treatment exposure is stronger than in other categorizations. Almost all of the outcome variable return substantive and significant results, which go in line with the expectations: a strong and significant decrease in the MSzP support, and an increase in Jobbik support. The change is also large when measured in percentage points shifts between the averages in Treatment 1 and Treatment 2 groups.
Again, the above results are consistent with my earlier findings and general theoretical expectations. The treatment manipulation significantly decreases support for MSzP among the self-identified blue-collar respondents. In the same time, in this blue-collar workers sub-category, the treatment response is visibly stronger, with the support for the radical right Jobbik party significantly increasing in different specifications of the outcome variable. The change in the Likelihood of voting support variable passes the ranksum test (which is rare). I also find a substantive and significant increase in the Redistribution Salience variable. Overall, in this specification of the blue-collar workers category, I find a significant heterogeneous impact of my treatment on respondents’ political preferences, which goes in line with my Hypotheses III and IV.

Workers by Education

Ultimately, I introduce the last specification of the blue-collar status based on a respondent’s education level:

- high school
- high school without graduation

For this specification, I repeat the above analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable:</th>
<th>Treatment 2</th>
<th>Treatment 1</th>
<th>T-statistic</th>
<th>Ha, Pr(T &gt; t)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question 1:</strong> MSzP (vs Fidesz) Decrease in support for neoliberal MSzP</td>
<td>.5952381</td>
<td>.4792899</td>
<td>t = 2.1426**</td>
<td>Pr(T &gt; t) = 0.0164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question 2:</strong> Jobbik (vs Fidesz)</td>
<td>.5892857</td>
<td>.5207101</td>
<td>t = 1.2658*</td>
<td>Pr(T &gt; t) = 0.1032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question 3:</strong> MSzP vs Jobbik vs Fidesz</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobbik</td>
<td>.2678571</td>
<td>.2899408</td>
<td>t = -0.4508</td>
<td>Pr(T &lt; t) = 0.3262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSzP</td>
<td>.4285714</td>
<td>.3076923</td>
<td>t = 2.3121***</td>
<td>Pr(T &gt; t) = 0.0107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, in this specification the results are similar to the above analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable:</th>
<th>Treatment 2</th>
<th>Treatment 1</th>
<th>T-statistic</th>
<th>Ha, Pr(T &gt; t)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Would you participate in the election? [1-definitely no; 4 – definitely yes]</td>
<td>3.553571</td>
<td>3.568047</td>
<td>z = -0.261</td>
<td>Prob &gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who would you vote for? MSzP party list</td>
<td>.0535714</td>
<td>.0177515</td>
<td>t = 1.7773**</td>
<td>Pr(T &gt; t) = 0.0382</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I also measured the responses on other outcome questions in this specification of the blue-collar workers’ variable. I do not find a particularly strong heterogeneous impact of my treatment on any of my other outcome variables.

So, while overall the above results definitely confirm the Hypotheses I and II – a decrease in support for the left MSzP party and increase in support for the radical right Jobbik, I find less confirmation for my Hypotheses III and IV, since the response to treatment exposure among the blue-collar workers respondents does not substantively differ from the response of the general sample. The only time where I find a significantly stronger response to treatment is for the second blue-collar workers categorization – respondents self-identified as a lower middle-income group.

The results differ, if I categorize my outcome variable as increase in support for both populist right Fidesz and radical right Jobbik parties (I do not provide these results here). This alternative brings a significant heterogeneous effect – the response among blue-collar working constituencies is stronger than the response of the general sample. This suggests that the blue-collar votes go to both Fidesz and Jobbik as result of frustration with the center-left party policy stance. This overall goes in line with the previous analysis on the issue, and the party dealignment theory elaborated in the previous chapters of this paper.

***

Overall the results of my experiment go in line with my theoretical expectations. In the above analysis, I discovered a significant effect of my treatment on declining support for the MSzP and increased support for the radical right. In cases like Hungary, the blue-collar constituencies frustrated by the abandonment of the mainstream left political parties are more likely to shift to the far-right of the political spectrum, and (as the analysis of the subsample of the blue-collar respondents by education reveals) to support the radical right parties. This finding supports the main argument of this paper: when the views of the working-class voters are not represented by the political mainstream due to the left parties’ shift to the center of the political spectrum, this constituency becomes more likely to shift to the right of the political spectrum and has a propensity to radicalize further.

| Who would you vote for? Jobbik | .1369048 | .2071006 | t = -1.7092** | Pr(T < t) = 0.0442 |
| Who will win the election (MSzP) | .0952381 | .1065089 | t = -0.3425 | Pr(T < t) = 0.3661 |
| Who will win the election (Jobbik) | .1547619 | .183432 | t = -0.7004 | Pr(T > t) = 0.2421 |
| How likely vote for Jobbik [1-definitely no; 4–definitely yes] | 1.952381 | 2.035503 | z = -0.727 | Prob > |z| = 0.4673 |
| Support Jobbik joining ruling coalition [1-definitely no; 4–definitely yes] | 2.375 | 2.378698 | z = -0.048 | Prob > |z| = 0.9620 |
| Self-identification [1 – far left; 4 – far right] | 2.60119 | 2.60355 | z = -0.275 | Prob > |z| = 0.7836 |
| Government should regulate business [1 – fully disagree; 4 – fully agree] | 2.39881 | 2.420118 | z = -0.266 | Prob > |z| = 0.7902 |
| How important Government Regulation issue to you? [1 – not important at all; 4 – very important] | 2.291667 | 2.349112 | z = -0.665 | Prob > |z| = 0.5058 |