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Master's Thesis

We Are Family: The Welfare State Agendas of European
Populist Radical Right Parties Between 1990 and 2021



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Masters in International Security Studies

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Abstract

Scholars usually avoid comparisons between Populist Radical Right Parties (PRRPs) from Western Europe and those from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). They often base this avoidance on allegedly fundamental differences within the ideological profiles of PRRPs in the two regions. These differences are assumed to stem from the communist historical legacy of the CEE countries. The thesis at hand challenges this assessment from a social policy perspective. Specifically, it compares the welfare state agendas of PRRPs in the EU-15 states and the post-Communist member states of the European Union between 1990 and 2021 through a historical-institutionalist lens. A welfare state agenda refers to the combination of the welfare-related ideas and policy positions that PRRPs advocate. Methodologically, ordinary least squares regressions conducted on two custom-designed datasets with yearly fixed effects do not reveal comprehensive systematic differences in the emphasis PRRPs place on welfare state expansion and welfare chauvinism. However, such differences would be expected under historical-institutionalist premises. Furthermore, an interpretive analysis of more than 500 welfare-related passages from the manifestos of European PRRPs suggests that two common ideas motivate policy positions – namely, a populist fear of abuse and the family as the nativist societal nucleus. Concurrently, the interpretive analysis reveals some ideational differences relating to the communist legacy: Whereas PRRPs in the post-Communist states have reservations towards diversifying the institutional components of the welfare state and tend to advocate centralizing provisions, PRRPs in the EU-15 states do not oppose diversification from the outset. Therefore, this thesis argues that the wide-spread distinction between PRRPs from CEE countries and Western Europe, which originates in each region’s distinct historical pretext, holds some analytical value regarding the parties’ social policy. Notwithstanding, this finding should not deter comparative research because there are two common and predominant ideas from which PRRPs derive their welfare-related policy positions beyond the historiographical divide.

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Introduction

The 2024 European Parliament elections were widely perceived as the latest expression of a long-standing trend: Although Populist Radical Right Parties (PRRPs) did not manage “the center ground of European politics to cave in” (Picheta, 2024), they, once again, gained electoral support in European countries since their emergence in the 1980s (Zulianello, 2024). This triumphant march across Europe has not only recalibrated the party political space within several countries (Oesch and Rennwald, 2018) but also inspired a wealth of comparative social science research; PRRPs have perhaps become the most-studied European party family.

In the framework of the mentioned comparative research scholars are (a) increasingly interested in the relationship between PRRPs’ politics and the welfare state (Rathgeb and Busemeyer, 2022a) and (b) do not avoid comparing PRRPs from diverse national backgrounds to each other. For example, Attewell (2020) utilizes individual-level data from Austria, Belgium, Finland, Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Switzerland to show how “[...] perceptions of the deservingness of benefit recipients and attitudes towards the scope of the welfare state are distinct, powerful predictors of vote choice” (p. 611), including PRRP vote choice. Similarly, Savage (2023) draws on survey data from Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia to connect voter attitudes regarding welfare to PRRP vote choice. Moving from the demand side to the supply side of politics, Giuliani (2023) comparatively investigates the family policy agendas of PRRPs in Austria, Finland, Germany, Italy, Spain and Sweden. A multitude of other research endeavours also speaks of the comparative enthusiasm reflected in the three cited studies by Attewell, Savage and Giuliani (e.g., Abou-Chadi et al., 2022; Abou-Chadi and Immergut, 2019; Oesch and Rennwald, 2018; Tavits and Letki, 2009).

However, there is one exception: The literature broadly avoids research designs focussing on both PRRPs from Western Europe and members of the party family from countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). To justify this, studies invoke the communist past of the latter group of countries and reference the resulting differences between the respective PRRPs’ ideological profiles and those of their Western European pendants (Bustikova and Kitschelt, 2009; Mudde, 2000; Pirro, 2013).

Consequently, “[...] cross-regional research on radical right politics in West and East –

particularly studies that draw synergies between both regions to reach broader comparative conclusions – still remains in the starting blocks” (Pytlas, 2018, p. 2). This thesis departs from those starting blocks by addressing the growing interest in the relation between the welfare state and PRRPs. In particular, this study asks the following research question: *In what ways do the welfare state agendas of PRRPs in the old, EU-15 and new, post-Communist member states of the European Union (EU) do (not) differ?* A welfare state agenda is the combination of the ideas PRRPs have about the welfare state and the policy positions they derive from those ideas. This thesis argues that PRRPs in both EU regions base their welfare state agendas, in part, on two mutual ideas. It thereby challenges the assessment of fundamentally different ideological profiles that allegedly precludes comparative research from the outset – at least from a social policy perspective.

To answer the research question, this thesis is organized as follows: The first part reviews contemporary literature and demonstrates why supply-side social policy – specifically the institution “welfare state” – represents a viable policy domain for a comparison of PRRPs in the EU across the divide between new and old member states. After introducing some basic analytic vocabulary, a historical-institutionalist theoretical framework is developed. This framework is used to define the main terms, such as *idea*, *welfare state agenda* and *policy position*, and it is subsequently applied within quantitative and interpretive analyses of party manifestos issued by PRRPs. While the results of the quantitative analysis do not indicate systematic differences between PRRPs’ welfare state agendas, the interpretive analysis clarifies the ideational processes driving agendas.

1) PRRPs and the Welfare State

The following sections explore the relationship between PRRPs and the welfare state in Western Europe and CEE countries after 1989 to explicate why and in which ways the welfare state agendas of PRRPs could possibly differ, why such differences matter and how comparative political science research can approximate them.

1.1) PRRPs and the Welfare State in Western Europe

As indicated in the introduction, the demand-side work regarding the factors determining electoral support for PRRPs in Western European democracies is abundant and covers a wide range of aspects of said electoral support. The, *inter alia*, evaluated explanatory variables are

euro-scepticism; discontent with current politics (Werts et al., 2013); shifts in the cultural value orientation of left-wing parties, which lead to partisan movements among their traditional working-class electorate (Oesch and Rennwald, 2018); limited general political trust (Ziller and Schübel, 2015); and individual-level anti-immigration stances – the variable commonly ascribed the most explanatory power (Rooduijn, 2015). While these considerations predominantly relate to the cultural axis of political conflict, scholars have described the economic positions of PRRPs as intentionally “blurry” and less relevant to the electorate (Rovny, 2013). A recent strand of literature challenges this assessment by refocussing on the supply side and thereby showing that PRRPs indeed hold clear contentions on the economic axis and pursue a distinct welfare state agenda familiar to voters. This agenda emphasizes consumptive welfare expenditures, such as public pensions or cash benefits, over investment policies, like job trainings or active labour market programmes (Enggist and Pinggera, 2022).

The focus on consumptive welfare spending is also embedded in a specific welfare state model: On the one hand, PRRPs advocate a chauvinistic welfare approach which restricts social services to ‘deserving’ natives (as opposed to ‘undeserving immigrants’). On the other hand, PRRPs emphasize the importance of former productivity in the distribution of welfare state provisions. According to this view, the more a person contributed to society, the more deserving they are of high welfare state benefits (Abts et al., 2021). Previous research has identified these perceptions of deservingness as predictors of populist radical right vote choice (Attewell, 2020). Moreover, PRRPs communicate their welfare-related stances in a populist and moralizing manner: They denounce the current welfare state as inefficient and depict immigrants as “welfare state tourists” undeserving of welfare state provisions from both the chauvinistic and productivity perspectives. The combination of striving to restrict (consumptive) welfare provisions to deserving natives and moralizing discursive strategies allows PRRPs to defend “welfare arrangements in principle, and even to argue in favour of their expansion in some areas like old age care and pensions. At the same time, it allows them to criticise the concrete functioning of the welfare state” (Abts et al., 2021, p. 36). There are several studies underscoring the effectiveness of this discursive proceeding in promoting welfare chauvinism (Enggist and Pinggera, 2022; Nordensvard and Ketola, 2015; Van Hootehem et al., 2021).

Whereas the outlined interest in the social policy of PRRPs primarily investigates the

preferences of the demand side and the discursive social policy strategies on the supply side, research on the fundamental ideas guiding the welfare state agenda of Western European PRRPs is scarce. This is a critical gap because the positions PRRPs advocate in their programs and the policy positions they advocate within their discursive proceedings do not necessarily match. Consider, for example, the response of the German Alternative for Germany (AfD) party to protests by German farmers against the abolition of federal subsidies for agricultural diesel in 2024. While the party categorically opposed such subsidies in their basic policy program, AfD politicians nonetheless sought to convey themselves as the only genuine proponents of the protesters' interests (Neuerer, 2024). This divergence of policy positions and political communications has also been observed within scientific inquiries (Pytlas, 2018; Rooduijn and Akkerman, 2017; Wagner and Meyer, 2017). Therefore, a closer examination of the fundamental welfare-related ideas and policy positions of PRRPs in Western European states facilitates a deeper understanding of the party family, especially considering recent findings on the relevance of socio-economic matters for its members' political profiles. A similar point can be made for PRRPs in the post-Communist CEE countries, although the scholarly tradition is somewhat different in that case.

1.2) PRRPs and the Welfare State in the Post-Communist Countries

In the spirit of Gøsta Esping-Andersen's seminal book *"The three worlds of welfare capitalism"* (Esping-Andersen, 1990), scholars have sought to evaluate whether the European post-Communist states developed a distinct welfare regime after 1991 with *regime* referring to "[...] specific patterns of work and welfare" which result from the interactions between societal institutions such as the state, market or family (Adascalitei, 2012; Vis & van Kersbergen, 2013, p. 53). Although the related studies oscillate between accounts arguing for continuity (Inglot, 2003) and change (Cook, 2007), there is a denotative consensus on the significance of the fall of the Communist Block (CB) for partisan politics regarding the welfare state. More precisely, students of the partisan space in the post-Communist CEE states largely agree that, for historical reasons, "Eastern European party politics are at odds with their Western counterparts" (Adascalitei, 2012, p. 63).

Communist rule strongly emphasized welfare provisions, and its social policies comprised, inter alia, "[...] heavily subsidies foods and rents, full employment, the relatively high wages of

workers, and the provisions of free or cheap health, education and cultural services [...]" (Deacon, 1993, 2000; quoted by Fenger, 2007, p. 13). When the CB collapsed between 1989 and 1991, economic crises "[...] unlike anything experienced under socialism" unfolded in the soon-to-be EU member states, rendering welfare state measures a viable object of political competition and creating public demand for renewed social protections (Fenger, 2007, p. 14). Conventionally, partisan theory identifies left parties as the central political actor addressing such demands (Picot, 2012). However, after 1989, the left parties in the post-Communist states faced a second – somewhat paradoxical – pressure besides the cessation of existing welfare state provisions.

For example, consider Hungary and Poland: In both countries, the former communist party experienced strong rejection from other political forces and parts of the electorate due to the party's affiliation with the ousted regime. To address the intense scrutiny, they distanced themselves from their communist past and approximated the liberal market paradigm predominant in the West. In the case of Hungary, the ex-communist Hungarian Socialist Party (MSzP) adopted a stabilization package in 1994 which entailed broad governmental spending cuts and an acceleration of privatization processes. Similarly, the Social Democracy of the Polish Republic (SdRP) party implemented fiscal austerity measures – including a reduction in social services spending – in response to being tarred as communists. Contrary to the parts of the electorate monitoring left parties for possible communist continuities, the characterizing feature of the base electorates of the MSzP and the SdRP were their strong loyalty. Therefore, these two left parties did not need to fear far-reaching losses of votes while, as sketched, reducing welfare provisions against the backdrop of the deteriorating state of the economy (Curry, 2003; Morlang, 2003; Tavits and Letki, 2009).

This assessment coincides with political science research demonstrating a greater willingness among voters to accept public spending cuts when a left party is in charge (Bojar, 2016; Ross, 1997). Furthermore, the broached double pressure on left parties was also reflected in the early negotiations between the European Community and the newly independent CEE countries. As early as 1991, the European Community underlined its support for "[...] the process of political and economic reforms in Central and Eastern Europe by way of improving market access, by making available aid programmes and by extending its loan facilities" (European Community, 1991). In the following years, the Community and, subsequently, the European Union strongly

emphasized the importance of introducing a free market economy in the CEE countries, clearly breaking with the communist past, as a precondition for joining the Community/Union (e.g., European Community, 1992, 1993; European Parliament, 1998). Hence, the economic policies of left parties in general, and their socio-economic policies in particular, faced not only domestic but also international scrutiny, as the parties were asked to demonstrate their ability to navigate a free market economy and break with their partisan legacy .

1.3) PRRPs, the Welfare State and Political Competition

As left parties struggled with the paradoxical double pressure of simultaneously coping with the ailing economy and proactively detaching their partisan identity from suspicions of communism, parties on the right, which were not exposed to such suspicions, had strong incentives to mobilize the deteriorated welfare state – not only to portray themselves as representatives of the voters affected by the cutbacks in welfare provisions but also to politically attack their opponents on the left. For instance, Allen (2017) shows how economically left political stances supporting greater redistribution predict PRRP vote choice in post-Communist countries but not in Western Europe. Analogously, Bustikova and Kitschelt (2009) juxtapose an avoidance of economic issues by Western PRRPs with the success of their post-Communist pendants in capitalizing on welfare-related issues to gain electoral support.

However, PRRPs in the West seem to compete with left parties, too – especially on matters of the welfare state. This ties in with the previously described chauvinistic welfare state model of PRRPs and their focus on consumptive welfare state provisions: To maximize their electoral potential, left-wing parties have started to emphasize social investments over consumptive welfare provisions, thereby appealing to “[...] their growing constituency of progressive sociocultural professionals [...]”. However, this shift also fuelled their contest over voters traditionally favouring a high level of consumptive welfare spending (Abou-Chadi and Immergut, 2019, quote on p. 697). The latter part of the electorate has nowadays become the “contested strongholds” of PRRPs and left parties alike (Oesch and Rennwald, 2018). Furthermore, beyond welfare state politics, the competition between PRRPs in the Western European states and their politically left counterparts is crucial for (causally) explaining variations in the level of electoral support for both party families as well as in their adopted policy positions (Rama and Santana, 2020; Vampa, 2020). In general, a greater success of PRRPs causes the mainstream left parties resort to more culturally protectionist and anti-

immigration policy stances (Abou-Chadi and Krause, 2020).

In view of PRRPs' welfare state politics in the CEE countries, Savage (2023) concludes that "[...] due to the specific context of the post-Communist political landscape, leftist parties were better placed to constrain social spending than rightist parties. In response, right-wing populist parties adopted interventionist positions on economic policy to compete directly with the left" (p. 584). Notably, Savage utilizes an ideational construct originally coined in the discourse on Western European PRRPs to explain the differing economic policy positions of PRRPs in the West and the East – namely *welfare chauvinism*. He defines welfare chauvinism as the notion that welfare provisions should be restricted to the majority population (p. 585), and he argues that PRRPs in the post-Communist states conditionalize their redistributive policy preferences by reserving the various provisions for the majority population. This reservations particularly powerful in "ethnically homogenous" (p. 585) countries because potential PRRP voters evaluate their stances towards more redistribution in relation to "how these change the balance between the minority and majority populations rather than objective concerns about poverty or economic security" (p. 585).

Savage's argument resonates not only with other (recent) inquiries applying welfare chauvinism to the post-Communist context (Grdešić, 2020; Mewes and Mau, 2012) but also with the observation that, until recently, immigration had not been a salient issue for parties in the new member states (Brils et al., 2022). In fact, Pirro (2014) deemed explanations for the success of PRRPs in the new member states which centre "[...] a native backlash against the immigration population" as inherently inappropriate (p. 247). From an ideational perspective,¹ PRRPs in Western European and CEE states therefore adhere to the same welfare chauvinistic framework while simultaneously displaying differences in the configuration of that framework: Rather than centring immigrants within their welfare chauvinistic preferences, PRRPs in the post-Communist CEE countries claim the ethnic minorities within their respective countries pose a threat to a functioning welfare state.

The examination of such different ideational configurations is significant considering (a) the need for more comparative research, as outlined in the introduction, and (b) the lack of studies on cooperation between PRRPs across the European Union. There is little to no knowledge

¹ A definition of the term *idea* is given in the theory section.

about the (in)coherence of their views of specific European policy areas (Falkner and Plattner, 2018). Some studies describe a distinct populist radical right struggle to pursue cooperation due to their nationalist ideological foundations (Dočekalová, 2006; Startin, 2010); however, the (lack of) cooperation between PRRPs on the European level has not been a much discussed topic among students of the party family. Therefore researching PRRPs' social policy positions and their ideational context in Western and CEE countries may facilitate a prognosis of future developments regarding potential cooperation among PRRPs across Europe on social policy issues. Although literature on cooperation between PRRPs is scarce, scholars of far-right movements – and far-right culture more broadly – are increasingly interested in the transnational aspect of those movements (Baspehlivan, 2023; Evans et al., 2023; Moreno-Almeida and Gerbaudo, 2021). This thesis also aims to carry this development into party research.

1.4) Three Trends in the Literature on PRRPs and the Welfare State in the EU

In sum, a review of the recent literature on the welfare state politics of PRRPs in Western European and CEE countries yields three crucial insights:

- 1) Whereas scholars have traditionally used welfare-related explanations to contextualize the party politics of PRRPs in the post-Communist CEE states following the CB's collapse, the literature on Western European PRRPs has only recently redirected its focus towards such explanations. Research on both regions implicitly or explicitly suggests that PRRPs predominantly compete with left parties on welfare state matters.
- 2) Most of the research examines the concrete welfare policies enacted by European PRRPs, the coverage of the welfare state within their political messages or the welfare-related preferences within their electorate. However, accounts exploring the fundamental welfare-related ideas and policy positions of PRRPs are scarce. Therefore, the contemporary knowledge about how PRRPs govern the welfare state and their voters' preferences regarding the welfare state is disproportionately greater than the knowledge about the ideas driving PRRPs' welfare state agendas.
- 3) The outlined research gap on the supply side of PRRPs' welfare politics is worth investigating because increasing evidence suggests that European PRRPs endorse a mutual welfare state model based on welfare chauvinism. This joint endorsement, in

turn, would contest the traditional analytical division described in the introduction to this thesis. Furthermore, a comparison of the social policy ideas and positions of PRRPs in CEE and Western European countries answers the existing calls for more research of this comparative colour.

In view of these three insights, the main research target of this thesis is to assess if and how PRRPs' welfare state agendas – comprising their welfare-related ideas and policy positions – in the old and new, post-Communist EU member states (not) differ. Thus far, this text has used the terms *Populist Radical Right Party*, *CEE countries* and *Western European countries* somewhat abstractly. The next section specifies how the study at hand understands these terms and prepares the envisaged comparison. The relevant theoretical concepts, such as *welfare chauvinism*, *welfare state agenda*, *idea* and *policy position* will be defined subsequently.

1.5) From CEE and Western European Countries to New and Old Member States

As shown, most literature on PRRPs uses the terms *Central and Eastern European countries* (e.g., Minkenberg, 2002; Vanhuysse, 2009) and *Western European countries* (e.g., Abou-Chadi & Krause, 2020; Oesch & Rennwald, 2018). However, instead of juxtaposing the two groups as such, this thesis prefers to distinguish between the EU-15 states (henceforth pragmatically called “old member states”) and the post-Communist states which joined the EU after 2004 (henceforth programmatically called “new member states”). The rationale behind this strategy is threefold.

First and foremost, the former two categories imply that commonalities across countries in either category exist merely due to geographical pretext. Contrarily, the reviewed literature and theory section leading up to the analyses conducted here centre history as a crucial determinative factor for the welfare-related policy positions and ideas of PRRPs. Accordingly, a sample of countries and parties matching this premise is required. To be precise, Croatia will be excluded in the datasets utilized for this study while Slovenia is included.² Assuming

²Moreover, Cyprus and Malta are also excluded from the pragmatic new member state category for historical reasons, although the two countries also joined the EU in 2004. Nonetheless, they are not in the analytical focus of this thesis: The Soviet Union established good diplomatic relations with Cyprus throughout the Cold War but these relations “[...] should be analysed within a wider context of Soviet relations with other allies after the Second World War (WWII) regarding Greece and Turkey” (Nikitina et al., 2019, p. 182). In a similar manner, Malta under Premier Dom Mintoff maintained an amicable diplomatic relationship with the Soviet Union (Briguglio and Pace,

similarities based on an geographic affiliation with a certain group of countries would (a) make this exclusion questionable and (b) impair the theoretical as well as analytical preciseness of the thesis.

The second reason also relates to the theoretical foundation of this thesis: The interactions between the EU and the new member states are themselves theorized, rendering the EU as an appropriate joint political framework. Thirdly and in conjunction with this claim, the definitions of what constitutes a PRRP developed hereinafter equally derive from scholarship within the CEE and Western European contexts. Thus, situating the parties under consideration in a joint, overarching framework (i.e., the EU) is more suitable for answering the posed research question, compared to an approach that views CEE and Western European countries as two insular social realities. This directly resonates with the comparative nature of the thesis.

1.5.1) Finding Common Definitions

Although most scholars have similar approaches to defining the populist radical right – sometimes denoted as the extreme right, radical right or populist right – there is no consensus (Mudde, 2016a) on the exact composition of the party family. This is not only due to the occasional emergence of new parties in the ideological environment of the populist radical right which previous studies could not account for, but it also reflects a disagreement within definitions of populism and the inclusion (or exclusion) of certain parties. For example, some studies of the PRRP party family incorporate the British United Kingdom Independence Party in their analyses (Enggist and Pinggera, 2022), whereas others disregard them (Mudde, 2016b). Furthermore, scholars usually distinguish – in line with the general distinction outlined earlier – between PRRPs in the old and new, post-Communist EU member states. While PRRPs in the new member states “[...] turned against a diverse array of alleged ‘threats’ to an imagined homogenous nation-state, such as indigenous ethnic minorities, LGBTI communities, ‘Western’ (i.e., ‘left-liberal’) values and their societal supporters”, PRRPs in the EU-15 highlighted the “[...] core issues [of] immigration, integration, and increasingly Islam” (Pytlas, 2018, p. 5). The differences are also reflected in the economic axis of political conflicts on which PRRPs in the new member states allegedly hold more left-leaning positions than their Western counterparts (Buščíková, 2018).

2013) but still followed an independent political trajectory – in 1989, the country was even chosen as a somewhat neutral ground for the summit between Mikhail Gorbachev and George H. W. Bush (Tudda, 2015).

Moreover, the new member states witness a different “variety of populism”. Consider the case of ANO 2011 in the Czech Republic. While there is widespread consensus that the party utilizes populist rhetoric (e.g., Ostrá, 2022), the party’s political messages do not primarily deliver radical right ideas to the electorate. Instead, the messages serve(d) the party’s leader, Andrej Babiš, to stage himself as a successful business man whose entrepreneurial experience can help him run a government efficiently (Saxonberg and Heinisch, 2024). Simultaneously, Babiš is one of “a handful of strongmen” who used to cultivate and maintain a general bond between (populist) parties across CEE countries; other political leaders in this circle were, for example, Viktor Orbán and Robert Fico, the chairman of the Slovakian SMER – a party which scholars initially described as a left-wing populist party after its emergence in 1999 (Spáč and Havlík, 2015, quote p. 368).

In addition to the described entrepreneurial and left-wing versions of populism, centrist parties in the new member states have also regularly been labelled as populist parties – especially regarding welfare-related topics (Sirovátka et al., 2022). Despite of the apparent variety among populist parties in the new member states, the overwhelming majority of the literature on populist parties in the old EU-15 member states associates populism with the radical right (Rooduijn and Akkerman, 2017). Eyeballing the assumed differences between PRRPs in both regions, a brief recapitulation of the meanings of *populism* and *radical right* is necessary to establish a proper theoretical – and hence analytical – framework.

The fundamental definitions social scientists apply for both radical right and populism do not differ significantly between inquires investigating partisan dynamics in the new member states and those assessing the political space within the EU-15 countries. For instance, Michael Minkenberg identifies the “myth of a homogenous nation, [...] directed against the concept of liberal and pluralist democracy and its underlying principles of individualism and universalism” as the core element of radical right worldviews in CEE countries (Minkenberg, 2002, p. 337). Moreover, he describes this myth as “populist” with populism not constituting a distinct political program but rather a rhetorical political tactic aimed at “mobilizing ‘the people’ against ‘the establishment’, ‘the system’ or ‘the State’ [...]” (Minkenberg, 2013, pp. 7–8).

Thereby, Minkenberg’s definition of the populist radical right parallels the one by Cas Mudde, who is known for his scholarship on the Western European populist radical right and who

highlights authoritarianism, nativism and populism as the three defining pillars of that party family. In Mudde's view, nativism revolves around a "homogenous nation state" and authoritarianism "[...] refers to the belief in a strictly ordered society, in which infringements of authority are to be punished severely [...]" (Mudde, 2016a, p. 4). The first pillar resonates with the myth of a homogenous nation state and the second implicitly reprises the rejection of universalistic and individualistic human values.

Lastly, Mudde views populism as corresponding to an ideology which "considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people', and the 'corrupt elite' [...]" (Mudde, 2016a, quote on p. 4, 2016b, 2004). The only substantive difference between Minkenberg's and Mudde's definitions of populism and the radical right is the perspective on populism as either an ideology, as taken by Mudde, or a rhetorical tactic, as advocated by Minkenberg. According to the second approach, any party may engage in populist rhetoric, whereas the first perspective precludes this possibility by construction – a party either falls into the category of "populist party" or it does not. Beyond this ontological disparity, however, the two approaches essentially reference the same phenomenon by rooting populism in the antagonization of "the people" versus "the elite" (i.e., the state, the system, etc.). Therefore, the described disparity can be concealed within an integrated, partisan version of the definitions of the radical right and populism:

- **Radical right party:** A radical right party is a party whose political line of thinking revolves around a nativist and homogenous view of the nation and aims at sanctioning any deviations from the established, nativist criteria for homogeneity.
- **Populist party:** A populist party is a party which bases its semantic political messages in an antagonization of a demonized societal group (e.g., "the elite", "the system") with "the pure people" to such an extent that this antagonization becomes an expected practice.

1.5.2) The Members of the Party Family

The combination of the two presented definitions constitutes a PRRP. The underlying definitions by Mudde and Minkenberg have been widely recognized in applied research in both the Western European (e.g., Berker and Pollex, 2021; Klein and Muis, 2019; Rama et al., 2021) and CEE contexts (e.g., Shekhovtsov, 2017; Stavrakakis et al., 2017; Wodak, 2020). The

reconciliation of the outlined disparity via the conceptualization of populism as an “expected practice” appeals to both the ideological and rhetorical perspectives on the phenomenon. While it clearly allows for the classification of parties as populist if there is an evident predominance of populist *and* radical right connotated messages in official documents and/or the parties’ discursive tactics, it also leaves room for change: A populist party may comprehensively alter the content of its semantic political messages. In this case, the populist label no longer applies. The same flexibility is also inherent to the introduced definition of the radical right. A previously radical right party could recalibrate their political profile such that the homogenous nation state is no longer at its core; similarly, a party that previously did not fit the definition of a radical right party can transform into one.

Two examples for respective transformations are the developments of the Fidesz party and the Law and Justice Party (PiS) in Hungary and Poland, respectively, which were initially considered conservative parties but “[...] then radicalized their policies and rhetoric” (Brils et al., 2022, p. 57). Although the illustrated definitional flexibility contributes to a more accurate, joint description of PRRPs in the new and old EU member states, it also has one important analytical implication: Rather than relying on a one-time classification of parties as PRRPs, subsequent analyses of PRRPs’ welfare state agendas must acknowledge trajectories similar to those of PiS and Fidesz. In light of this implication and the varieties of populism in the new member states, one classification scheme for PRRPs across Europe is particularly suited to answering the research question.

The PopuList database by Rooduijn et al. (2023) offers researchers a list of populist parties which (a) is based on Mudde’s definition of populism, (b) distinguishes between populist, populist far-left parties, populist far-right parties, far-left parties and far-right parties, and (c) provides information on the trajectories of the included parties. For instance, the list does not label the Hungarian Fidesz as populist before 2002, and it assigns the far-right specification – also grounded in Mudde’s conceptualization – only after 2010. The selection of parties for the list involves at least four stages in which comparative scholars and country experts collaborate, and, methodologically, the list employs an Expert-informed Qualitative Comparative Classification. Hence, the PopuList represents a thoroughly developed categorization of parties that suits the described research environment of this thesis. The precise overview of parties borrowed from the PopuList can be found in the forthcoming analytical sections. However,

before this text analyses the welfare state agendas of PRRPs in the new and old member states, the employed theoretical vocabulary must be clarified.

2) Theoretical Background: Historical Institutionalism

Considering the insights provided within the reviewed literature, an account of the welfare-related policy preferences of PRRPs in the old and new EU member states should be – at least partly – historical. The overwhelming majority of existing studies investigating the differences between welfare politics in Western and Eastern EU states identify a recalibration of party politics in post-Communist states in the aftermath of the events of 1989-1991. Thus, to establish a research design suitable for assessing patterns of policy positions and their underlying ideas, the fall of the CB serves as a plausible theoretical point of departure. This thesis draws on historical institutionalism, which is the most well-established theoretical framework for public policy research examining history. In social policy, the predominance of historical institutionalist approaches is particularly noteworthy; in fact, the work of some of the most influential historical institutionalists, such as Paul Pierson, examines European welfare states and their institutional legacies (Pierson, 2002, 1994).

2.1) Historical Institutionalism and the Term *Institution*

The term *historical institutionalism* was coined in the collection *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis* edited, inter alia, by Sven Steinmo, Kathleen Thelen and Frank Eds from 1992 (Steinmo et al., 1992). Since then, a plethora of contributions has amplified and scrutinized the concept. It is therefore difficult to identify a general definition of historical institutionalism. In particular, the question of what exactly constitutes an *institution* is answered differently depending on the applied perspective (Thelen, 2002). This thesis adopts Skogstad's (2023) definition of institutions as “any or all of formal organizations, legally enforceable rules, and/or expected practices or behavioural norms that are the temporally contingent outcomes of power struggles in which some political actors and coalitions prevail over others” (p. 1). Skogstad's definition refers to a seminal article by Peter Hall in the aforementioned collection (Hall, 1992).

As is the case with other definitions of institutions, the proposed one is relatively vague, and students of historical institutionalism therefore emphasize the importance of clearly distinguishing between ideas, institutions and actors for ideational research contexts (Béland,

2016). Considering the comparative epistemological interests implied by the research question and the reviewed literature, this thesis differentiates between *institutions* and *institutionalization*. The first term exclusively refers to the institution “welfare state”, whereas the second term expands the logic of Skogstad’s definition to the ideational realm of policy positions.

Hence, all formal organizations of the welfare state (e.g., the public agencies administering welfare provisions), all legally enforceable rules regarding welfare provisions (e.g., entitlements) and all expected practices and/or behavioural norms regarding provisions (e.g., reliable transfer of provisions) qualify as components of the *institution* “welfare state”.³ However, this excludes policy positions and ideas about the welfare state of PRRPs (or, more broadly, of actors) because rather than characterizing the existing institution welfare state, these positions and ideas attempt to transform or stabilize one or more of its institutional components. Nonetheless, policy positions may become *institutionalized*. The institutionalization of policy preferences is present when specific PRRP preferences (e.g., more spending on eldercare) reoccur over a significant amount of time, transforming them, to a certain extent, into practices expected by the electorate or when the preferences become legally enforceable following a democratic change of power. This approach to policy positions is appropriate considering the fundamental premises of historical institutionalism in applied research and useful for introducing a concrete definition of *ideas* and how they relate to *policy positions*.

In essence, historical institutionalists “wish to stress that institutions are important not just how they constrain individual choice or affect individual strategies, but also how they affect the articulation of interests, and particularly the articulation of *collective* interests” (Thelen, 2002, p. 92). As demonstrated, the fall of the CB significantly disrupted the legal welfare rules and the execution of expected welfare practices in the prospective EU member states. It also resulted in a paradox double pressure on left parties described earlier. This pressure from the demand side, external stakeholders and other political actors, such as the European Commission, had notable repercussions on the welfare state agenda of PRRPs. Drawing on the terminology of historical institutionalism, the configuration of the institution “welfare state” affected the collective welfare interests of PRRPs in the post-Communist states, separating those PRRPs from their pendants in the EU-15 countries. In the new member states, right-wing parties had

³The subsumed components will be further specified in the Interpretive Analysis.

more of an incentive to articulate support for welfare provisions and enact related legislation when in government than their EU-15 counterparts.

In the long term, historical institutionalists would expect the political decisions by PRRPs pursuing these new incentives after 1991 to become institutionalized or – again adopting historical institutionalist jargon – path dependent (Pierson, 2000, 1994). Therefore, PRRPs in the states which joined the European Union after 2004 would – theoretically – articulate a greater preference to expand welfare provisions compared to PRRPs in the old EU states. Despite the clarity of this perspective, it contains two decisive blind spots: First, it neglects any institutional change initiated by (domestic) actors, such as PRRPs, which does not qualify as a critical juncture. Second, and relatedly, it disregards the reviewed recent research identifying welfare chauvinism as a mutual ideational driver of the welfare-related policy preferences held by PRRPs across Europe. Considering these gaps, the addition of an ideational amendment to historical institutionalism proves fruitful because it (a) acknowledges the importance of change mechanisms that do not qualify as critical junctures, thereby allowing for incremental change, and (b) specifies how not only institutional configurations shape actors' collective interests but also how the actors themselves may strive to shape institutions. More precisely, ideas cast in the form of policy positions may induce:

- *Layering*: additions and revisions of institutional components (compare Daugbjerg & Kay, 2020; Kay, 2007);
- *Drifting*: holding institutional components constant despite contextual changes altering the de-facto structure of the components (compare Hacker et al., 2015);
- *Conversion*: redirection and reinterpreting the institution and its components (compare Hacker et al., 2015; Thelen, 2004); and
- *Displacement*: removal of existing components for the purpose of introducing innovative components (compare *ibid*).

In sum, an ideational amendment to historical institutionalism acknowledges the contemporary emphasis on the conceptual welfare approach of PRRPs and accommodates institutional change stemming from that approach. Simultaneously, such an amendment does not refute the premises of historical institutionalism identified as promising for answering the research question.

2.1.1) Defining *Idea, Policy Position and Welfare State Agenda*

In social policy studies, an *idea* is a “[...] historically-constructed ‘causal belief[]’ of individuals and collective actors. Understood broadly, these beliefs include the values and perceptions of actors” (Béland, 2016, p. 736). In the populist radical right case, the actors (i.e., PRRPs) believe that there are “deserving” and “undeserving” recipients of welfare state provisions in society. PRRPs in the old EU member states equate immigrants with the undeserving recipients, whereas PRRPs in the new member states deem ethnic minorities undeserving. PRRPs advocate more provisions for the deserving recipients, while they seek to retrench provisions for undeserving recipients. Accordingly, PRRPs view the distribution of welfare benefits as the cause of a major social injustice. From this idea, they derive concrete reform imperatives (compare Béland, 2009) – or policy positions – aimed at altering the institutional state of the welfare regime. Thus, a welfare-related policy position is a precise proposal by an PRRP to reform the institution welfare state based on an idea. For instance, the Austrian Freedom Party repeatedly called for the establishment of a separate social security system for immigrants (policy position) because they see provisions disbursed to immigrants as a burden on Austrian citizens (idea/causal belief)⁴. A welfare state agenda refers to the welfare-related ideas *and* policy positions of PRRPs.

Nonetheless, the articulated reform imperatives and policy positions are also influenced by institutional configurations. In enticing right parties to generally favour more welfare state provisions compared to PRRPs in the West, the fall of the CB would have – following this line of reasoning – also interacted with the ideational, welfare chauvinistic underpinnings of their agenda. Unlike PRRPs in the EU-15 countries, PRRPs in the post-Communist member states may have exploited welfare chauvinism to justify their comparatively higher collective interest in expanding welfare state benefits. The same idea, namely welfare chauvinism, could have in consequence spurred two different interpretations. Considering the potential of ideas to change institutions through the articulation of reform imperatives and subsequent processes of layering, drifting, conversion or displacement, an examination of these (subtle) ideational differences facilitates a more comprehensive understanding of welfare-related policy positions by PRRPs in the EU.

⁴ Please consult the Interpretive Analysis for the exact reference.

2.2) A Theoretical Framework for Approaching the Research Question

To summarize, applying the lens of historical institutionalism to the literature on PRRPs and the welfare state reveals four determinative factors for the welfare state agendas of PRRPs in old and new EU member states:

- 1) ***The institution “welfare state”***: The political space in which PRRPs operate when developing ideas about the welfare state and formulating related policy preferences is delimited by the historically grown configuration of all formal organizations of the welfare state, all legally enforceable rules regarding welfare provisions and all expected practices and/or behavioural norms regarding provisions.
- 2) ***Other political actors***: The political space of PRRPs is also impacted by the welfare ideas, policy positions and political actions of other political actors, especially parties on the left (compare Tavits and Letki, 2009; Oesch and Rennwald, 2018).
- 3) ***Ideas***: The causal beliefs about the institution welfare state represent the link between the first two factors and PRRPs’ policy positions. In their preparatory function for reform imperatives (e.g., demands for more public spending across important welfare dimensions, such as public pensions or social housing), causal beliefs (= ideas) potentially induce change in the institution welfare state through layering, drifting, conversion or replacement.
- 4) ***Critical junctures***: A critical juncture corresponds “[...] to a fixed period of high uncertainty during which the normal structural and institutional influences on political behaviour are relaxed and the feasible options available to powerful actors expanded” (Skogstad, 2023, p. 5). In the case of the welfare state, a critical juncture therefore refers to an external or internal shock that restructures its components and provides the involved political actors, such as PRRPs, with opportunities to adapt their welfare state agendas.

Figure 1 illustrates the outlined theoretical model:

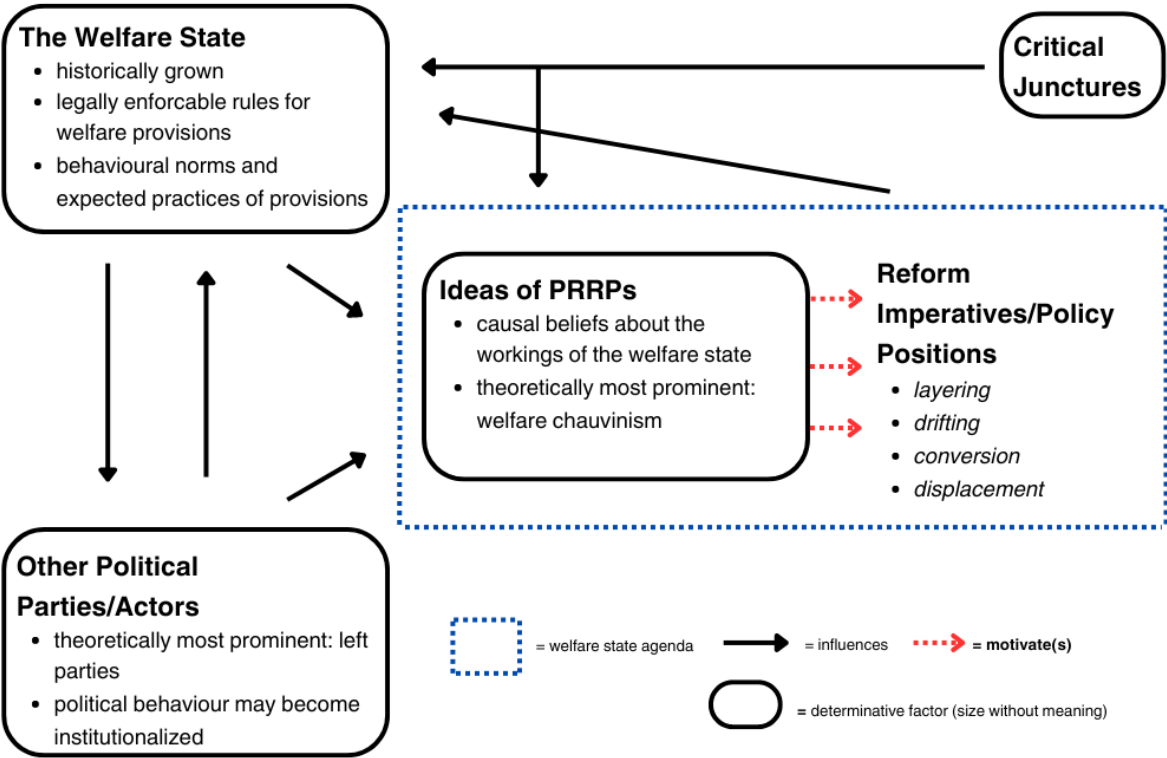


Figure 1: A historical-institutionalist model of how PRRPs generate their welfare state agendas and how these agendas interact with their political environment.

It should be noted that the introduced framework ought to apply merely to PRRPs. Clearly, the welfare-related ideas of PRRPs also interact with other political actors. Similarly, critical junctures likely interact with the welfare-related ideas of other political actors, too. However, the main interest of this thesis is to theorize the welfare state agendas of PRRPs so that they can be compared across the new–old member state divide rather than a general theorization of welfare state agendas. Therefore, interrelations between the four determinative factors that go beyond this text’s analytical goal are excluded. The next section outlines the research design and describes several ontological propositions relevant to the analytical goal of this thesis.

3) Research Design

3.1) Positivism and Interpretivism

There is a long-standing dispute between positivism and interpretivism in the fields of political science and public policy (Scauso, 2020). While a comprehensive comparison of the history

and legacy of these two paradigms lies beyond the scope of this inquiry, the posed research question requires a brief juxtaposition of their ontological premises. This juxtaposition is productive because “[...] ontological assumptions (whether explicit or implicit) affect epistemology and, as a consequence, methodology” (Chatterjee, 2013, p. 95). It is also necessary because researching welfare state agendas of PRRPs appeals to both positivist and interpretivist categorizations of political reality.

The term *ontology* refers to the “[...] values a researcher holds about what can be known as real and what someone believes to be factual” (Bryman, 2016; Ryan, 2018, p. 2). From a positivist standpoint, the political world, with its phenomena, such as parties, policy positions and voters, is part of an objectively existing reality. That reality can be described via thorough data collection and analysis, and the quality of social science research is primarily determined by the possibilities for independent external parties to reproduce the findings using the documented analytical procedures. Subsequently, the established insights about patterns in the appearance of the specific phenomenon under analysis allow formulation of hypotheses about the appearance of the phenomenon when certain internal or external conditions, or variables, change. For instance, and as shown in the reviewed literature, PRRPs in Western Europe seem to prefer consumptive welfare provisions over investment policies. Thus, it may be hypothesized that the Western European PRRPs are more likely to highlight the importance of increasing consumptive provisions for deserving recipients in settings where public spending on such provisions is relatively low.

In contrast, interpretive scholars question the existence of an objective reality and view political reality as a product of social interactions which an observer cannot refrain from. Considering this constructivist ontology, social science research is an experience of experiential learning invested in the dynamic relationship between social (i.e., political) phenomena and the researcher (Irshaidat, 2022). Accordingly, the ideas European PRRPs pursue in regard to the welfare state cannot be extrapolated. Rather, they are continuously reproduced outcomes of ongoing interactions that research is part of – and must make meaning of (compare for example Abts et al., 2021). A PRRP could, due to unique, nuanced contextual factors, and despite otherwise similar conditions, derive welfare-related policy positions that differ from those of a PRRP in an old member state, even though the two positions are based on the same idea. In accordance with the reviewed literature and the theoretical framework, this perspective is

crucial to answering the posed research question. For example, the initially regionalist profile of the Italian Northern League may have repercussions for their welfare-related ideas and policy positions. Research tracing such ideational processes is likewise constrained by the political or cultural propositions of the research itself.

The two examples of possible positivist and interpretivist approximations to PRRPs and their welfare state agendas hint at the utility of both paradigms for analyses of PRRPs' welfare agendas. On the one hand, various databases, like the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) (Lehmann et al., 2023) and the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Bakker et al., 2015), gather formalized information on policy positions aiming to reduce or increase public investments in specific welfare provisions. This information enables an empirical assessment of differences in the patterns of support for or resentment toward public welfare spending by PRRPs in the old and new European member states between 1990 and 2021. On the other hand, the ideas (potentially) driving the related policy positions manifest from dynamic interactions between PRRPs and other actors, political events and/or institutions over time. Hence, they elude standardized documentation and must be reconstructed in the light of these interactions. The same ideas about the welfare state may have facilitated different policy positions in the old and new member states and/or at different points in time due to discrete historical and national contexts. In short, these policy positions require interpretation of interactions in the sense outlined earlier. In drafting a research design that facilitates both positivist and interpretivist presumptions, a brief overview of the two approaches' implications for applied research is necessary. After all, it is unsurprising that proponents of either philosophy have varying approaches to applied research – considering the large ontological disparities between interpretivism and positivism. In fact, interpretivism has been described as anti-positivism (Flick, 2014).

Following Durnová and Weible (2020), this thesis distinguishes between mainstream political process studies – which lean towards positivism – and interpretive studies. While the distinction by Durnová & Weible primarily relates to public policy and the policy process, it is worthwhile to extend their line of reasoning to comparative political science more generally; especially since (comparative) political scientists have led very similar ontological debates on constructivism and positivism (Moses and Knutsen, 2019a). Moreover, his thesis borders between public policy research and comparative political science. On the one hand, it is

interested in the politics of the welfare state in particular nation states, which is a classical theme of public policy. On the other hand, the thesis compares entire political systems to each other. Correspondingly, the historical-institutionalist model is equally suited to analyse PRRPs' welfare state politics within single nation states as it is appropriate for thinking about differences between nation states. Durnová & Weible outline three crucial disparities between mainstream and interpretive studies:

- ***Status of language:*** Interpretive policy studies place a greater emphasis on language than mainstream policy process studies do. Consequently, they “build on the possibility of multiple meanings and then analyse how meanings coproduce policy processes, that is, which meanings are attributed by whom and where, thereby seeking to explain what practices and what power structures these specific meanings reveal” (Durnová & Weible, 2020, p. 575).
- ***Theory:*** The mainstream approach sees theories as “continuously revisited and updated reservoirs of knowledge about policy processes” which permit hypothesizing about the appearance of a phenomenon under a set of circumstances, while interpretive approaches deliberately abstain from hypotheses. Instead, interpretive scholars' findings are “created from the inquiry and analysis in the field rather than previously derived from a theory” (ibid., p. 578-579). Accordingly, theory may refer to an array of ontological assumptions or previous research about both the policy process and the specific phenomenon under observation. However, this array does not serve hypothesis-building; rather, it provides a lens through which research can engage with the appearance of the phenomenon (compare also Collins & Stockton, 2018).
- ***Methodology:*** In line with constructive ontology, proponents of interpretivism regard interpretation as the suitable academic proceeding because the appearances of the studied phenomena within the political world, and even the phenomena themselves, are “[...] constructed through meanings assigned to them by various actors [...]” (Durnová & Weible, 2020, p. 581), including the researcher. In contrast, advocates of mainstream policy process studies value rigorous methodological criteria over interpretation, with the former warranting reproducibility as well as objectivity.

Despite these differences, mainstream public policy research and interpretivism are not incommensurable (King et al., 2021). Nonetheless, their combination into a suitable research

design requires a transparent handling of the guiding ontological assumptions.

3.1.1) Three Ontological Premises

Although mainstream and interpretive studies diverge in their execution of public policy and political science research, they share a crucial proposition: The two *modi operandi* equally recognize human bias as the main obstacle to learning about the policy process and political systems (i.e., learning about the welfare agendas of PRRPs). While mainstream public policy research tackles that obstacle by maximizing the transparency and standardization of its research methodologies in pursuit of generalizability and internal as well as external validity (Olaussen et al., 2022), interpretively guided academic work acknowledges the presence of bias as a given from the outset. Rather than striving to conceal or abolish this bias, interpretive work regards humans as “meaning-making creatures” and therefore finds generalizability altogether antithetical to the experiential learning experience which social science research ultimately amounts to (Durnová & Weible, 2020, p. 573). These two lines of thinking may seem incompatible. However, in the context of this research, they converge somewhat smoothly and produce three guiding ontological premises for a customized research design.

Firstly, the established research question explicitly pertains to (a) the period between 1990 and 2021 and (b) the old and new member states of the EU. Moreover, an overwhelming majority of inquiries juxtaposing PRRPs (and their welfare agendas) in the two regions identify the political dynamics following the fall of the CB as the main reason behind the differences between the parties (Minkenbergh, 2017, 2002; Savage, 2023; Tavits and Letki, 2009). These findings must be considered as part of a proper comparison of the welfare agendas of PRRPs in the EU-15 and post-Communist member states. The role history plays for welfare agendas should form the basis of the comparative inquiry planned out here. Accordingly, the goal of the forthcoming analyses is programmatically contingent upon a specific, historically rooted context. The question of whether the resulting findings are generalizable thereby becomes obsolete.

Secondly, and in a similar fashion, the contemporary literature on the welfare agenda of both PRRPs and their constituents emphasizes the conceptual side of PRRPs’ welfare state politics over the influence of situational political constellations. More precisely, political scientists are interested in the function of the welfare state within the ideology of the populist radical right party family, who the corresponding parties deem (un)deserving of welfare provisions and how

these notions of deservingness resonate with the experiences of party constituents (Abts et al., 2021; Attewell, 2020; Bolet, 2023; Burgoon et al., 2018; de Koster et al., 2013). Thus, it is conclusive to adopt an ideational perspective on social policy positions to adequately capture the driving factors behind such positions of PRRPs across Europe. Although political opportunities and constellations impact partisan positioning, the (fundamental) ideas PRRPs hold about welfare spending appear to be of greater importance for answering the posed research question. This assumption does neither preclude tracing how those constellations have affected the involved ideas nor how ideas have influenced constellations – as demonstrated in the theory section. It postulates, nonetheless, that PRRPs do not only formulate social policy preferences due to a certain political constellation but always against an ideational backdrop.

Thirdly, PRRPs communicate concrete stances towards public spending across different welfare dimensions after deriving them from their ideas about the welfare state. In particular, mainstream public policy research, among other channels, has traditionally focused on party manifestos as proxies of a party's collective interests (Dolezal et al., 2012; Eder et al., 2017; Volkens et al., 2013). Consequently, there is extensive information available on party manifestos published throughout recent decades. Although most of the electorate does not read manifestos, political parties value them as means for mobilizing support indirectly through interest groups, appealing to voters via coverage in mass media, influencing campaign agendas, rewarding and intellectually equipping party members, resolving internal disputes, sending signals to other parties/actors and agenda-setting in general (Harmel, 2018; Zulianello, 2014). In line with the ideational understanding of the policy process, this thesis views election manifestos as a vibrant platform for PRRPs to not only mention distinct ideas about the welfare state but also document their resulting desires to increase or retrench welfare provisions across specific dimensions, such as social housing or pensions. As virtually all European PRRPs publish party manifestos on a regular basis, they represent expressions of a common language of ideas and can be seen as an act of positioning in an ongoing political debate with other parties and actors. The existence of such a language allows for an objective comparison of ideas and policy positions that is both accessible to third parties and replicable, since the same analytical criteria can be applied for every expression (i.e., a party manifesto). In this case, objectivity refers to a mutual reference meaning:

For instance, the CMP (Lehmann et al., 2023), as the most prominent database for policy

positions of political parties, reports the proportional amount and content of so-called quasi-sentences devoted to a specific policy area within a party manifesto (Enggist and Pinggera, 2022; Gemenis, 2013). The criteria employed to describe the content of the quasi-sentences may be conditional on their creators' implicit or explicit cultural biases. Nonetheless, the criteria establish objectivity in the sense that they provide snapshots of policy positions which were taken with the same "technique". Consider, for example, the item "per601 (National Way of Life: Positive)" in the latest version of the CMP, which measures "favourable mentions of the manifesto country's nation, history, and general appeals" in the form of quasi-sentences (Lehmann et al., 2023, p. 19). The meaning of a "favourable mention" of national history can vary depending on who expresses and interacts with it and in which cultural and/or historical context. But precisely because the CMP categorizes a mention as favourable on the grounds of *one* formalized meaning – transparently rehashed in the cited codebook and the coding instructions – instead of multiple meanings, researchers can objectively compare favourable mentions of a country's nation or history within the expressions of the common ideational language spoken by European PRRPs.

In this ontology, objectivity is established by such a reference meaning. The CMP assesses the formalization quality with certain tests (Krippendorff's alpha for scaling) that measure how reliably the formalized meaning yields the same analytical result for one mention. A score of -1 indicates a systematic failure, while a score of 1 signals perfect reliability (Lehmann et al., 2023, p. 6). In the datasets used for the statistical analyses, the average test result lies above 0.70, which forms a decent comparative basis (Swert, 2012).

Similarly valuable insights can be attained by re-relating the mention to its original context (i.e., the respective party manifesto and its location in the social world) and interpreting the contextual interactions between involved actors (including the researcher). Returning to the snapshot metaphor, party manifestos capture a specific stage of the policy process, namely the agenda-setting stage (Nowlin, 2011). The formalization of meaning allows for these snapshots to be viewed side by side with the same observation criteria, thereby exposing differences and commonalities between them. Nonetheless, the criteria do not necessarily reveal the origins of the captured situation nor what meanings the displayed actors ascribe to the situation. To examine those meanings, research must move beyond formalization into interpretation.

In sum, this thesis postulates, in accordance with previous relevant literature and available data, three fundamental ontological assumptions for answering the research question:

- The produced knowledge is contextual and therefore unsuitable for deriving general statements about the welfare state agendas of PRRPs across time and space. The concrete context is a historical one limited to the EU and the years ranging from the fall of the CB 1989-1991 to 2021.
- PRRPs derive their stances towards the expansion or retrenchment of welfare state provisions from their ideas about the institution welfare state. Thus, in the research context at hand, ideas are highly significant for the agenda-setting stage of the policy process.
- Party manifestos, at least in relation to the welfare state, constitute a common ideational language of PRRPs across Europe. The individual manifestos are expressions of this language. They are part of a political reality, especially the agenda-setting stage of the policy process, that can be processed both objectively and interpretively.

These three assumptions match the epistemic premises of mainstream and interpretive public policy research as outlined by Durnová and Weible (2020). The first one resonates with the interpretive idea that knowledge about political reality is inherently contextual and precludes the establishment of universal laws about phenomena and their appearances within political reality. The second one appeals to the status of language within interpretive inquiries. If ideas shape the formulation of PRRPs' welfare-related policy positions, the semantics of the respective ideas will play a decisive role in the development of those positions. Finally, the third assumption fosters epistemic space for mainstream and interpretive understandings of theory and methodology. On the one hand, the pieces of evidence emerging from the analyzed context may be used to generate objective comparisons – guided by theory and hypotheses inferred from neighbouring endeavours – in the sense described above. On the other hand, the pieces also serve as an effective point of departure for exploring the language and multiple meanings of political reality through an appropriate theoretical framework (i.e., historical institutionalism).

3.2) Overarching Structure

From here, the proper design for the posed research question follows almost automatically. The

first part analyzes the introduced theoretical framework as an established reservoir of knowledge and hypothesizes which differences and commonalities will emerge from an objective comparison between the welfare-related ideas and policy positions of PRRPs in the old and new member states. These hypotheses are quantitatively evaluated using appropriate methods of statistical inference. The second part utilizes the theoretical framework for an interpretive in-depth investigation of party manifestos. The two parts of the research design are subsequently presented in turn.

3.2.1) Quantitative Analysis: Hypotheses, Data and Methods

In line with the theoretical model, the critical juncture of 1989-1991 – which affected the welfare states in old member states significantly less than those in the new member states – may have incentivized PRRPs in the latter group of countries to place more emphasis on the extension of welfare provisions. This policy position is hypothesized to have become institutionalized since 1991. This institutionalization represents a path dependency, and PRRPs in the new member states are therefore – compared to their counterparts in the EU-15 states – greater advocates of expanding the overall level of welfare provisions. Thus, the first hypothesis of this thesis is the following:

***H1:** PRRPs in the new EU member states demand generally more welfare provisions than PRRPs in the old member states.*

At the same time, PRRPs across Europe base their welfare-related policy positions on welfare chauvinistic ideas, despite targeting different groups with those ideas. The second hypothesis is therefore as follows:

***H2:** There is no difference in the emphasis on welfare chauvinism among European PRRPs.*

Finally, as the reviewed literature showed, PRRPs in the EU predominantly compete with left parties on matters of the welfare state. Accordingly, the third hypothesis postulates the following:

***H3:** The welfare-related ideas and policy positions of PRRPs are affected by other political actors and parties, especially left parties.*

To test the three hypotheses, two datasets – both incorporating data from 1990 to 2021 – were

established. The first set only contains information on the welfare-related positions and ideas of PRRPs across the EU. The second set contains the same information as well as information on left parties and parties of the political middle⁵. The purpose of the second dataset is to provide the basis for a sanity check with more control variables for the analysis conducted on the first, smaller dataset. Most of the data in the two sets comes from the CMP database (Lehmann et al., 2023). However, the sets also utilize data from three other databases – Eurostat, the Comparative Political Project and the Quality of Governance data set.

All PRRPs in EU member states that are listed by the PopuList are included for the time periods in which the PopuList classified them as populist radical right. For example, the manifesto of the Hungarian Fidesz is only considered after 2010. There is one exception: The two datasets do not comprise information on the party manifestos of Croatian PRRPs because Croatia joined the EU in 2013 – five years after the global financial crisis which was a critical juncture for both European politics and populist radical right politics in all EU member states (Loch and Norocel, 2015; Neyer, 2015). For instance, Germany’s decision to contribute to the EU’s financial aid package for Greece triggered domestic Eurosceptic forces to rally around the economics professor Bernd Lucke. Those forces eventually founded the AfD, which developed into a PRRP (Decker, 2022).

This illustrates how EU membership may have altered the relationship between PRRPs and other political actors (i.e., the EU) and how these parties processed the critical juncture of 2008. Thus, the inclusion of Croatia would necessitate an “extra” theorization of the impact 2008 had on the welfare-related ideas and policy positions of PRRPs and their relations to other political actors outside of a mutual political framework (i.e., the EU). This, in turn, would deviate from the overarching comparative goal of the thesis at hand.

Concurrently, the two datasets do not exclude Slovenian PRRPs, even though the reforms carried out under the Yugoslavian dictator Josip Broz Tito after 1948 resulted in a distinct “Titoistic” economic policy which was implemented (somewhat) independent of Soviet influence (Neal, 2023). However, this independence should not obscure the fact that the economic policy originated in communist ideas emphasizing the state’s responsibility for

⁵ The coding of these party families follows the CMP coding. The category “left parties” comprises left and social democratic parties, and “parties of the political middle” refers to conservative, centre-right and liberal parties.

welfare provisions (Filipovič Hrast and Kopač Mrak, 2016). In 1990, Slovenia declared its independence from the disintegrating Yugoslavia and commenced a political and economic rapprochement with Western Europe. This rapprochement had wide-ranging implications for the Slovenian welfare state comparable to the developments in other post-Communist states. Slovenia is hence often subsumed under the CEE label in political economy and welfare state research (Aidukaite, 2011). Going back even further in history, Slovenia was part of the Western Habsburg monarchy and has traditionally been perceived as closer to Central and Western Europe, compared to Croatia (Varga, 2023).

The analyzed time frame is limited to the years between 1990 and 2021 because Russia's invasion of Ukraine may emerge as an additional critical juncture for the welfare state agendas of PRRPs (in the new member states) (Ivaldi et al., 2023). However, at present, there is neither a consensus on this matter nor enough primary material (i.e., manifestos) to comparatively investigate the juncture.

The CMP offers its users insights into the “relative emphasis” political parties place on a “given (pro/con) position” (Gemenis, 2013). It does so by indicating the proportion of quasi-sentences a party devoted to the given position within their election manifesto for a given national election. Although the CMP is among the most widely used data sources on party positional research (Bakker et al., 2015; Ecker et al., 2022; Enggist and Pinggera, 2022), the body of literature critical of its theoretical coding assumptions and reliability is growing (Gemenis, 2013). Some of the critiques also address the welfare-related items of the CMP. Nonetheless, comprehensive “concept validity concerns about the data seem exaggerated” (Horn et al., 2017, p. 403). Therefore, the CMP data remains a sensible foundation for the subsequent analyses, especially considering the adopted analytical approach, which moves beyond the formalized dimension of quantitative analysis and thereby sticks close to the primary sources of the CMP by construction (i.e., the election manifestos).

In particular, two CMP categories are useful for the established research context: First, the proportion of quasi-sentences a party dedicated to introducing, maintaining or expanding any public social service or social security theme relating to health care, child care, elder care, pensions, welfare provisions more generally or social housing and, second, the proportion of quasi-sentences expressing the desire to retrench such services and themes (= policy positions).

The simple sum of these two measures serves as an indicator of the overall relative emphasis EU parties placed on the welfare state between 1990 and 2021. It should be noted that education spending is not included, even though the CMP also provides a variable measuring the proportion of quasi-sentences addressing the expansion and retrenchment of education expenditures. The rationale behind the analytical exclusion of educational spendings is straightforward – not in all countries education was considered as a part of the welfare state between 1990 and 2021 (Allmendinger and Leibfried, 2003). This exclusion applies in much of the theoretical literature this thesis draws upon. While studies tend to view welfare and education as closely related, there does not seem to be a final consensus regarding whether education policy is a sub-category of social policy or if it constitutes an autonomous policy domain that complements social policy (Malinovskiy and Shibanova, 2023; Mosher, 2015; Willemse and de Beer, 2012). The inclusion of education spending in the variables capturing the relative emphasis on the welfare state within manifestos would effectively necessitate theorizing the aforementioned interrelations, and the analysis would risk losing preciseness due to theoretical overloading. This concerns the interpretive analysis in particular; an additional consideration of education spending would have resulted in a quantity of primary material that exceeds the academic capacity of this thesis.

Moreover, the two compiled databases comprise information on theoretically relevant or general macro-socioeconomic figures, such as the immigration rate (data extracted from Eurostat); the inflation rate, the share of the population older than 60, the unemployment rate and election results (derived from the Comparative Political Data Set, Armingeon et al., 2023); and an index of ethnic fractionalization following the coding of Alesina et al. (2003), taken from the Quality of Governance Data Set (Teorell et al., 2013)⁶. Data on entitlement measures, such as welfare state generosity (Scruggs, 2022), could not be included because the respective indicators only capture the period between 1995 and 2010 for a significant number of the new member states (e.g., Latvia, Estonia and Bulgaria). This would have (a) led to a number of observations not representative for the time frame under investigation and (b) likely introduced bias in the data analysis because the year 2015 is of theoretical⁷ and empirical interest.

In line with the established hypotheses, the overarching goal of the quantitative inquiry is

⁶ The index was not available for some countries and years. For these years, the score of the previous or next available year was held constant.

⁷ This will be explicated in the Interpretive Analysis.

twofold. First, it assesses if PRRPs in the new member states put more emphasis on increasing welfare state provisions (= difference in a policy position), if there are any differences between the new states and their EU-15 counterparts regarding welfare chauvinism (= ideational differences) and if left parties influence this emphasis and these ideas. A custom-made index is used to map the degree of welfare chauvinism contained in each manifesto. This index conceives of welfare chauvinism as the co-occurrence of negative sentiments towards multiculturalism and positive stances towards traditional morality, the national way of life and welfare state expansion. Thus, for each manifesto, the proportional amounts of quasi-sentences relating to these categories were summed up. This indexing is not only consistent with other indexes in the CMP database but also matches the provided conceptualization of welfare state chauvinism: In essence, welfare state chauvinism postulates that immigration, and hence multiculturalism, undermine the national welfare state by reallocating provisions from deserving natives to putatively undeserving parts of the society, a practice which allegedly contradicts the national way of life and its traditional values. The index also resonates with the hypothesized diverging addressees of welfare chauvinism because the categories utilized do not explicitly refer to immigrants nor ethnic minorities but rather to general human values with implications for ethnic minorities and immigrants alike.

Second, the results of the envisaged statistical evaluations are ought to inform the interpretive analyses about possible points of interest in the evaluated manifestos. In light of this preparatory function and the first ontological assumption – precluding any inferences about general “laws” of the political process and directing the focus to the political context at hand – the findings produced hereinafter remain somewhat descriptive. Nonetheless, they are sufficient for answering the research question because the datasets described include nearly all available election manifestos of PRRPs in the EU between 1990 and 2021.

3.2.1.1) Introducing Four Baseline Models

To test the first, second, and third hypotheses, two standard linear OLS models were designed for each of the two outlined dependent variables. The models were applied to both datasets, resulting in a total of four baseline models. The employed independent variables consist of a dummy variable indicating whether a manifesto belonged to a party in a new member state, the maximum amount of quasi-sentences devoted to welfare state expansion in the manifesto of a left party in the respective country and year, the same variable for a party of the middle, an index variable capturing the highest sum of quasi-sentences related to equality and welfare state

expansion in a manifesto of a left party in a given year and country, the described measure of ethnic fractionalization, the immigration rate and macro-economic control variables which could potentially impact the relative emphasis placed by PRRPs (and other parties) on the welfare state.

The latter control variables comprised social security spending (expressed as a percentage of overall GDP), the share of the population older than 60, the effective number of parties in the election associated with the observed manifesto, the lagged vote share of left parties, and the inflation rate. The number of quasi-sentences devoted to welfare state expansion by other parties was recoded as the proportion of a proportion: The CMP also contains certain indices which are obtained by performing simple summations with the proportion of quasi-sentences relating to specific conceptual variables. This results in an “overproportion” because all conceptual variables together total more than 100. Instead of disregarding the indices and working exclusively with the individual conceptual categories, this thesis understands the CMP’s indices⁸ as additional categories capturing part of the programmatic dimension of a party manifesto. Therefore, the maximum number of quasi-sentences dedicated to welfare state expansion in the manifesto of a left party or a party of the middle was recoded as the proportion of the overproportion. For instance, suppose all variables including the indices add up to 120. Then, the proportion of quasi-sentences devoted to welfare state expansion is divided by 120. Hence, manifestos with high values on the indices – driving overproportion – are penalized. This effectively balances the relative emphasis on welfare state expansion within the manifestos of other political actors (i.e., left parties and parties of the political middle) with the relative emphasis these manifestos place on certain programmatic dimensions.⁹ A simple, two-sided t-test showed no significant difference between the overproportions of parties in the old and new member states which could have biased the manipulated control variables¹⁰:

⁸ The crafted index for welfare chauvinism is exempt from this.

⁹ This process was only applied to the control variables relating to the manifestos of other political actors (i.e., left parties and parties of the middle). The two dependent variables still indicate the simple proportion of quasi-sentences dedicated to welfare state expansion or welfare chauvinism.

¹⁰ If there were significantly more overproportion in the manifestos of parties in the new member states, a comparison with manifestos in the old member states would have been impossible because, in that case, parties in the new member states would place, by construction, less emphasis on welfare state expansion. This would have (possibly) introduced bias into the interaction effects of Models 3 and 4 (compare below).

Data Set	T-Statistic	Degrees of Freedom	P-Values
data set on PRRPs	-0.57404	124.43	0.567
expanded data set	-0.59416	128.2	0.5525

Table 1: Insignificant results of a two-sided t-test comparing the average overproportion of quasi-sentences in the manifestos of PRRPs and other parties in old and new member states.

Although there is limited literature on the direct impact of the aforementioned macro-economic control variables on the welfare-related positions of populist radical parties, there is a battery of previous research indicating a relationship between the variables and how PRRPs fare in elections. For example, a recent meta-analysis by Sipma and Lubbers (2020) notes a weak positive effect of the unemployment rate on support for PRRPs in Western and Eastern Europe. The addition of social security spending to the pool of control variables refers to the discursive strategies regarding the welfare state adopted by PRRPs; as stated in the reviewed literature, the PRRPs base their own social policy pledges on a (perceived) malfunctioning of the welfare state. Finally, pensions, as one of the most prominent measures of consumptive welfare state expenditures, have been shown to be of greater relevance within the manifestos of Western European PRRPs than previously assumed (Enggist and Pinggera, 2022; Rathgeb and Busemeyer, 2022b) and make up much of a state's social security expenditures. Thus, all of the selected control variables potentially affect the relative emphasis PRRPs put on the institution welfare state in the framework of their policy positions and ideas about this institution.

In formal terms, the first two baseline linear models for the first dataset, which only includes PRRPs' manifestos, read as follows:

$$(1) \text{welfexp}_i = x_i\beta + \varepsilon_i$$

$$(2) \text{welfchauv}_i = x_i\theta + \kappa_i$$

where *welfexp* and *welfchauv* refer to the two dependent variables (welfare state expansion and additive index of welfare chauvinism, respectively) in a party manifesto *i*, $x_i\beta$ and $\theta_i\beta$ are short expressions for $\beta_0 + \beta_1x_{i1} + \beta_2x_{i2} + \dots + \beta_kx_{ik}$ and $\theta_0 + \theta_1x_{i1} + \theta_2x_{i2} + \dots + \theta_kx_{im}$, x_i is a vector carrying certain independent variables for each manifesto and ε_i and κ_i refer to the error terms. Given that the models should also apply to the second dataset, which has (slightly) different values on the dependent variables and different sets of included independent

variables¹¹, the following two additional baseline models are necessary:

$$(3) \text{ welfex}_o = \omega_l \rho + \epsilon_o$$

$$(4) \text{ welfchau}_o = \omega_l \delta + \tau_o$$

where the interpretation for a manifesto l is the same as in models (1) and (2). To assess the quality of the models, all four models were checked for normality of residuals, outliers, variance inflation (VIF) and heteroskedasticity through visual inspection and formal tests. Specifically, Breusch-Pagan tests for heteroskedasticity (Birău, 2012) and Shapiro-Wilkinson tests for normality of residuals (Yap and Sim, 2011) were conducted. An overview of detailed results can be found in the Appendix, along with various diagnostic plots.

While the Breusch-Pagan tests indicated no heteroskedasticity in the first two models, models (3) and (4) exhibited inconsistent variance of the residuals around the predicted means. Additionally, the Shapiro-Wilkinson tests showed that the residuals of the second, third, and fourth models did not follow a normal distribution. However, violations of the normality assumption in datasets with more than ten observations per predictor do not significantly impact the point estimates of the parameters nor the estimates of their variance; the variance estimates are crucial to deriving correct levels of statistical significance and confidence intervals from the model. On the contrary, arbitrarily transforming variables to meet the normality assumption *can* bias the results (Schmidt and Finan, 2018). Therefore, the non-normality of the residuals was noted but not further addressed because straightforward log-transformations also did not yield considerable improvements.

To handle the heteroskedasticity detected in models (3) and (4), robust standard errors were used in a re-estimation before the results of the re-estimated models were compared to the results from the original models. Although the introduction of robust standard errors triggered some changes to the p-values, the substantive results of the models remained consistent. Here, “substantive” change refers to an initially significant predictor becoming insignificant at conventional levels ($p < 0.1$) in the alternative model specification and/or the reversion of an effect’s direction.

¹¹ Because the second dataset comprises more observations, more parameters can be included in the model. Furthermore, the programmatic index combining equality and welfare state expansion was only used in the first dataset.

One studentized residual in models (2) and (4) significantly diverged from the expected values based on the theoretical quantiles, suggesting a potential outlier with strong influence on the model. As a preliminary sensitivity check, the most influential observations for both models were identified using Cook's distances with a threshold of $4/n$ and then excluded in a re-estimation (Kim and Storer, 1996). Again, the results did not substantively change. Lastly, none of the predictors in the four models exceeded a VIF-factor of 5 except for included interaction terms, offering no evidence of problematic multicollinearity induced by high correlations between the (focal) predictors.

3.2.1.2) Refining the Baseline Models: Including Yearly Fixed Effects

The four models described in the previous section provide a solid analytical base for the empirical identification of differences between the policy position and ideas of PRRPs in the new and old EU member states regarding the established theoretical premises. Nonetheless, the unbalanced panel nature of the data (i.e., repeated measurements over 30 years with an unequal number of observations per unit) necessitates some refinements. The outlined hypotheses specifically postulate a difference between PRRPs in the two regions regardless of the year the manifesto is observed (= path dependency). Thus, there should not, theoretically, be any unobserved association between a specific year and the included independent variables. Therefore, it is essential to control for the influence of years on the outcome to avoid time-specific bias induced by mutual critical juncture, such as the 2015 migrant situation (Arzheimer and Berning, 2019; Pytlas, 2021), that may impact the number of quasi-sentences devoted to welfare state expansion or welfare chauvinism within the manifestos of all PRRPs and/or parties. This can be achieved by including dummy variables for the years as fixed effects in the model. Following the notation of Schmelzer et al. (2024), a refined version of model 1 reads as follows:

$$(1.1) \text{welfexp}_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_{1it} + \dots + \beta_k x_{kit} + \gamma_2 D2_t + \gamma_3 D3_t + \dots + \gamma_n Dr_t + \varepsilon_{it}$$

where t is the time subscript and $D2_t, D3_t, \dots, Dr_t$ are the dummy variables for the years. Since this approach is equivalent to including a fixed intercept for every year in the regression model (ibid), an alternative option would be to conceptualize the yearly intercepts as a random, normally distributed variable. This would allow for the effect of specific years to vary by

including an extra error term for the respective yearly intercept (compare Bell and Jones, 2015):

$$(5) \text{ welfexp}_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_{1it} + \dots + \beta_k x_{kit} + \mu_t + \varepsilon_{it}$$

$$(6) \mu_t \sim N(0, \sigma^2)$$

Such a random effects model is particularly valuable when the dataset at hand only contains observations of some groups (i.e., years) out of a larger population of groups; technically, the fixed effects model (1.1) only enables inferences pertaining to the effect of years observed within the two established datasets.

Notwithstanding, in the present research context, fixed effects suffice for answering the research question. This is the case not only because the first outlined ontological assumption explicitly limits the explanatory aspirations to manifestos of PRRPs in the EU countries between 1990 and 2021 but also because the two datasets contain (nearly) all theoretically relevant group levels (i.e., all 30 years but also countries and, for the first dataset, parties, too). In the context of the second dataset, adding an error term for parties would likely help control for unobserved variations of partisan effects on the proportion of welfare-related quasi-sentences in a given manifesto (e.g., partisan tradition, idiosyncratic manifesto drafting processes, etc.). However, the core assumption of random effects models is that the random effects/the group-level error terms are independent of the independent variables. Since the independent variables of foremost interest are a dummy variable indicating whether a party belongs to a new member state and a variable capturing the party type in the second dataset, the core assumption of the random effects model is violated by construction.

This elaboration hints at why a one-way fixed effects model (only yearly fixed intercepts) was chosen over a two-way (fixed effects for parties and years) or even three-way fixed effects model (parties, years and countries). As fixed effects ultimately correspond to a series of dummy variables, party- and country-based fixed effects would inevitably produce bias due to perfect multicollinearity, rendering the models unestimable. Additionally, including a fixed country effect would make the new member state variable conceptually useless because being located in a new member state essentially corresponds to a unit-specific trait that fixed effects aim at controlling for in the first place.

Despite the decision to use only yearly fixed effects, the results of four models with random partisan and yearly effects can be found in the Appendix. Again, they do not differ substantively from the models that were eventually selected for use.

3.2.2) Interpretive Analysis: Sample and Structure

An interpretive analysis of PRRPs' manifestos that examines their welfare-related ideas and policy positions does not need to aim at representativity. However, it does require a sample of manifestos from the same parties in the old and new EU member states at different points in time because the analysis explicitly aims to trace developments between 1990 and 2021. These developments should become clearer when comparing the same party to itself rather than comparing parties from different national contexts (Moses and Knutsen, 2019b). Additionally, the selected manifestos may not over- nor under-emphasize the welfare state – this way, bias in the results stemming from attrition or overrepresentation is avoided. Suppose, for example, there is no mention of the welfare state in the manifesto of a PRRP in a new member state. Accordingly, any possible peculiarities in policy positions or ideational claims inherent to PRRPs in the new member states become unobservable within the manifestos of the sampled party. In the framework of a case-oriented analysis, this would likely lead to a false interpretation of the differences/similarities between PRRPs in the old and new member states. The other logical way around, including a PRRP in the sample whose manifestos prioritize the welfare state more heavily than other PRRPs do risks producing findings more suitable for analyzing the welfare preferences of the party in question than for answering the research question, which addresses patterns across partisan contexts.

To address the outlined sampling challenges in accordance with the historical-institutionalist theoretical framework, this thesis segments the time frame between 1990 and 2021 into three subperiods corresponding with possible critical junctures before sampling manifestos. The first subperiod ranges from 1990 to the accession of the new member states in 2004; the second ranges from 2004 until the migrant situation in 2015; and the third covers the years between 2015 and 2021. The year of accession 2004 was chosen since the EU enlargement greatly “[...] challenged the design of European Welfare states” (Offe & Fuchs, 2007, p. iii) and is often utilized as the causal point of departure for studies investigating institutional differences between new and old member states (Aidukaite, 2011). Similarly, the migrant situation of 2015 has not only shaped the anti-immigration narratives of PRRPs in the old member states but also boosted the salience of immigration as a topic in the new member states, causing repercussions

for PRRP politics (Brils et al., 2022; Gómez-Reino, 2019; Lažetić, 2018). The interpretive analysis also considers the financial crisis of 2008 as a critical juncture, although it is not used for sampling.

The manifestos eventually analyzed were selected through purposive sampling and taken from the CMP database. Purposive sampling allows researchers to select the units most suited to the study (Gill, 2020).

First, the dataset comprising only the manifestos of PRRPs from the previous analytical part served to filter manifestos. More precisely, manifestos in which the share of quasi-sentences dedicated to the welfare state lies within the middle 50% of the amount of quasi-sentences devoted to the welfare state within the manifestos of all PRRPs in one subperiod.¹² For example, between 1990 and 2004, 50% of manifestos directed between 3% and 8.25% of their quasi-sentences towards welfare state matters when expressed as a percentage of the general overproportion of quasi-sentences in a manifesto. Thus, if the share of welfare-related quasi-sentences within a manifesto of a PRRP between 1990 and 2004 is neither below 3% nor above 8.25%, the manifesto qualified for the analysis.

This way, the sample allows for a “regular” PRRP manifesto to be evaluated in regard to the welfare state and in balance with the programmatic dimensions of a manifesto by penalizing manifestos heavily emphasizing programmatic dimensions. Simultaneously, the segmentation of the analyzed time period yields pairs, triplets or panels of party manifestos, as each party can be represented through more than one manifesto. The following pairs, triplets and panels arose:

- 1) Manifestos of the Austrian Freedom Party in 1990, 1999, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2013 and 2017
- 2) Manifestos of the Greek Golden Dawn in 2015 and 2019
- 3) Manifestos of the Danish People’s Party in 2005, 2007, 2011 and 2019
- 4) Manifestos of the Belgian Flemish Interest in 2007, 2014 and 2019
- 5) Manifestos of the Belgian New Flemish Alliance in 2010, 2014 and 2019
- 6) Manifestos of the French National Front in 2007 and 2017
- 7) Manifestos of the Italian Northern League in 1992, 1994, 1996, 2001 and 2013

¹² Again expressed as the proportion of the overproportion

- 8) Manifestos of the Italian Brothers of Italy in 2013 and 2018
- 9) Manifestos of the Estonian Conservative People's Party in 2015 and 2019
- 10) Manifestos of the Polish League of Families in 2001 and 2005
- 11) Manifestos of the Polish Law and Justice in 2007, 2015 and 2019
- 12) Manifestos of the Greater Romanian Party in 1992 and 2004
- 13) Manifestos of the Slovak National Party in 1990, 1992, 1996 and 2016
- 14) Manifestos of the Slovenian National Party in 1996, 2000, 2008 and 2018

The manifestos of the Greater Romanian Party could not be included because its 1992 manifesto consisted of a nearly unreadable, handwritten document. Therefore, there is no usable predecessor for the party's 2004 manifesto and, in turn, no panel for the party. Furthermore, the 1990 manifesto of the Austrian Freedom Party was not available in the CMP database, and the file containing the 2007 manifesto of the Danish People's Party was damaged. The remaining 40 manifestos were included in this study.

3.2.2.1) Structuring the Analysis

The interpretive analysis of the sampled manifestos followed a three-step approach in line with the methodology for interpretive content analysis outlined by Drisko and Maschi (2015). Hence, the goal of the analysis was not to generate generalizable insights about the welfare-related ideas and policy positions of European PRRPs but instead to interpretively extract ideas and policy positions from the given sample.

In the first step after translating the sampled manifestos into English using machine learning (Kutylowski, 2024)¹³, all relevant welfare-related passages were extracted from the manifestos. The extraction process presupposed explicitness and exclusivity of the identified passage, meaning that the passage had to either directly address one of the five prevalent components of the institution welfare state corresponding to the CMP categories (i.e., social housing, childcare, pensions, healthcare and social security more generally) and/or be a general statement exclusively about those components. This effectively excluded political measures which indirectly impact social policy, such as tax breaks for certain vulnerable groups or labour market policies aimed at the overall creation of jobs. However, if, for instance, a passage demands the establishment of state-financed programs to reintegrate unemployed workers into the labour

¹³For this, the translation software DeepL was used.

market, it qualified for the analysis because the associated provisions explicitly target members of society in social need. Potential edge cases, like the former severance pay scheme in Austria¹⁴ (Hofer, 2007), were included.

In a similar vein, reform imperatives meant to facilitate general housebuilding were not considered, whereas positions explicitly pledging the creation of more social housing to provide citizens in need with accommodation qualified for the analysis. Furthermore, the sampling was restricted to domestic reform imperatives/policy positions, and PRRPs' policy positions on development aid were therefore excluded. In the context of reform imperatives relating to asylum-seekers, only passages explicitly addressing nationally funded welfare provisions for asylum-seekers were retained. Hence, policy positions contesting the general (constitutional) right of asylum were not part of the subsequent analysis, but passages insinuating that people seek asylum solely for the purpose of welfare provisions were included (in line with the exclusivity principle).

In the second step of the analysis, the selected passages were grouped, inductively and deductively, into ideational and/or positional categories. The following deductive categories correspond to the introduced theoretical model and thus relate to the general character of the reform imperatives/policy positions on the one hand and to their ideational background on the other hand:

- *Layering*: The Manifesto demands additions to and/or revisions of existing provisions, formal organizations, regulations or expected practices/behavioural norms related to the welfare state.
- *Drifting*: The Manifesto demands no changes despite changes in the social-political environment of the institution welfare state.
- *Conversion*: The manifesto demands redirection and reinterpretation.
- *Displacement*: The manifesto demands the removal of certain provisions/regulations/norms (to introduce new ones).
- *Welfare state chauvinism*: The manifesto identifies immigration and/or ethnic minorities as a causal threat to the functioning of a welfare state and/or conditionalizes provisions/regulation/norms on negative stances towards

¹⁴ Until 2003, employees would receive a one-off social security payment after the end of their working contract.

multiculturalism on the one side and the embrace of traditional morality and the national way of life on the other side.

If a passage did not match any of the given deductive categories, a remark was coded which allows the formulation of inductive insights. The entire coding process was conducted twice; in the second iteration, mistakenly included passages violating the explicitness or exclusivity principle were eliminated. The process yielded a total of 512 manifesto passages. Furthermore, ideational categories were inductively assigned to the passages in the second coding round. This reflects the interpretive understanding of social science research as an experiential learning experience of the researcher. All analyzed passages and ascribed codes appear in the Appendix.

In the third and final step of the interpretive analysis, the deductive and inductive codes assigned to the passages were condensed into more abstract ideas and general policy positions. The comparison of such ideas and associated policy positions along the old–new member state division (over time) corresponds to the results of the analysis.

4) Results

4.1) Quantitative Analysis

When evaluating the descriptive statistics for the focal variables within the two datasets, one clear trend emerged – plainly spoken, parties do not like talking about welfare state retrenchment. This was evident from the low variance in the variable indicating the proportion of quasi-sentences devoted to welfare state retrenchment in both datasets. Consequently, there was less variance for a set of independent variables to explain different levels of the dependent variables, and it became difficult to identify meaningful relationships. As outlined in the theoretical framework, the main hypothesized difference between the welfare-related policy positions of PRRPs in the new and old member states is a path-dependency resulting in PRRPs from the new member states emphasizing welfare state expansion more than their EU-15 counterparts. In combination with the possible modelling problems induced by the low variance on the retrenchment variable, the first hypothesis prompted the decision to disregard the variable altogether.

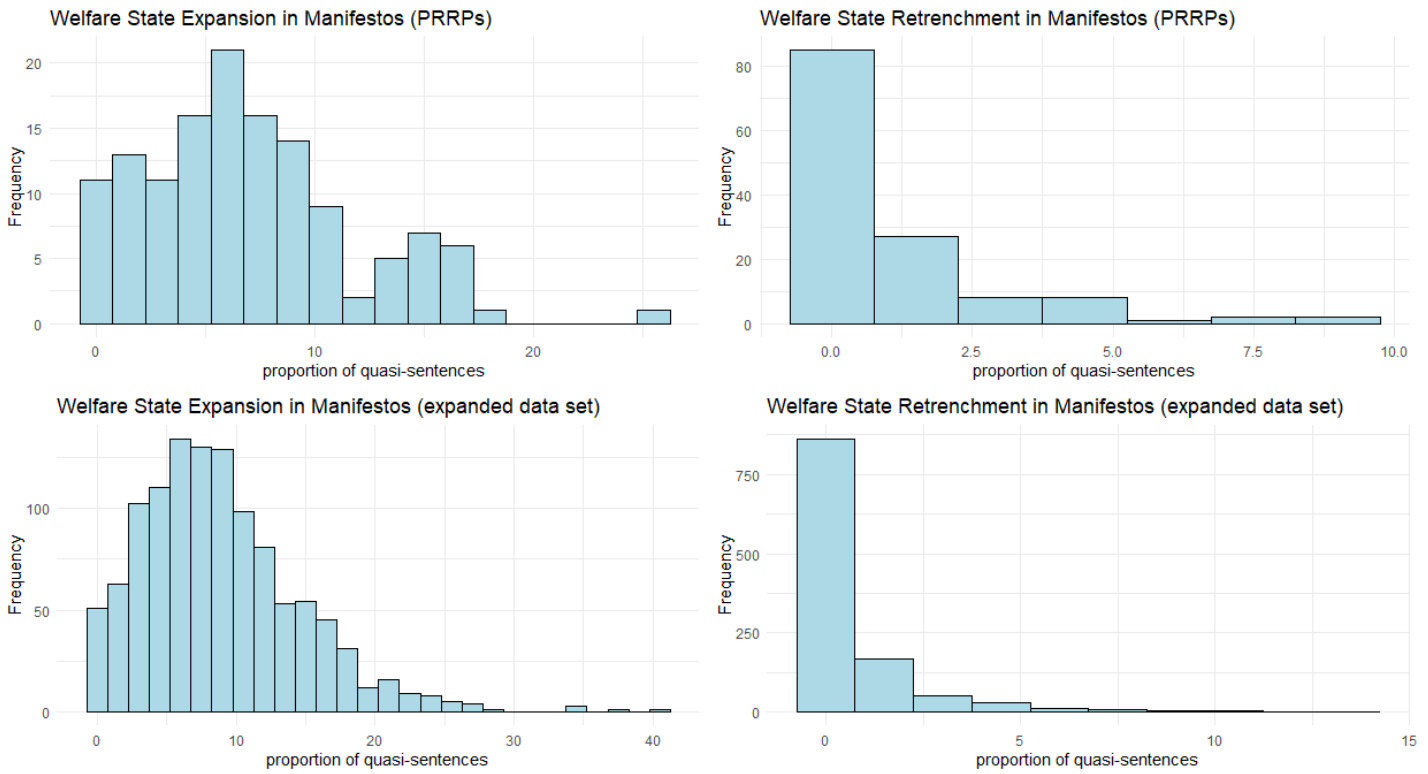


Figure 2: Histograms of the positional welfare-related variables in the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) in the two designed datasets.

Furthermore, the histograms in Figure 2 indicate the presence of some outliers on the expansion variable with one manifesto in the dataset about PRRPs. Although outliers can introduce bias, their removal can result in the loss of potentially valuable data for no theoretically valid reason. For instance, it might be theoretically relevant that a specific party in a specific country with a specific context devoted a relatively large proportion of their manifesto of quasi-sentences about welfare state expansion in their election manifesto. Even if not theoretically relevant, such a case still – de facto – constitutes a part of the inquired political reality which should be accounted for. Therefore, the evaluation of the four baseline models that was conducted using basic diagnostic tools and which indicated an overall robustness of the models was understood as a justification for retaining outliers rather than excluding them outright.

Variable	Minimum	Median	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
<i>welfare state expansion (PRRPs)</i>	0.00	6.45	25.00	6.93	4.88
<i>welfare chauvinism (PRRPs)</i>	1.56	6.45	61.54	17.84	9.90
<i>welfare state expansion (expanded data set)</i>	0.00	4.82	40.35	8.85	5.77
<i>welfare chauvinism (expanded data set)</i>	0.00	11.83	62.50	13.39	8.13

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for the two dependent variables (proportion of quasi-sentences) used for modelling in the two designed datasets.

After comparing all four baseline models to a version with yearly fixed effects via joint F-tests and selecting the better fitting model specification accordingly, the following results for the first two models were retained:

Regression Results for Models (1) and (2)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	welfare state expansion (1)	welfare chauvinism (2)
new member state: yes	-0.036 (1.094)	-1.071 (2.133)
ethnic fractionalization	-0.360 (3.567)	-3.541 (6.954)
social security expenditures	-0.173 (0.185)	-0.176 (0.360)
parties in the election	-0.528* (0.296)	-0.992* (0.578)
welfare state programmatic of a left party	0.106 (0.088)	0.324* (0.171)

welfare state expansion of a middle party	0.262*** (0.095)	0.412** (0.185)
constant	8.723** (3.904)	17.487** (7.611)
yearly fixed effects	no	no
Observations	109	109
R ²	0.228	0.233
Adjusted R ²	0.182	0.188
Residual Std. Error (df = 102)	4.465	8.705
F Statistic (df = 6; 102)	5.007***	5.171***

Note: Standard errors
in parentheses.

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

Table 3: Regression results for models (1) and (2) run using the data with only manifestos of PRRPs.

The two models in table 3 correspond to models 1 and 2, as they utilize the first crafted dataset with only manifestos by PRRPs, and the effect of belonging to a new member state can be assessed directly: Although PRRPs in the new member states devote, on average, less of their manifestos to both welfare chauvinism and welfare state expansion compared to their EU-15 counterparts, when holding all other variables constant, the respective effect coefficients were not significant at conventional levels. To put it more clearly, the two models did not suggest a difference. This assessment was robust to reconfigurations and extensions of the included control variables. For example, when the immigration rate was also included as a potentially meaningful predictor for PRRPs in EU-15 states, no significant (negative) relationship between belonging to a new member state and the proportion of quasi-sentences dedicated to welfare state expansion or welfare chauvinism arose.

Almost the opposite was the case for the last two predictors, namely (1) the maximum amount¹⁵ of quasi-sentences favouring equality and welfare state expansion within a manifesto by a left party in a given year and (2) the maximum number of quasi-sentences mentioning the expansion of welfare state provisions in a manifesto by a party of the middle. Despite some substantive

¹⁵ These amounts are measured as proportions of overproportions, as explained above.

changes in significance levels when the set of explanatory variables was rearranged or fixed effects were included¹⁶, one of the two coefficients always remained significant at the 10% level. The positive direction of the association with the respective dependent variable was robust to every conducted sensitivity check. Hence, PRRPs in the EU seem to increase the relative emphasis of their party manifestos on welfare state expansion and welfare chauvinism when there is an increase in the number of quasi-sentences with left-leaning stances towards the welfare state in the manifestos of left parties and parties of the middle (relative to the overproportion).

Considering the conceptualization of party manifestos as an expression of a common ideational language of PRRPs across the EU, this pattern provides evidence for **H3**. The welfare-related policy positions and ideas of PRRPs seem to relate to the policy positions and ideas of other political actors. However, the hypothesized position of left parties as the main competitor of PRRPs regarding the welfare state is not supported by the data. On the contrary, the effect appears to be greater for manifestos of parties commonly perceived as part of the political middle. Similarly, the significance of the found effect is more robust to alternative model specifications than it was in the case of left parties. This opens potential avenues for future research. While research has – for the old and new member states – acknowledged the electoral competition between left parties and PRRPs on the economic axis of political conflict (Loxbo, 2023), the literature examining such a competition between PRRPs and parties of the political middle is scarce. It should be noted that the identified relationship is evidently not causal; nonetheless, it reflects a greater proportion of welfare-related quasi-sentences in PRRPs' manifestos in years and countries in which left parties and especially parties of the political middle place more relative emphasis on welfare state expansion compared to other policy domains.

The third and fourth models corroborate the insights gained from the first two models, albeit only indirectly, because the expansion of the database to parties other than PRRPs effectively entails that PRRPs in new and old member states cannot be compared to each other using a simple binary predictor. The inclusion of such an independent variable would only facilitate inferences about differences in manifestos across all included parties in the old and new member states. Nevertheless, by interacting the affiliation of a party manifesto with a PRRP and the

¹⁶For the first two models, the joint f-tests did not indicate a better model fit for the fixed effects versions.

membership status of the respective country, it becomes possible to compare PRRPs in the new member states to parties of the chosen reference category (i.e., parties of the political middle) in the old member states.

Results of Models (3) and (4)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	welfare state expansion (3)	welfare chauvinism (4)
left party	1.147 (1.376)	-3.000 (2.035)
PRRP	-4.112** (1.841)	3.445 (2.722)
new member state: yes	0.154 (0.813)	0.186 (1.202)
ethnic fractionalization	1.191 (1.838)	0.376 (2.717)
immigration rate	0.018 (0.699)	0.380 (1.033)
inflation rate	0.293* (0.149)	0.193 (0.221)
social security expenditures	-0.123 (0.102)	-0.286* (0.151)
share of people older than 60	0.207 (0.152)	0.590*** (0.225)
welfare state expansion of a left party	0.393*** (0.039)	0.440*** (0.057)
number of parties in election	-0.185	-0.199

	(0.187)	(0.277)
maximum vote share of a left party	-0.010	-0.015
	(0.036)	(0.053)
unemployment rate	0.068	0.065
	(0.062)	(0.091)
maximum lagged vote share of a left party	-0.085*	-0.130**
	(0.044)	(0.064)
left party × new member state	0.362	2.165
	(0.998)	(1.475)
PRRP × new member state	-0.032	-3.507*
	(1.311)	(1.939)
PRRP × lagged vote share	0.118**	0.185**
	(0.060)	(0.088)
yearly fixed effects	yes	yes
Observations	606	606
R ²	0.246	0.226
Adjusted R ²	0.194	0.172
F Statistic (df = 17; 566)	10.860***	9.713***

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.

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

Table 4: Regression results for models (3) and (4) run on the expanded data set.

The two resulting coefficients indicate the following: First, there does not seem to be a difference between the two groups just mentioned in the proportion of quasi-sentences their manifestos devote to welfare state expansion. Second, such a difference apparently exists for the proportion of quasi-sentences emphasizing welfare chauvinism. This appears to contradict the assessment of no difference between the relative emphasis on welfare chauvinism by PRRPs in the new and old member states in the framework of models (1) and (2). However, this

contradiction dissolves when considering the outlined interpretation of the coefficients as a comparison between the proportion of quasi-sentences dedicated to welfare chauvinism in manifestos of PRRPs in new member states to those of parties of the middle in old member states, while all other variables are held constant. Therefore, unlike models (1) and (2), the two models do not directly compare PRRPs in the old and new member states to each other; rather, they compare the party family as a whole to parties of the political middle. Against this backdrop, the effect in question reveals – in line with the first two models – interactions between PRRPs and other (partisan) political actors when their locus in a new or old member state is controlled for. Notably, according to model (4), PRRPs in new member states dedicate, on average, less of their manifestos to quasi-sentences relating to welfare chauvinism than parties of the middle in the EU-15 states do, holding all other variables constant.

The robustness of the interaction between the lagged vote share of left parties and the predictor identifying a manifesto by a PRRP to the aforementioned sensitivity checks further substantiates the observation that PRRPs increase their emphasis on welfare state expansion and welfare chauvinism in the old and new member states alike in years and countries where other parties dedicate more quasi-sentences to welfare state expansion relative to other policy domains, including programmatic dimensions. The positive and highly significant coefficient for the maximum of quasi-sentences emphasizing welfare state expansion within a manifesto of a left party may suggest a similar effect, regardless of party family and whether a party belongs to a new or old member state.

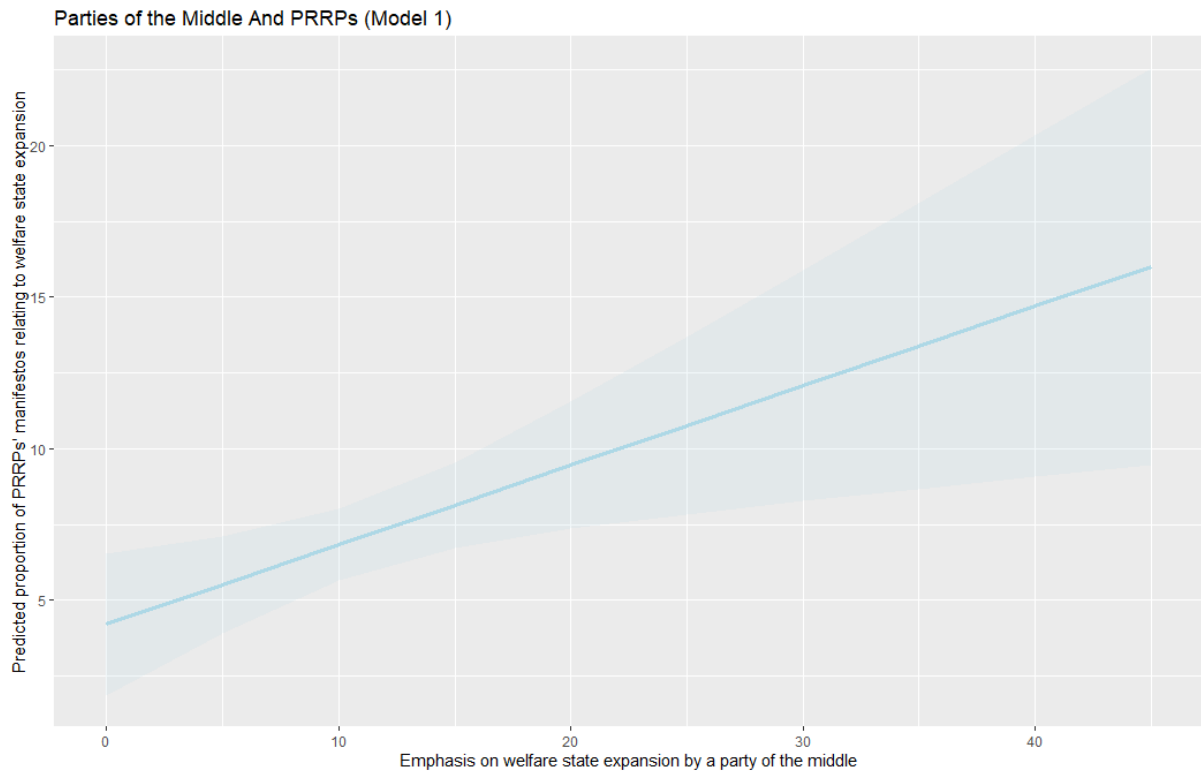


Figure 3: The predicted relationship between the emphasis on welfare state expansion in manifestos by parties of the middle (compared to other policy domains including indices) and the proportion of quasi-sentences devoted to welfare state expansion in PRRPs' manifestos (based on model (1)). The blue line indicates the prediction; the coloration corresponds to confidence intervals.

Overall, the data does not support a systematic difference between demands of welfare state expansion across the new–old member state divide. The results regarding the importance of welfare chauvinism in manifestos are mixed. Moreover, the results indicate that there is competition between PRRPs and other political actors on welfare-related ideas (i.e., welfare chauvinism) and policy positions (i.e., welfare state expansion). Hence, *H1* is rejected, while *H2* and *H3* are (partly) accepted. A major implication of these results is that the new–old member state divide may not serve as a proper rationale for a priori opposition to any comparison of PRRPs' social policy due to historical reasons. Thus, the identification of common ideas and policy positions is possible. The following analysis seeks to interpret party manifestos under that premise while simultaneously acknowledging the possibility of historically grown differences in line with the adopted theoretical approach.

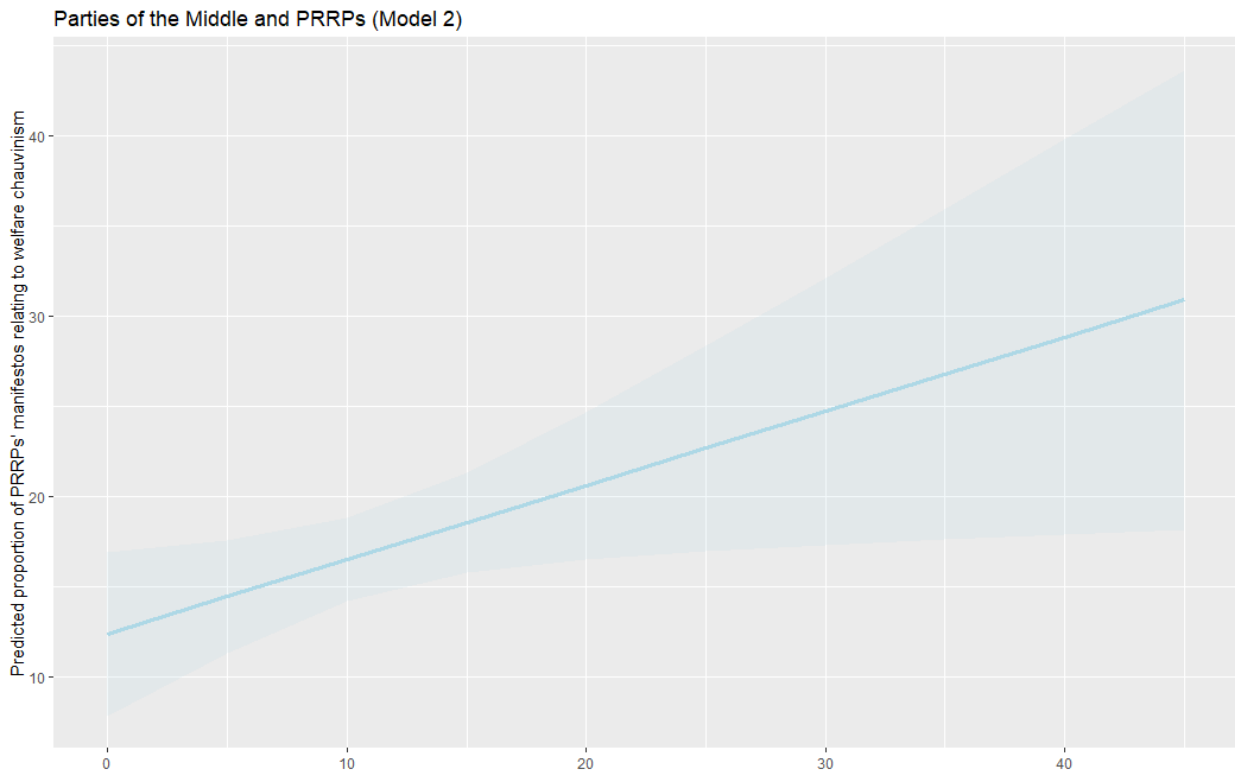


Figure 4: The predicted relationship between the emphasis on welfare state expansion in manifestos of parties of the middle (compared to other policy domains including indices) and the proportion of quasi-sentences devoted to welfare chauvinism in PRRPs' manifestos (based on model (2)). The blue line indicates the prediction; the coloration corresponds to confidence intervals. Additional plots reflecting the relationship between the manifestos of left parties and PRRPs' manifestos can be found in the Appendix.

4.2) Interpretive Analysis

4.2.1) Commonalities in Agendas

Considering the reviewed literature, the established theoretical framework and the results of the quantitative analysis, PRRPs in both the old and new EU member states should be – independently of, but perhaps not unaffected by, the particular point in time – advocates of welfare chauvinistic policy position and ideas. However, the ideational object differs. While PRRPs in the old member states may focus on immigrants as undeserving recipients preventing the establishment of a “fair” welfare state, PRRPs in the new member states would be expected to centre ethnic minorities in their welfare chauvinistic perspective. Indeed, the Slovenian National Party postulated the following in 1996:

“Social Security must be guaranteed to all Slovenes and loyal Slovenian citizens, and foreigners will be treated as foreign labour [...]” (Slovenian National Party, 1996, p. 5)¹⁷

¹⁷ “Socialna varnost mora biti zagotovljena vsem Slovenkam in Slovencem ter lojalnim slovenskim državljanom, tujci pa bodo obravnavani kot zunanja delovna sila, tako kot jo obravnavajo po demokratičnih evropskih državah.”

The party repeated this position in the 2008 version of their manifesto (Slovenian National Party, 2008). Although the exclusion of foreign workers from provisions disbursed in the framework of national social security schemes until their contributions reach a certain amount is not uncommon per se, the implicit distinction between “loyal” and “unloyal” citizens is notable. The party’s manifesto published in 2018 highlights the potential groups targeted by such a distinction:

“We defend the right to basic healthcare for all citizens, with the provision that marginalised groups and communities, least of all migrant groups, should not be given priority in the provision of the basic healthcare” (Slovenian National Party, 2018, p. 4)¹⁸

Notwithstanding, there are very few passages in the sampled manifestos of PRRPs in the new member states which clearly reveal welfare chauvinism directed towards ethnic minorities beyond these statements by the Slovenian National Party. The picture is different for PRRPs in the old member states. Several of those PRRPs, such as the Austrian Freedom Party, the French National Front, the Belgian Flemish Interest and the Greek Golden Dawn, (repeatedly) identified foreigners and/or immigrants as responsible for a malfunctioning welfare state (Brothers Of Italy, 2018; Flemish Interest, 2007; Golden Dawn, 2015; National Front, 2017, 2007; New Flemish Alliance, 2019, 2019, 2014, 2014; Northern League, 1996). For example, in 2006, the Austrian Freedom Party demanded a separate social security scheme for guest workers to ensure that they would not receive provisions earned by Austrians:

“A separate social insurance scheme must be created for guest workers that is specially designed for a temporary stay in Austria. There must be no shortfall compensation from the public purse” (Austrian Freedom Party, 2006, p. 2)¹⁹

The party’s manifesto from 2008 elaborates on the ideational underpinnings of the same policy position:

“[...]. The burdening of our social system by economic migrants must be prevented. We are therefore committed to insuring migrant workers according to a model tailored to their temporary stay and to setting up a special social insurance scheme for this purpose without shortfall compensation from the public purse” (Austrian Freedom Party, 2008, p.

¹⁸ “Zagovarjamo pravico do osnovnega zdravstva za vse državljanke in državljane, s tem, da pri zagotavljanju osnovnega zdravstva ne smejo imeti prednosti marginalne skupine in skupnosti, še najmanj pa migrantske skupine.”

¹⁹ “Für Gastarbeiter ist eine eigene Sozialversicherung zu schaffen, die speziell für einen temporären Aufenthalt in Österreich konzipiert ist. Es hat kein Fehlbetragsausgleich durch die öffentliche Hand zu erfolgen.”

In their manifestos from 2013 (Austrian Freedom Party, 2013) and 2017, the party reemphasized not only the need for separate provision schemes but also the assessment that immigrants burden the welfare state and therefore prevent the distribution of provisions to deserving Austrian natives:

“It is unfair... The fact that the pensions of hard-workings Austrians are lower than the minimum income for immigrants” (Austrian Freedom Party, 2017, p. 15)²¹

As outlined, the same point could also be made for other PRRPs in the old member states. Thus, welfare chauvinism appears to be more virulent in old member states than in the new member states, in line with the results of model (4). An intracoderreliability²² of over 90% for the deductive category “welfare chauvinism” exacerbates this impression. However, when inductively examining the ideational essence of the quoted welfare chauvinistic policy positions and ideas, an idea about the welfare state common to PRRPs in the new *and* old member states crystallizes: The Austrian Freedom Party does not advocate a division of social security schemes because immigrants are immigrants but rather because they “burden” the welfare state and prevent “deserving” Austrians from receiving benefits. This reflects a deep fear of PRRPs that the components of the institution welfare state will be abused, necessitating measures to remove opportunities for abusers. This fear of abuse is constant over time, and it is not limited to the Austrian Freedom Party nor PRRPs in the old member states. Furthermore, the identified abusers are not exclusively immigrants and/or ethnic minorities. In 1990, the Slovak National Party adumbrated their social policy as follows:

“Support such a social policy, which will not permit impoverishment of the weaker social groups (pensioners, students, families with children) for the benefit of a rich group of entrepreneurs.” (Slovak National Party, 1990, p. 4)²³

In this passage, “a rich group of entrepreneurs” is labelled as the potential abusers of the welfare

²⁰ “Eine Belastung unseres Sozialsystems durch Wirtschaftsflüchtlinge muss aber verhindert werden. Wir bekennen uns daher dazu, Gastarbeiter gemäß einem für ihren vorübergehenden Aufenthalt maßgeschneiderten Modell zu versichern und dafür eine eigens zu schaffende Sozialversicherung ohne Fehlbetragsausgleich durch die öffentliche Hand einzurichten.“

²¹ “[...] [d]ass Pensionen hart arbeitender Österreicher geringer sind als die Mindestsicherung für Zuwanderer.”

²² The reliability was measured as the percentage of successful matches in the second coding round.

²³ “Podporovať takú sociálnu politiku, ktorá nebude môcť zbedačovať slabšie sociálne vrstvy (dôchodcovia, študenti, rodiny s deťmi) v prospech bohatej podnikateľskej vrstvy.” The quoted translation is copied from the annotated version of the manifesto in the CMP.

state, reflecting the populist juxtaposition of “the people” with “the elite.” The Austrian Freedom Party and the Polish Law and Justice Party (once again) advocate similar policy positions (Austrian Freedom Party, 2017, 2013; Law and Justice, 2007). When the Slovak National Party published their manifesto for the electoral campaign of 1998, the fear of abuse remained present, but the feared abusers had changed:

“The SNS [Slovak National Party] considers the main task of state policy to build a socially just society, where social justice benefits are received only by those who cannot work and not by those who do not want to work.” (Slovak National Party, 1998, p. 35)²⁴

Eighteen years later, after Slovakia’s accession to the EU and the 2015 migrant situation, the party similarly noted the following:

“We will create the conditions for the creation of health risk insurance so that the principle of solidarity in health care is not abused by a part of the population [...]” (Slovak National Party, 2016, p. 17)²⁵

Therefore, the conceptualization of immigrants and/or ethnic minorities as undeserving recipients exploiting the welfare state at the expense of deserving natives is a symptom of a more abstract, guiding idea: The institution welfare state is always at risk of abuse. From this perspective, PRRPs must merely isolate a group of potential abusers, and the selection process may be shaped by other typical radical right ideas, such as Euroscepticism, anti-elite sentiments, anti-immigration stances or idiosyncratic features of the specific party. For instance, the ideational basis of the sampled manifestos by the Belgian Flemish Interest party is the allegation that “[s]ocial security alone transfers almost 3 billion euros each year from Flanders to Wallonia. The so-called solidarity with Wallonia is actually an organized theft of Flemish resources” (Flemish Interest, 2019, 2014, 2007, p. 38)²⁶. Similarly, the early Italian Northern League before Salvini became its chairman stated that “[...] for every 100 liras per inhabitant that this state transfers to the Lombardy Region, the Sicily Region receives 332 liras [...], the Campania Region 188 [...], and so on. Even in the Northern Regions there are poor people, social services that do not work, [...], unemployed people [...]” (Northern League,

²⁴ “SNS považuje hlavnú štátnej sociálnej politiky budovať sociálne spravodlivú spoločnosť, keď dávky sociálnej spravodlivosti poberajú len tí, ktorí nemôžu, a nie tí, ktorí nechcú pracovať.”

²⁵ “Vytvoríme podmienky pre vznik pripoistenia zdravotného rizika, aby sa nezneužíval princíp solidarity v zdravotníctve časťou obyvateľstva [...]”

²⁶ “De sociale zekerheid alleen al versast elk jaar bijna 3 miljard euro van Vlaanderen naar Wallonië.”

1996)²⁷.

In sum, welfare chauvinism appears to be ideationally more flexible than often assumed because it is not restricted to the scapegoating of immigrants and/or ethnic minorities; rather, it is based on a general fear of institutional abuse. This idea of an ever-threatened welfare state, in turn, motivates welfare chauvinistic ideas and policy positions. Some of the latter include abolishing pension or social security privileges (Austrian Freedom Party, 2013; Brothers Of Italy, 2013; Flemish Interest, 2007; Law and Justice, 2007), establishing separate social security schemes for foreigners and natives (Austrian Freedom Party, 2008, 2006; Flemish Interest, 2019; National Front, 2007) and imposing harsher sanctions on welfare state abusers (New Flemish Alliance, 2019, 2014; Slovak National Party, 2016).

Alongside the outlined fear of abuse, there is a second, time-constant idea uniting PRRPs across the new–old member state division. In both regions, parties introduce the family as the nativist linchpin of their social policy. Consider the 2019 manifesto of the Polish Law and Justice Party, which identified the main purpose behind the institution welfare state as follows:

*“The Polish welfare state model works to strengthen families and build a middle class”
(Law and Justice, 2019, p. 211).²⁸*

This emphasis on families is not a peculiarity arising solely from the Catholic profile of the Law and Justice Party (Folvarčný and Kopeček, 2020) – in the same year, the Belgian Flemish Interest party also described “[...] the family as a benchmark [for social policy] [...] (Flemish Interest, 2019, p. 79).²⁹ However, prior to 2015 and 2004, the manifestos of PRRPs in all EU countries ideationally centred the family within their social policy claims as well. For example, the Northern League in Italy declared the development of the family to be “[...] the foundation of a new social pact [...]” (Northern League, 2001)³⁰. A plethora of other sampled manifestos illustrates the idea of the family as the future-proof societal nucleus with accordingly

²⁷ “[...] per ogni 100 lire per abitante che questo Stato trasferisce alla Regione Lombardia, alla Regione Sicilia ne arrivano 332 (più del triplo), alla Regione Campania 188 (quasi il doppio), e via dicendo. Anche nelle Regioni del Nord ci sono poveri, servizi sociali che non funzionano, strade con le buche grosse così, disoccupati [...]”. Please note that the manifesto was saved as a .csv-file in the CMP; therefore, no corresponding page number could be identified.

²⁸ “Polski model państwa dobrobytu działa na rzecz wzmocnienia rodzin oraz budowy klasy średniej.”

²⁹ “Het Vlaams Belang ziet het gezin als een ijkpunt en wil dat ook waardenen.”

³⁰ “[...] di un nuovo patto sociale [...]”. Note that the manifesto was saved as .csv-file in the CMP; therefore, no corresponding page number could be identified.

formulated social policy positions (Austrian Freedom Party, 2013, 2008, 2006; Brothers Of Italy, 2018; Conservative People’s Party, 2015; Golden Dawn, 2019, 2015; New Flemish Alliance, 2014, 2010; Northern League, 2001; Slovak National Party, 2016, 1998, 1992).

While provisions for families to invest in future generations are increasingly found in European parties’ welfare state agendas, including outside the populist radical right context (Morgan, 2013), PRRPs tend to be advocates of a specific family model. Although the aforementioned manifesto by the Flemish Interest noted that the benchmark family “[...] should be interpreted much more broadly than the classic family of the 20th century” (Flemish Interest, 2019, p. 79)³¹, the family-related social policy positions in the sampled manifestos predominantly incentivize mothers – and not fathers – to take responsibility for care work and stress that native mothers in particular are the target of such incentives. In the campaign leading up to the 2020 Polish elections, a résumé by the Polish Law and Justice Party of their past social policy efforts in government stated the following:

“The 500+ program has relieved mothers of their titanic responsibilities and given them more freedom to pursue their life goals, including professional ones. The Mother’s Pension (‘Mom 4+’) is the first such project, treating parenting work as professional work [...]”
(Law and Justice, 2019, p. 64).³²

In a similar manner, the French National Front demanded a personal pension for “[...] French mothers with three or more children, then gradually for all French mothers [...]” (National Front, 2007, p. 14)³³, and the Austrian Freedom Party argued for a basic pension for “Austrian women who have raised children [...]” (Austrian Freedom Party, 2006, p. 8)³⁴. The amount of the latter pension was supposed to be stipulated by the number of children raised. Meanwhile, the Brothers of Italy pledged a parental covering of “[...] up to 80% and equalization of protections for female self-employed workers” (Brothers Of Italy, 2018, p. 2)³⁵. These passages reflect a finding in recent literature on the family policy agendas of PRRPs in Western European countries which indicates that, on the one hand, such agendas follow a “male-

³¹ “Het gezin – dat veel ruimer ge- interpreteerd dient te worden dan het klassieke gezin uit de 20e eeuw – [...]”

³² “Program 500+ pozwolił odciążyć matki z ich tytanicznych obowiązków i dał im więcej swobody w realizacji celów życiowych, również zawodowych. Matczyna emerytura (‘Mama 4+’) to pierwszy taki projekt, traktujący pracę wychowawczą jak pracę zawodową, która jest podstawą do naliczania składek emerytalnych.”

³³ “Le droit à la retraite personnelle, d’abord pour les mères françaises de trois enfants et plus, puis progressivement pour l’ensemble des mères de famille françaises.”

³⁴ “Österreichische Frauen, welche Kinder großgezogen haben, sollen je nach Kinderanzahl Anspruch auf eine Grundpension erwerben.”

³⁵ “Congedo parentale coperto fino all’80% ed equiparazione delle tutele per le lavoratrici autonome.”

breadwinner” approach but, on the other hand, also differ in several regards (Giuliani, 2023, p. 179). In the research context at hand, the Catholic Law and Justice Party may be more traditional in their family model than the Flemish Interest or the New Flemish Alliance, who noted, in 2014, the end of “[...] the time when a family consisted of a working husband, a stay-at-home mom and their children” (New Flemish Alliance, 2014, p. 34)³⁶. As with welfare chauvinism, the precise manifestation of the underlying idea in these cases appears to be moderated through idiosyncratic features of the party and/or country in question.

While these cross-national and partisan differences require further research, they should not obscure the fact that the idea of the family – in its function as the nativist societal nucleus – constitutes the linchpin of much of PRRPs’ welfare state agendas across the EU. Some of the precise policy positions and reform imperatives derived from this idea include introducing parental and/or maternal wages (Austrian Freedom Party, 2013; Flemish Interest, 2014, 2007; National Front, 2007; New Flemish Alliance, 2014), improving the circumstances of current parental/maternal leave schemes (Brothers Of Italy, 2018; Conservative People’s Party, 2015; Law and Justice, 2015, 2007; New Flemish Alliance, 2019), linking the decision to raise children to pension benefits (Austrian Freedom Party, 2017, 2006; Law and Justice, 2019, 2015, 2007; New Flemish Alliance, 2014) and increasing family/child allowances (Austrian Freedom Party, 2013, 2008, 2006; Brothers Of Italy, 2018, 2013; New Flemish Alliance, 2010). Moreover, PRRPs aim at fostering informal care arrangements and ideationally base the corresponding policy positions on the importance of the family (Flemish Interest, 2019, 2014, 2007; Law and Justice, 2015; Northern League, 2013). In some instances, parties also base their support for banning abortions in the described function of the family as the nativist societal nucleus (Golden Dawn, 2019, 2015). Lastly, and again illustrating the nativist connotations of the described idea, PRRPs link their family-oriented social policy positions with their welfare chauvinistic ideas. For example, the National Front stated the following in 2007:

“[...] As intended when they were created, family benefits are intended to encourage the birth rate and French families. Family allowances will be reserved exclusively for French families. [...] Illegal immigrants will no longer receive these benefits, which will be paid only to French citizens” (National Front, 2007, p. 29)³⁷

³⁶ “De tijd waarin een gezin bestond uit een werkende man, een huisvrouw en hun kinderen ligt achter ons.”

³⁷ “Comme cela était prévu lors de leur création, les prestations familiales sont destinées à encourager la natalité et les familles françaises. Les allocations familiales seront exclusivement réservées aux familles françaises”; “Les clandestins ne recevront plus ces aides qui seront versées seulement aux citoyens français.”

Overall, the interpretive analysis of over 500 welfare-related passages within the manifestos of European PRRPs reveals two ideas guiding their social policy positions: A populist fear of abuse and the family as the nativist societal nucleus. Although the ideational cores of these two ideas are constant over time, their specific manifestations may be influenced by idiosyncratic features of the party in question and the respective national context or by other ideas common among PRRPs, such as anti-elite sentiments or categorical opposition to immigration. This insight is notable because inquiries have hitherto subsumed welfare chauvinism under the nativist ideological component of PRRPs. However, the results presented here suggest that a general fear of abuse is the idea behind welfare chauvinistic policy positions, and this idea reflects the populist component of PRRPs' ideology rather than the nativist one.

4.2.2) Differences in Agendas

Nevertheless, one ideational difference which appears to be connected to the critical juncture of 1989-1991 emerges along the new–old member state divide in the coded passages. As discussed in the reviewed literature, the collapse of the CB initiated the integration of the institution welfare state into a liberal market economy in the post-Communist states. This integration comprised, inter alia, the diversification of the long-standing pay-as-you-go pension systems (PAYGO), which were amended to include funded institutional components (Boulhol and Lüske, 2019). A similar diversification process also occurred in other branches of the welfare state, like healthcare (Cook, 2011). In opposition to these developments, PRRPs in the new member states tended to reject the idea that a free market can contribute to the adequate functioning of the institution welfare state and were committed to centralizing the welfare state's components. This tendency seems to have been reinforced in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, which, among other things, halted the diversification of pension systems due to the high costs associated with such changes (Boulhol and Lüske, 2019).

Already in 2007, the Polish Law and Justice Party called for the conversion of the main national social security organization responsible for the disbursement of provisions, including pensions – the Zakład Ubezpieczeń Społecznych – “[...] from an organizational unit with its own legal personality into a classic state budgetary unit” to “[...] ensure full control over the institution's

expenditures and their rationalization” (Law and Justice, 2007, p. 24)³⁸. The party’s position was clarified in 2015, especially in view of healthcare-related provisions:

*“We reject the claim that market mechanisms can be the basis for the functioning of the main part of the system [healthcare], and health is a commodity like any other. Responsibility for the health security of Poles is ultimately a public, political responsibility, and therefore primarily the responsibility of the government, local administration, politicians” (Law and Justice, 2015, pp. 115–116).*³⁹

This idea motivated precise policy positions such as the creation of “[...] a mechanism to allow already commercialized or privatized units [in the healthcare sector] to move away from the harmful formula of commercial companies into legal entities operating under a not-for-profit formula” (ibid., p. 117). In a similar manner, the Slovenian National Party argued, in 1996, for the separation of “state-run primary health care from private self-pay concessionary healthcare” and rejected “[...] the common practice of the same people filling both segments of healthcare” (Slovenian National Party, 1996, p. 9)⁴⁰. More than two decades later, in 2018, the party published a manifesto – as part of an electoral campaign – which re-emphasized their opposition to diversification of provision schemes and stressed the perceived urgency of respective regulations:

*“We [...] advocate the immediate regulation of health legislation, without various private or semi-private bypasses” (Slovenian National Party, 2018, p. 4)*⁴¹

There are similar passages demanding the centralization of healthcare and pension provisions in several of the sampled manifestos of the remaining PRRPs in the new member states, notably in those manifestos drafted after the crisis year 2008 (Conservative People’s Party, 2019, 2015; Slovak National Party, 2016).

³⁸ “Dlatego możliwe jest przekształcenie ZUS z jednostki organizacyjnej z własną osobowością prawną w klasyczną państwową jednostkę budżetową. Dzięki temu finansowanie działalności Zakładu będzie następowało bezpośrednio z budżetu, co zapewni pełną kontrolę nad wydatkami tej instytucji i ich racjonalizację.”

³⁹ “Odrzucamy twierdzenie, że mechanizmy rynkowe mogą być podstawą funkcjonowania głównej części systemu, a zdrowie to taki towar jak każdy inny. Odpowiedzialność za bezpieczeństwo zdrowotne Polaków to ostatecznie odpowiedzialność publiczna, polityczna, a więc przede wszystkim odpowiedzialność rządu, administracji samorządowej, polityków.”

⁴⁰ “Vladi bomo predlagali ločitev osnovnega zdravstva pod okriljem države od privatnega samoplačniškega oziroma koncesijskega zdravstva. Ne pristajamo na ustaljeno prakso, da isti zdravniki zapolnjujejo oba segmenta zdravstva.”

⁴¹ “Zato se zavzemamo za takojšnjo ureditev zdravstvenega zakonodaja, brez raznih privatnih ali pol privatnih obvodov.”

However, PRRPs in the old member states do not largely oppose the idea of diversifying the institution welfare state in pursuit of a more effective welfare state. The Austrian Freedom Party even concluded the following in 1999:

“Experience has shown that the more social policy tasks are carried out by centralized state institutions, the less effective social welfare becomes. [...]. The state, as the ultimately responsible organizational form of the risk community, should only guarantee basic care that supplements and completes the autonomous provision” (Austrian Freedom Party, 1999, p. 36)⁴²

Meanwhile, regarding pension systems, the Northern League in Italy emphasized, in 1996, the putative importance of diversifying the existing PAYGO systems to bolster their effectiveness (Northern League, 1996). The Flemish Interest in Belgium adopted a similar ideational stance in 2007, describing their functionaries as “[...] firm advocates of the development of the second and third pension pillars” (Flemish Interest, 2007, p. 42)⁴³. In the same year, the National Front in France identified the existing PAYGO pension system as the primary obstacle to preventing a further decline in average pensions (National Front, 2007).

After the 2008 financial crisis, the described ideational sympathy towards diversification remained present. The 2013 manifesto of the Brothers of Italy envisaged a “welfare revolution” in which they considered the third sector to be an “indispensable partner of local governments” (Brothers Of Italy, 2013, p. 14)⁴⁴. In 2010, the New Flemish Alliance similarly identified the private sector as a solution for challenges in the nursing sector (New Flemish Alliance, 2010), and, in 2019, the party called for an expansion of supplementary pension schemes (New Flemish Alliance, 2019).

This does not imply that PRRPs in the old member states uniformly support diversification of the welfare state’s institutional components, while PRRPs in the new member states unequivocally strive to centralize the majority of welfare provisions. In fact, contemporary research notes an unusual heterogeneity of economic policy positions among the populist

⁴² “Erfahrungsgemäß leidet die soziale Treffsicherheit, je mehr Aufgaben der Sozialpolitik von zentralistischen staatlichen Einrichtungen wahrgenommen werden. [...]. Der Staat als letztverantwortliche Organisationsform der Risikogemeinschaft soll hierbei lediglich eine Grundversorgung gewährleisten, die die eigenverantwortliche Vorsorge ergänzt und vervollständigt.”

⁴³ “Wij zijn stevige pleitbezorgers van de uitbouw van de tweede en de derde pensioenpijler.”

⁴⁴ “La ‘rivoluzione del welfare’ passa anche per la valorizzazione del Terzo settore: sentinella delle pulsioni sociali, partner irrinunciabile degli enti locali, portatore sano di valori nell’era della crisi che è culturale prima che finanziaria.”

radical right party family (Afonso and Rennwald, 2018). The introduced juxtaposition is only intended to serve as an illustration of the result of the interpretive analysis pertaining to differences in the welfare state agendas of PRRPs in the new and old member states. This insight relates to the established theoretical framework and the reviewed literature: The fall of the CB had a significant impact on the institution welfare state in the affected countries because its functional logic was integrated into a liberal market paradigm under the administrations of left, post-Communist parties, and PRRPs in the soon-to-be EU member states adjusted their welfare state agenda, in part, to fill the resulting ideational gap (i.e., by opposing diversification). The critical juncture of 1989-1991 did not, however, disrupt the welfare state in the old member states, and it therefore did not trigger a joint ideational trajectory on matters of diversification/centralization. A brief evaluation of who PRRPs in the new member states deemed responsible for the allegedly harmful diversification processes underpins this assessment.

4.2.3) Other Political Actors and Critical Junctures

The Polish Law and Justice Party's 2015 manifesto, which is more than 200 pages long, is prefaced with an extensive recapitulation of Poland's economic history. Although this historiography largely violates the established principles of exclusivity and explicitness described in section 3.2.1) and was therefore excluded from this study's sample, it nonetheless set the tone for the party's subsequent welfare-related policy positions pertaining to diversification of the institution's components.

According to the Law and Justice Party, the "collapse of the communist system in 1989 marked the beginning of the construction of a new social, economic and political reality in Poland". On the one hand, this new reality included the "[...] return of the market [which] was to be combined with privatization [...]" and "[...] the democratic mechanism that replaced the mono-party dictatorship [...]". On the other hand, "[...] old cadres still prevailed [...]" in the restructured state structures and in the banks". In the party's view, the sustained power of these "old cadres" putatively precluded a smooth functioning of both democratic institutions and market rules because the respective actors had begun a rigorous "marketization and privatization of state functions" under the premises of a flawed interpretation of liberalism that had been designed already before the collapse of the CB. When the conservative Solidarity Electoral Action coalition (Szczerbiak, 2005) broke apart and lost in the 2001 parliamentary election, these old cadres (i.e., the inaugurated social democratic government) allegedly again

“[...] felt so strong that they decided to attack, plunder and make completely dependent on themselves the most powerful pillar of the Third Republic’s system”. Consequently, the newly founded Law and Justice Party, seeking “real change”, won the elections in 2005. However, following a “gigantic campaign of denigration, lies and insults” conducted in cooperation with the “mainstream media”, the economically liberal Platforma Obywatelska party, led by Donald Tusk, rose to power in 2007. The Tusk administration then purportedly reinforced “[...] the flawed version of liberalism that was promoted in Poland after 1989” (Law and Justice, 2015, pp. 15–19)⁴⁵.

Reservations towards liberal, market-oriented forces are not limited to the Law and Justice Party. In 1990, the Slovak National Party warned against “[...] problems that will arise for society and the individual from the market-oriented economy” (Slovak National Party, 1990, p. 2)⁴⁶. Although the party’s subsequent manifesto, from 1992, envisaged more privatization as part of a transition to a market economy, the party reassured its voters that the “change of the economic and social system will not interfere with basic social securities of citizens [...]” (Slovak National Party, 1992, p. 5)⁴⁷.

Whereas the critical juncture of 1989-1991 gave PRRPs in the new member states an opportunity to blame former communist politicians – putatively acting on the grounds of a flawed interpretation of liberalism – for a malfunctioning economy and a diversified welfare state, the fall of the CB did not offer a similar ideational opportunity to PRRPs in the old member states. Consequently, the latter group of PRRPs tends to refer to other political actors under different premises and in the light of a different critical juncture.

Consider, for example, the French National Front, which ascribed the “[...] decline in the average pension over the years, and the uncertainty surrounding its financing [...]” to the “[...] most obvious failures of the liberal and socialist governments that have led the country for the past 25 years”. Therefore, the manifesto argues, the standing PAYGO pension system should

⁴⁵ The original text of the entire passage can be accessed in the Appendix.

⁴⁶ “Toto programové vyhlásenie SNS sa neuzatvára pred novými konkrétnymi cieľmi i problémami, ktoré bude prinášať život spoločnosti i jednotlivca v trhovo-peňažných vzťahoch”. The translation was copied from the English version of the manifesto contained in the CMP database.

⁴⁷ Note that the CMP database only contained an already translated version of the manifesto.

be abolished (National Front, 2007, quote on p. 154).⁴⁸ In a similar manner, although without direct reference to an allegedly socialist or liberal ideological profile, the Austrian Freedom Party clearly identified, in their 2013 manifesto, the motivation behind their welfare chauvinistic policy positions:

“The SPÖ, ÖVP and Greens are bringing more and more immigrants into the country. In doing so, they are jeopardizing Austrian jobs, fuel wage and social dumping and destroy the education system in the metropolitan areas. The social system is, for example, endangered by high unemployment among foreigners.” (Austrian Freedom Party, 2013, p. 4)⁴⁹

In view of the identified, problematic social dumping, the manifesto demanded no further opening of the Austrian labour market for workers from the East. In 2017, the party re-emphasized the cited idea that Eastern European workers are endangering the national social security system:

“In addition, cheap labour from Eastern Europe is displacing Austrian employees step by step from the domestic labour market, thereby fuelling unemployment, which is already at record levels” (Austrian Freedom Party, 2017, p. 28)⁵⁰

Similarly, the Belgian Flemish Interest ascertained in 2019 that “[...] it is cheaper to hire workers from Eastern Europe. [...] Social dumping leads to social abuses” (Flemish Interest, 2019, p. 22)⁵¹. In a completely different ideational manner, the Polish Law and Justice Party had, two years earlier, informed its voters how the party would utilize EU funds to bolster welfare provisions for Polish families (Law and Justice, 2015). Hence, the accession of the new member states in 2004 (i.e., the second critical juncture) provided PRRPs in the old member states with new “material” for their policy positions. That material originated from an ideational place of fear of abuse: The workers from the new member states who were joining the national security systems could now be labelled as abusers of those systems. The responsibility for the

⁴⁸ “La diminution de la retraite moyenne au fil des années ainsi que l’incertitude pesant sur leur financement à l’horizon 2005-2010, comptent parmi les échecs les plus patents des gouvernements libéraux et socialistes qui se sont succédés à la tête du pays depuis 25 ans.”

⁴⁹ “SPÖ, ÖVP und Grüne holen unter immer neuen Vorwänden immer mehr Zuwanderer ins Land. Damit gefährden sie österreichische Arbeitsplätze, heizen Lohn- und Sozialdumping an und zerstören das Bildungssystem in den Ballungsräumen. Das Sozialsystem wird z.B. durch eine hohe Ausländerarbeitslosigkeit gefährdet.”

⁵⁰ “Darüber hinaus verdrängen billige Arbeitskräfte aus dem europäischen Osten österreichische Arbeitnehmer Schritt für Schritt vom heimischen Arbeitsmarkt und heizen dadurch die ohnehin schon auf Rekordniveau befindliche Arbeitslosigkeit weiter an“

⁵¹ “[...] is het goedkoper om werknemers uit Oost-Europa aan te werven. Sociale dumping leidt tot sociale wantoestanden [...]”

developments allowing for such an influx was attributed to the parties' political opponents and, evidently, to the EU.

Finally, PRRPs in the old member states also reacted to the critical juncture of 2015. Notwithstanding, the sampled manifestos are less expressive about the juncture than could be expected in line with the theoretical framework, and the associated passages do not necessarily pertain to the welfare state. For instance, the Austrian Freedom Party explicitly related the events of 2015 to an increase in the level of crime committed by foreigners rather than to abuses of welfare provisions (Austrian Freedom Party, 2017). In a similar manner, the Belgian Flemish Interest stressed the purportedly dramatic situation in 2015 and some of its implications (Flemish Interest, 2019) but did not depict possible repercussions for the welfare state. These findings may be surprising. However, they match the generated insights regarding the ideas about the welfare state linking PRRPs' social policies across Europe: As outlined in section 4.2.1), the welfare state is conceived of as an institution that is always at risk of abuse. This fear of abuse is constant over time and motivates welfare chauvinistic policy positions, among others. Thus, the ideational framework for processing the migrant crisis of 2015 existed long before 2015. This is notable because, while the events of 2015 may have marked a critical juncture for the electoral support of PRRPs in (Western) Europe, they did not constitute such a juncture for the general ideational profile of the respective parties regarding social policy⁵². In fact, the cited manifesto by the Flemish Interest simply incorporated the aftermath of 2015 into the party's welfare-chauvinistic ideas:

"The continuing mass influx [of immigrants] has far-reaching consequences in many policy areas. [...]. The waiting lists for social housing and health care are getting longer" (Flemish Interest, 2019, p. 25)⁵³.

The idea that immigrants contribute to a malfunctioning of social housing systems in Belgium was already present in the party's 2007 manifesto, in which it "[...] completely rejects the current policy [in allocation of social housing], where political refugees and fortune seekers are given priority" (Flemish Interest, 2007, p. 42)⁵⁴. In sum, the interpretive analysis does not

⁵² There may be exceptions. For example, Arzheimer (2015) and Arzheimer and Berning (2019) argue that the German AfD only developed into a PRRP after 2015.

⁵³ "De aanhoudende, massale instroom heeft verregaande gevolgen op heel wat beleidsdomeinen. [...] De wachtlijsten voor sociale woningen en in de gezondheidszorg worden langer."

⁵⁴ "Het Vlaams Belang wijst het huidige beleid, waar politieke vluchtelingen en fortunezoekers voorrang krijgen, volledig af."

support the notion that 2015 was a decisive year for the social policy profile of PRRPs in the EU.

A last remark connects to the deductively introduced general forms a policy position can take, namely conversion, layering, drifting or displacement. The overwhelming majority of passages in the sampled manifestos can be classified as either conversion or layering. Therefore, PRRPs in the EU may be more interested in modifying the institution welfare state than disrupting it. Simultaneously, the intracoderreliability for all four categories is below 50%, and their inferential value is thus very limited. The low reliability reflects the failure of the categories to adequately process several implications of one policy position. Consider, for example, the following passage:

“11): Pensions: shift from pay-as-you-go system to funded system, encouragement of competing pension funds” (Northern League, 1994).⁵⁵

On the one hand, the shift from a PAYGO pension system to a funded system can be interpreted as a conversion of the guiding principles of the institution welfare state that results in a redistribution of existing means into new funds. On the other hand, such a redistribution implies new legislation and new institutional components, which would correspond to layering. Alternatively, the policy position could also imply the comprehensive abolishment (= displacement) of the existing PAYGO system, which would correspond to the idea of diversification. Thus, an academic assessment of the general forms of PRRPs' (welfare-related) policy positions could be worthwhile; however, it would require a more stringent operationalization of the categories used.

Overall, the interpretive analysis of more than 500 passages from the sampled PRRP manifestos yielded four ideas guiding PRRPs' social policy across the EU as well as a multitude of policy positions motivated by the same ideas. The commonly assumed new–old member state division appears to provide some explanatory value for two of those ideas: While PRRPs in the new member states hold more reservations towards diversification of the institutional components of the welfare state and tend to aim at centralizing the disbursement of welfare provisions due to the critical juncture of 1989-1991, PRRPs in the old member states do not a priori reject

⁵⁵ “Pensioni: passaggio dal sistema a ripartizione al sistema a capitalizzazione, incentivazione dei fondi-pensione in concorrenza tra loro”. Please note that the manifesto was saved as a .csv-file in the CMP database and a corresponding page number could therefore not be identified.

diversification and even tend to promote it. Table five summarizes the main findings of the interpretive analysis and outlines the associated policy positions.

Idea	Sub-Idea	Associated Policy Positions (Examples)	Difference between Old and New Member States
fear of abuse	welfare chauvinism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • abolish pension and/or social security privileges • establish separate social security schemes for foreigners and natives • impose harder sanctions on welfare state abuse 	no
family as nativist societal nucleus	male breadwinner model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introduction of parental/maternal wages • improve current parental/maternal leave schemes • tie decision to bring up children to pension benefits • increase family and/or child allowances • foster informal care arrangements 	no
centralization		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • channel disbursed welfare provisions • install institutional components simultaneously responsible for several provision schemes • clearly separate state-run and private-run healthcare • guide private healthcare providers towards a non-profit orientation 	yes
diversification		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • transfer regulation competencies to the local level • broaden supplementary pension schemes • strengthen private healthcare providers 	yes

Table 5: Results of the interpretive analysis: Differences and commonalities in welfare state agendas.

5) Discussion

This study's findings contribute to several contemporary discussions about the welfare politics of PRRPs specifically and the PRRP party family in the European Union more generally. First and foremost, the assessment that the commonly drawn distinction between new and old – or CEE and Western European countries, respectively – may not be as analytically valuable as previously assumed by research opens up fruitful avenues for future inquiries which focus on synergies between PRRPs across Europe (based on their social policies) rather than their differences. As the established theoretical framework suggested, the post-Communist political context appears to impact PRRPs' welfare-related ideas and policy positions, but a time-constant family model and a flexible chauvinism grounded in a fear of abuse also link PRRPs across Europe and guide their views of the welfare state.

Nonetheless, these ideational links do not necessarily imply uniformity. The theme of chauvinism in particular is often connected to other, sometimes idiosyncratic ideational features of the party in question. This connection aligns with an emerging consensus within the literature on the transnational aspects of far-right movements, according to which far-right online agitation across borders does not utilize common political messages; rather, it exploits overarching political themes⁵⁶ used to tailor far-right political agendas to national audiences (Moreno-Almeida and Gerbaudo, 2021; Yang and Fang, 2023). Regarding the carrying of such endeavours into party research, as envisaged in the reviewed literature, the research outcomes presented here suggest a parallel dynamic in partisan contexts. Although there exists, at least hypothetically, an overarching welfare state agenda that enables cooperation between PRRPs, PRRPs narrate the overarching themes through a lens of national and partisan peculiarities. This, in turn, can produce diverging manifestations of the same idea. For example, when EU-15 PRRPs make the EU and especially workers from the Eastern EU objects of welfare chauvinism, whereas PRRPs in the new member states regard EU money as a welcome means with which to finance their welfare-related reform imperatives or when the Flemish Interest specifically targets Wallonians more than immigrants.

Secondly, the evidence hinting at a general political contest between PRRPs and other political parties also holds across the new–old member state divide. The somewhat surprising insight

⁵⁶ The far-right community would probably label these themes as “metapolitics”.

that parties of the middle – rather than those on the left – may be the main competitor of PRRPs on welfare-related ideas and policy positions represents another promising point of departure for further research. Several previous studies have arrived at similar conclusions (e.g., Afonso and Rennwald, 2018), but as demonstrated in the reviewed literature, much of the theoretical work regarding party competition on welfare issues implicitly or explicitly views left parties as the primary competitor of PRRPs. At this point, it should again be noted that the central interest of this thesis is not the discursive competition for specific electoral groups: In this regard scholarship has repeatedly demonstrated the existence of a contest between PRRPs and left parties for voters who have a comparatively low socio-economic status and who fear relative deprivation, such as blue-collar workers experiencing subjective loss of social status (Gidron and Hall, 2017; Hartevelde, 2016; Oesch and Rennwald, 2018). Nonetheless, the ideas on which PRRPs in the EU base their precise welfare-related policy positions may be influenced more by the behaviour of parties of the middle than by that of left parties. The identified family-oriented ideas particularly resonate with the conservative notion of the family as the nucleus of society (Schmitz, 2009). Additional comparative research beyond the new–old member state division is needed to substantiate this assessment and determine the exact ideational interactions between parties of the political middle and PRRPs on welfare state matters.

Thirdly, the conducted analyses support the established theoretical assumption that critical historical junctures impact the welfare-related ideas and positions of PRRPs. Notwithstanding, the related findings are somewhat inconclusive. While PRRPs in the new member states consistently refer to the allegedly detrimental (from a welfare perspective) behaviour of their political opponents after the fall of the CB, the approach to the migrant situation of 2015 is not as clear-cut.

Fourthly, and in a similar vein, the adopted historical-institutionalist approach to the ideas of PRRPs emerged as an effective analytical tool thanks to the ideational amendment. Only when reflecting on the significance of ideas for institutional change, the social policy positions of actors (i.e., PRRPs) may be adequately compared to each other because there appear to be ideas guiding these positions regardless of critical junctures. This insight has a crucial implication for applications of historical institutionalism to matters of PRRPs' social policy: It is not enough to consider the impact critical junctures has had on actors. Rather, the focus should be laid on the interrelations between precise ideas of actors, other political actors, the institution in

question and critical junctures.

Despite the somewhat weak evidence on the precise interconnections between historical junctures and those ideas, the references to history within PRRPs' manifestos are not limited to its impacts on the institution welfare state. These references often highlight traditions as the corner stone of a national identity threatened by domestic and/or supranational political forces. For instance, the Austrian Freedom Party postulated the following in their 2013 manifesto:

“The SPÖ, ÖVP and Greens are doing too little to protect our Austrian identity. They are working with the EU on a unified state and a forced-into-line type of person. [...]. One gets the impression that they are ashamed of their own culture and tradition. We want to preserve our own identity. For us, our traditions, customs and culture are unique and worth protecting” (Austrian Freedom Party, 2013, p. 11).⁵⁷

Usually, researchers match this emphasis on tradition to the nativist component of PRRPs' ideology – much like welfare chauvinism is often subsumed under PRRPs' nativist world view (Betz, 2019; Careja and Harris, 2022). In light of the outlined flexibility of welfare chauvinism as an ideational theme, historical-institutionalist frameworks appear to be a valuable instrument for examining the interactions between PRRPs' conceptualizations of tradition and their idea to preclude certain allegedly undeserving persons from receiving welfare provisions in the context of their overarching nativist viewpoints. This would, however, necessitate (a) reconciling the nativist interpretation of welfare chauvinism and the findings presented in this study, which identify the populist definitional element of PRRPs, and (b) closer interdisciplinary collaboration between the fields of history and political science.

6) Conclusion

The next sections elaborate on the broached limitations of the performed analyses. They also answer the research questions through a historical-institutional theoretical lens and summarize the final argument of the thesis.

6.1) Limitations

There are several important limitations of this thesis. First and foremost, the comparison

⁵⁷ “SPÖ, ÖVP und Grüne schützen unsere österreichische Identität zu wenig. Mit der EU arbeiten sie am Einheitsstaat und Einheitsmenschen. [...]. Man hat den Eindruck, als würden sie sich für die eigene Kultur und Tradition schämen.”

between the welfare state agendas of PRRPs across Europe inevitably adopts a relatively abstract, comparative perspective on nation states and their welfare regimes. Therefore, the comparison cannot do theoretical justice to all potentially relevant contexts; undoubtedly, there also differences beyond the old–new member state divide which have repercussions for the welfare state agendas of PRRPs. Although assumptions about disparities between new and old member states are wide-spread in the literature and therefore constituted the basis of this thesis, a closer analytical assessment of specific regions also presents a viable avenue for future research. For instance, the sampled manifestos of the Danish People’s Party from 2019 emphasized the long, successful history of the Danish welfare state and outlined the importance of preserving the institution’s status quo (Danish People’s Party, 2019). In this case, examining the general form of policy positions (i.e., drifting) could shed light on the interrelations between the institution welfare state and PRRPs’ policy positions about the institution. It appears plausible that PRRPs in the northern European welfare states place more political emphasis on maintaining the status quo than on modifying it due to the international reputation of Nordic welfare states. This emphasize would then, again, connect with historical trajectories. Hence, the established historical-institutionalist theoretical framework may be utilized to compare specific EU regions to each other and the low intracoderreliability of the deductively formulated general forms of a policy position constitutes one major caveat/limitation of the thesis.

Secondly, the results of the interpretive analysis represent – in line with the described ontological premises of such interpretive research endeavours – a somewhat subjective condensation of party manifesto contents into more abstract ideas and policy positions. The rationale behind this condensation is (a) the constructive ontology underlying interpretivism generally and (b) the results of the quantitative analysis. The four identified ideas and their sub-ideas do not represent empirically perfect rubrics for assessing populist radical right social policy. Rather, they should be understood as proposals for such rubrics – based on the notion of commonalities between the welfare state agendas of PRRPs across potential sources of differences, such as the location of the respective party in an old or new member state – which should be validated or falsified in future studies. Additionally, the ideas and policy positions listed in table 5 should not be understood as separate from each other. For example, fostering informal care arrangements as a result of the family’s function as the nativist societal nucleus can also be interpreted as a form of risk diversification. Therefore, future research could explore the welfare state agendas of PRRPs as ideational systems rather than as the sum of insular

ideational components.

Thirdly, the thesis drew exclusively on party manifestos to examine welfare state agendas of PRRPs. Although manifestos are a vibrant platform for parties to present their ideas and policy positions, as well as to answer to other political actor's ideas and positions, their contents do not necessarily match what parties convey in their public, discursive strategies. Hence, despite principal ideational commonalities, the public discourse of PRRPs may differ significantly across the EU. In a related manner, PRRPs also compete with each other. For example, when Maximilian Krah, the leading AfD candidate for the 2024 European elections, told an Italian newspaper "[...] not all members of the Nazis' elite SS unit [...] were war criminals" (Skujins and Jones, 2024), the president of the French National Rally,⁵⁸ Marine Le Pen, announced that she "[...] no longer wants to sit with the party" and the EU parliament's far-right group Identity and Democracy expelled their German member (Von Pezold et al., 2024). According to experts, Le Pen's announcement was at least partially driven by her desire to demonstrate her ability to run a government, considering the support for her party at the time (Zerback, n.d.). An investigation of whether and how the discursive strategies of PRRPs and the competition among them relate to their shared social policy principles requires the consultation of sources other than party manifestos. Again, the findings presented in this thesis can serve as a starting point for such an investigation.

Fourthly, the quantitative part of this thesis evaluated the welfare-related policy positions of PRRPs by focussing on reform imperatives calling for the general expansion of provisions. Although this decision resulted from the insights generated on the base of the reviewed literature and the subsequently established theoretical presumptions, scholars have previously recommended differentiating between the overarching orientations of the specific provisions rather than between expansion and retrenchment. In particular, research papers identify consumptive welfare provisions, like public pensions or cash benefits, as more important for PRRPs than investment policies, such as application trainings or active labour market programmes (Enggist and Pinggera, 2022; Otjes et al., 2018). For the research context at hand, this recalibrated approach to bridging welfare state and party research (Rathgeb and Busemeyer, 2022a) could help amplify knowledge about joint and/or diverging ideas and policy positions. For example, the centrality of the family as the nativist societal nucleus within PRRPs' welfare

⁵⁸ The National Rally emerged from the National Front.

state agendas may reinforce the aforementioned preference for consumptive welfare provisions. After all, the policy positions subsumed under this idea, as shown in table 5, tend to pertain to consumptive measures (e.g., pension benefits in exchange for raising children).

Lastly, the party manifestos were translated with machine learning, which tends to disregard subtle differences in meaning. This potential loss of subtlety poses a limitation considering the central status of language within the constructive ontology of interpretive studies outlined in section 3.1). Hence, country and language experts should scrutinize the presented findings.

Despite its limitations, this thesis makes a valuable contribution to the discourse on PRRPs and the welfare state by challenging the common notion that parties in the new member states have an inherently different ideational profile – from a social policy perspective – than their counterparts in the old member states.

6.2) An Answer to the Research Question

The results of this study's quantitative and interpretive analyses produced several notable findings on the ways in which the welfare state agendas of PRRPs in the old and new member states do (not) differ from each other. Firstly, PRRPs across Europe do derive their policy positions and reform imperatives from their ideas about the welfare state, and these positions tend to aim at modifying the institution welfare state rather than disrupting it (i.e., they focus on conversion and layering rather than displacement). There are two common, predominant ideas behind the policy positions: an abstract, populist fear of abuse and the family as the future-proof societal nucleus. While the idea of the family as the linchpin of social policy appears to be constant over time, the fear of abuse emerges as a flexible theme which may be exploited for populistically antagonizing deserving parts of the society with all sorts of groups deemed as undeserving. These groups can but do not necessarily include immigrants and/or ethnic minorities. In Belgium, the Flemish Interest scapegoated Wallonians for obstructing an efficient welfare state. Meanwhile, the Italian Northern League before Salvini (Albertazzi et al., 2018) lamented the putatively unfair redistribution of welfare provisions to the country's southern region, and the Austrian Freedom Party repeatedly identified high pensions for public officials as hindering a welfare state that favours deserving citizens. All these manifestations of welfare-related chauvinism are united by a populist fear that the deserving parts of society are stripped of their entitlement to welfare provisions. The provisions are, in turn, paid to undeserving

groups, which are seen as only seeking to enrich themselves. This principle of fear functions independently of whether a party is located in a new or old member state.

Secondly, the behaviour of other political parties influences the ideas and policy positions of PRRPs in the old and new member states alike. The proportion of quasi-sentences devoted to welfare state expansion or the ideational components of welfare chauvinism within the manifestos of PRRPs is higher in years and countries where left parties and parties of the middle place more relative emphasis on welfare state expansions in their manifestos. In the context of their ideas about the welfare state, PRRPs reference political opponents and incumbent or former governments to underscore the putatively dire status quo. Moreover, PRRPs partly weave the critical junctures of most interest – such as 1989-1991 – into their ideas. Notwithstanding, the fear of abuse and the classic family are time-constant ideas.

Thirdly, PRRPs in the new and old member states also display differences regarding two ideas about the institution welfare state: PRRPs in the old member states do not per se oppose diversification of the welfare state's institutional components. However, PRRPs in the new member states emphasize centralization over diversification and, moreover promote the utilization of EU funds as part of their social policy positions. The ideationally ground such positions opposing diversification in references to an overly liberal course of action taken by their political opponents after 1991, which not only directly refers to the outlined double pressure on left parties in the new member states following the fall of the CB but perhaps also reflects the financially costly choices made by many of the new member states to transition from PAYGO towards funded pension systems. Here, the financial crisis of 2008 could be considered an additional critical juncture because it necessitated fiscal austerity measures comprising, inter alia, the suspension of the pension reforms adopted at the beginning of the millennium. The financial crisis altered the institutional composition of the welfare state, which had repercussions for the welfare state agenda of PRRPs who blamed the behaviour of other political actors (i.e., former governments) for the status quo.

Thus, the division of new and old member states (or CEE countries and Western European Countries) because of their historical legacy holds some analytical value. However, this should not deter comparative research since the welfare state agendas of PRRPs in both regions are built on the same ideational foundations, namely the family as the nativist societal nucleus and

a populist fear of abuse.

6.3) Summary and Final Argument

This thesis compared the welfare state agendas of PRRPs in the old and new, post-Communist EU member states – a comparison that scholars typically avoid due to allegedly stark differences in the ideological profiles of PRRPs in each region. Often, the distinct historical legacies of the countries in question are invoked in this line of reasoning. Therefore, the thesis adopted a historical-institutionalist approach. A quantitative analysis of a sample of party manifestos suggested no comprehensive systematic differences between welfare state agendas. In a subsequent interpretive analysis of the manifestos, two mutual, time-constant social policy ideas of PRRPs across the European Union emerged: the family as the future-proof, nativist societal nucleus and a populist fear of abuse. In parallel, PRRPs in the new member states were shown to hold more historically grown reservations towards the diversification of the welfare state's institutional components. This thesis concludes that – despite some historically shaped differences – the welfare state agendas of PRRPs in the old and new member states are based, in part, on common ideas. The thesis thereby challenges the traditionally drawn old–new member state divide from a social policy perspective.

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Appendix

Results of Breusch-Pagan and Shapiro-Wilkinson tests

- *Breusch-Pagan*

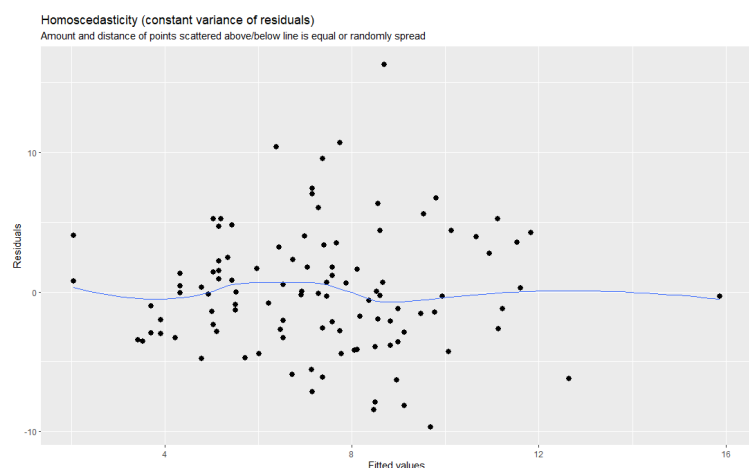
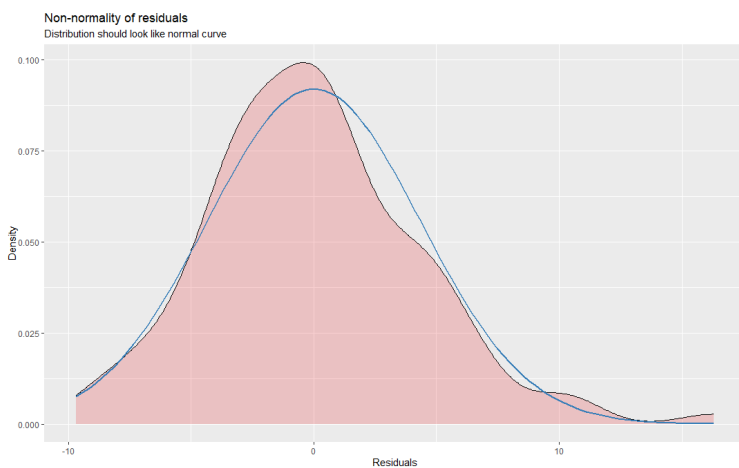
Baseline Model	Test Statistic	Degrees of Freedom	P-Value
(1)	6.25	6.00	0.36
(2)	11.98	6.00	0.06
(3)	80.27	17.00	<0.01
(4)	37.45	17	<0.01

- *Shapiro-Wilkinson*

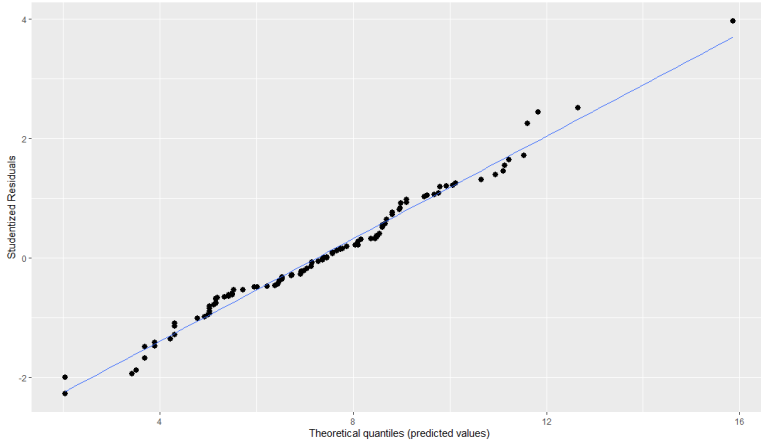
Baseline Model (residuals)	Test Statistic	P-Value
(1)	0.98	0.05
(2)	0.94	<0.01
(3)	0.98	<0.01
(4)	0.93	<0.01

Diagnostic Plots

- *Baseline Model 1*

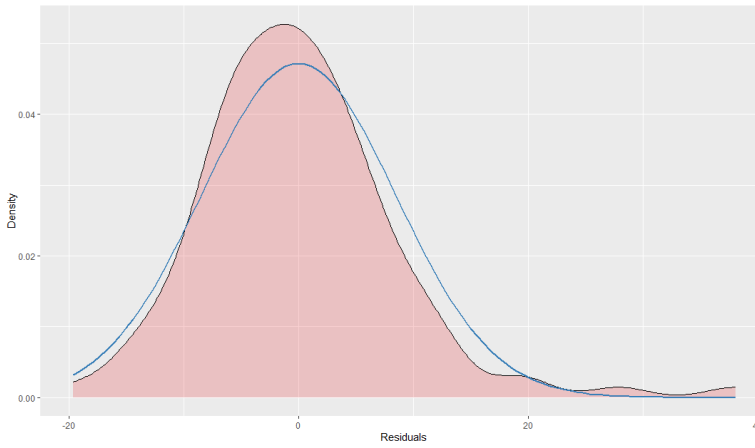


Non-normality of residuals and outliers
Dots should be plotted along the line

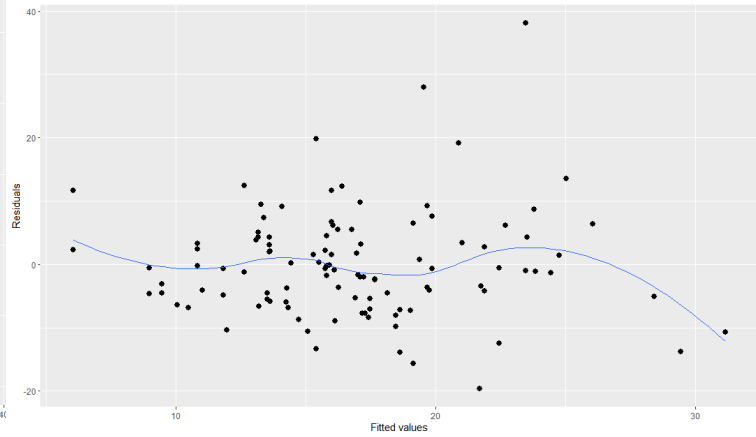


- *Baseline Model 2*

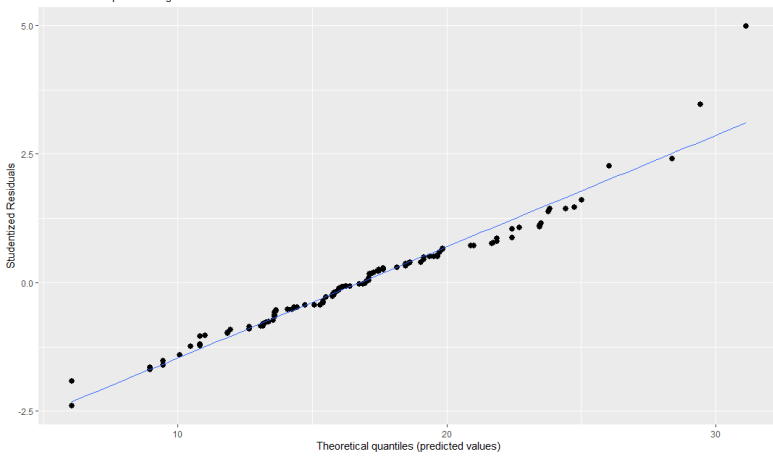
Non-normality of residuals
Distribution should look like normal curve



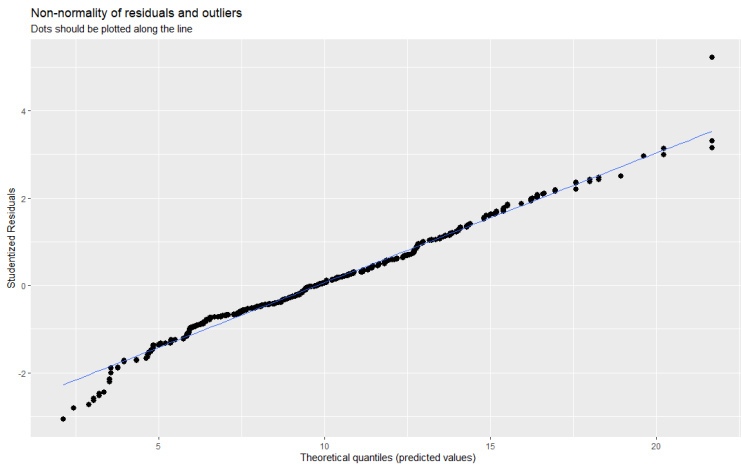
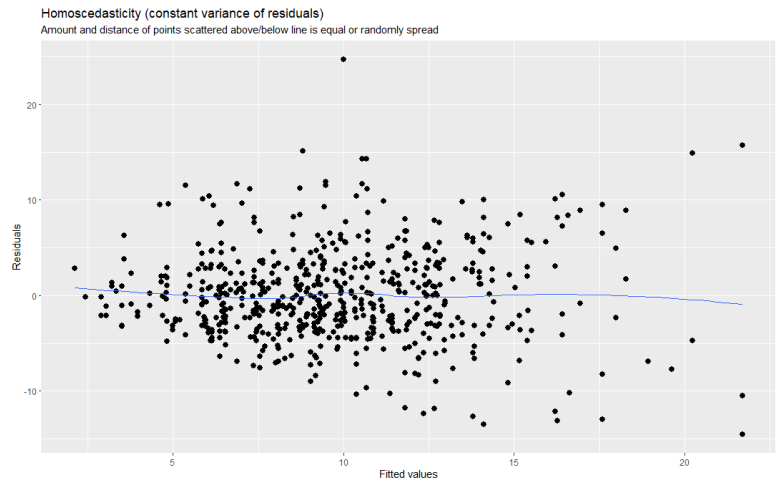
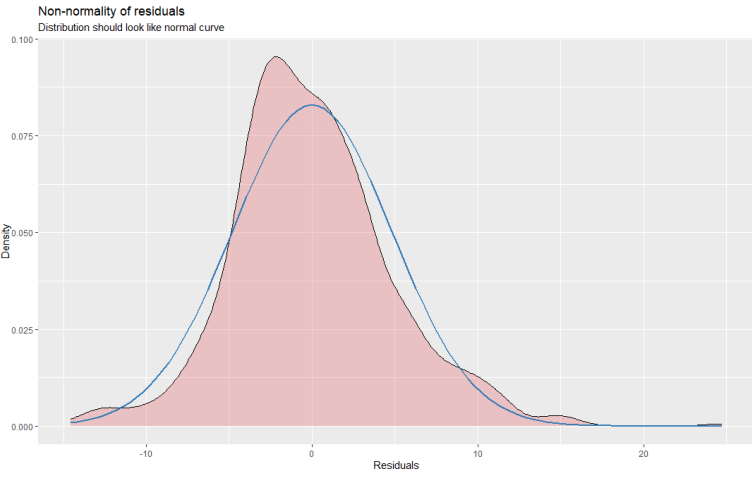
Homoscedasticity (constant variance of residuals)
Amount and distance of points scattered above/below line is equal or randomly spread



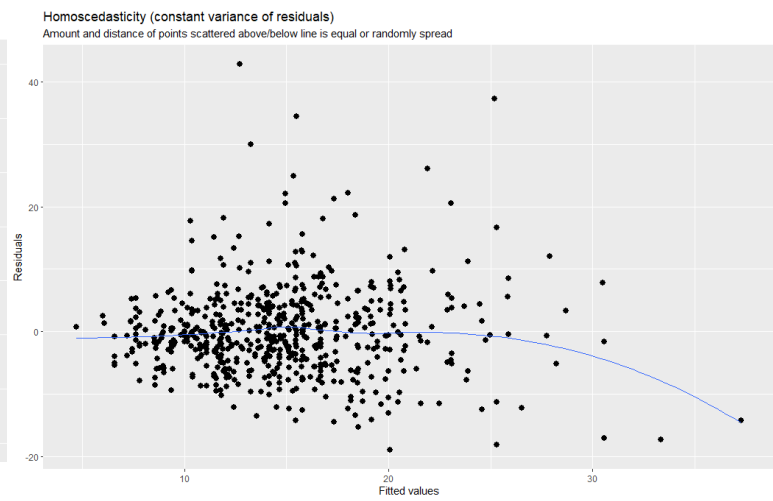
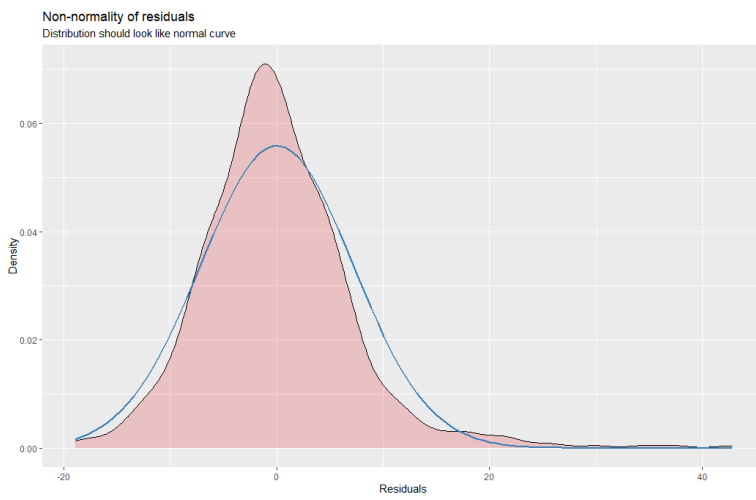
Non-normality of residuals and outliers
Dots should be plotted along the line



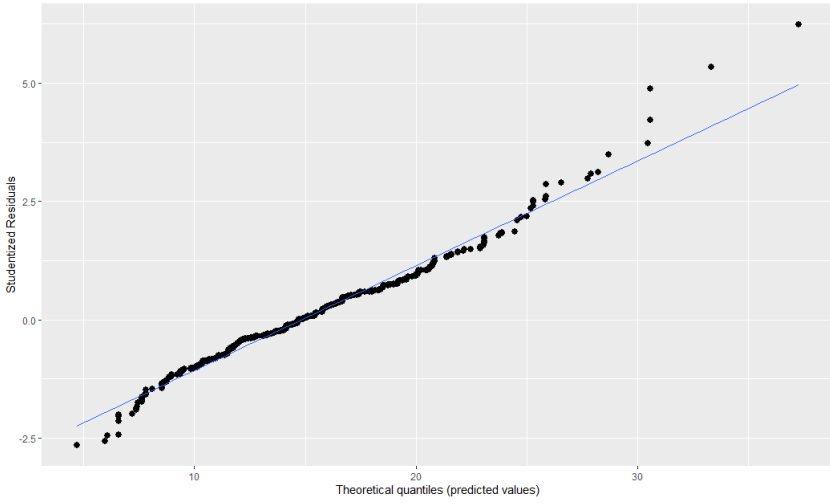
• *Baseline Model 3*



• *Baseline Model 4*

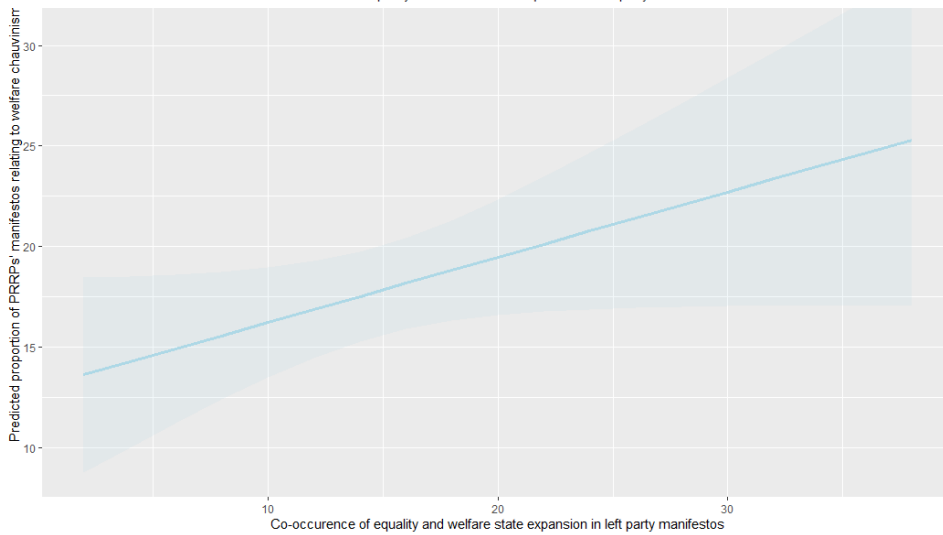
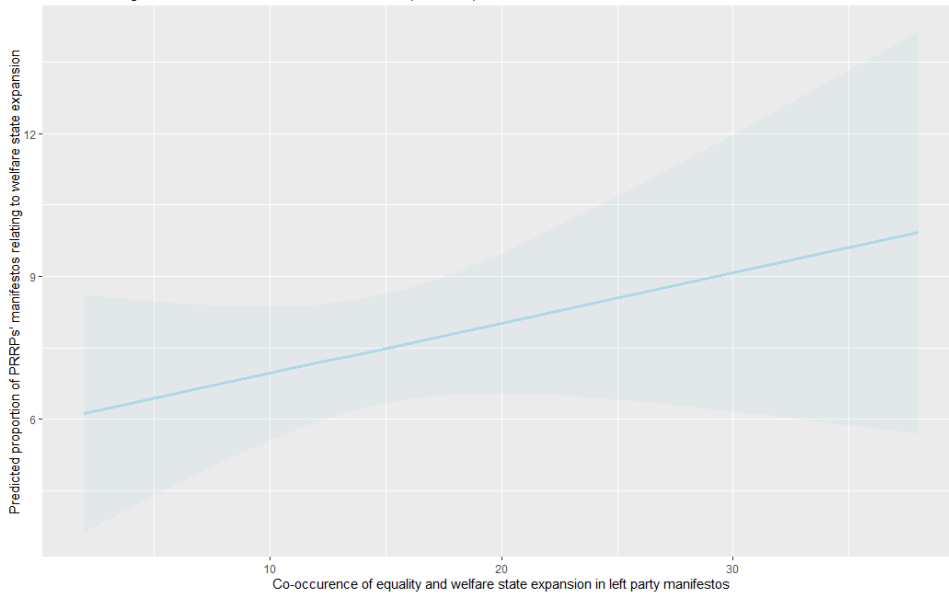


Non-normality of residuals and outliers
Dots should be plotted along the line



PRRPs and left parties

Welfare Programmatic of Left Parties and PRRPs (Model 1)



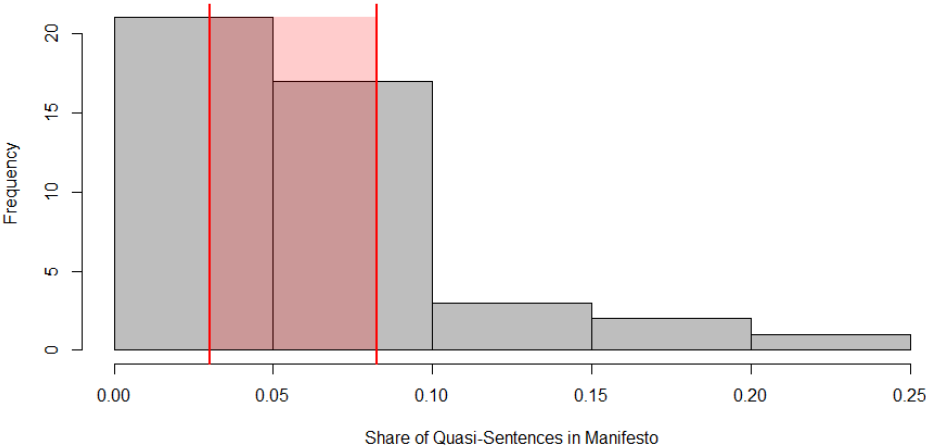
Coding Sheet: Interpretive Analysis of party manifestos

1. Sampling

The Manifestos are selected through purposive sampling with the goal to identify manifestos which can be thought of as examples for a ‘typical’ Populist Radical Right manifesto in their view of the welfare state. Furthermore, the sampling was ought to identify several manifestos by the same PRRP in order to allow more valid inferences about developments within the time frame. In line with the theoretical approach of the thesis (Historical Institutionalism), the 31 years under analysis were therefore segmented into three sub time frames which correspond to the periods between the three major political events that (possibly) qualify as critical junctures for PRRPs: The fall of the SU, the accession of the new member states to the European Union and the migrant situation in 2015.

For matching the outlined purpose, the data set from the quantitative part of the thesis was used to filter those manifestos within which the proportion of quasi-sentences devoted to the welfare state generally ranges within the middle 50% of the proportion of quasi-sentences devoted to the welfare state generally within the manifestos of all PRRPs in one sub time frame, including programmatic dimension. For example, between 1990 and 2004, 50% of manifestos devoted between three and 8,25% of their manifesto, when expressed as a proportion of the overproportion to account for the programmatic dimensions, to the welfare state. Thus, if a PRRP between 1990 and 2004 devoted between three and 8,25% to the welfare state, the respective manifesto qualifies for the analysis:

Share of Quasi-Sentences Devoted to the Welfare State in Manifestos of PRRPs (1990-2004)



This way, the sample only comprises cases close to the overall average and allows to evaluate the ‘regular’ manifesto in relation to the welfare state Moreover, the segmentation into three sub time frames results in pairs, triplets or panels of party manifestos because each party be represented through one or more manifestos between 1990-2004, 2005-2014 and 2015-2021. The following pairs/triplets/panels arose:

- 15) Manifestos of the Austrian Freedom Party in 1990, 1999, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2013 and 2017
- 16) Manifestos of the Greek Golden Dawn in 2015 and 2019
- 17) Manifestos of the Danish People's Party in 2005, 2007, 2011 and 2019
- 18) Manifestos of the Belgian Flemish Interest in 2007, 2014 and 2019
- 19) Manifestos of the Belgian New Flemish Alliance in 2010, 2014 and 2019
- 20) Manifestos of the French National Front in 2007 and 2017
- 21) Manifestos of the Italiana Northern League in 1992, 1994, 1996, 2001 and 2013
- 22) Manifestos of the Italian Brothers of Italy in 2013 and 2018
- 23) Manifestos of the Estonian Conservative People's Party in 2015 and 2019
- 24) Manifestos of the Polish League of Families in 2001 and 2005
- 25) Manifestos of the Polish Law and Justice in 2007, 2015 and 2019
- 26) Manifestos of the Romanian Greater Romanian Party in 1992 and 2004
- 27) Manifestos of the Slovak National Party in 1990, 1992, 1996 and 2016
- 28) Manifestos of the Slovenian National Party in 1996, 2000, 2008 and 2018

The manifestos of the Greater Romanian Party could not be included because its 1992 version consisted of a nearly unreadable, handwritten document. Therefore, the 2004 manifesto loses its predecessor, leaving no panel for the party. The 1990 manifesto of the Austrian Freedom Party was not available in the CMP data base and the 2007 file containing manifesto of the Danish People's Party was damaged. Besides this inaccessibility, the remaining 40 manifestos were included which equals a response quote of roughly 91%.

2. *Interpretation*

The interpretive analysis follows a three-step approach in line with the interpretive content analysis methodology Drisko and Maschi (2015). Firstly, the relevant passages (i.e., passages pertaining to the welfare state) are identified. The identification process follows the CMP coding process, if documented. Secondly, the identified passages are either inductively or deductively grouped into thematic categories. The deductive categories correspond to the established theoretical model and thus relate to the concrete policy position of PRRPs and the ideational background of these positions:

- Layering: The Manifesto demands additions to and/or revisions of existing provisions, formal organizations, regulations or expected practices/behavioural norms related to the welfare state.

- Drifting: The Manifesto demands no changes despite contextual changes.
- Conversion: The manifesto demands redirection and reinterpretation.
- Displacement: The manifesto demands the removal of certain provisions/regulations/norms (in order to introduce new ones).
- Welfare state chauvinism: The manifesto identifies immigration and/or ethnic minorities as a causal threat for the functioning of a welfare state and/or conditionalizes provisions/regulation/norms on negative stances towards multiculturalism on the one side and on the embracement of traditional morality as well as the national way of life on the other side.

If a passage does fit in any of the deductive categories, “unclear” is coded. The entire coding process took place twice in an excel-file of the following structure.

Party	Year	Country	Identified Passage	New member state (no/yes)	Identified character of policy position (pp)	Welfare Chauvinism/causal claims (no/yes/unclear)	remarks/new theme
Example party	2006	Denmark	“There should be more welfare state provisions for native citizens. In particular, parental coverage should be raised”	no	layering	yes	family

Thirdly, the coded results are synthesized into more abstract ideas (e.g., family as the nativist societal gamete or fear of abuse). These ideas and the associated policy positions constitute the outcome of the interpretive analysis and are presented in the thesis by comparing them within manifestos of PRRPs in the old and new member states. All three analytical steps resonate with

the interpretive idea that social science research equals an experience of experiential learning invested in the dynamic relationship between social phenomena and the researcher (Irshaidat, 2022). The researcher is hence always a meaning-making part of the social world and cannot be a neutral outsider – he or she has to interpret the world and the resulting interpretation need not to be reproducible by external parties. Here, the developed theoretical model and the results of the quantitative analysis present the background against which the researcher interprets the political world. The three analytical steps in sum match the third formulated ontological assumption of the thesis according to which party manifestos as expressions of a common ideational language of PRRPs across the EU can be processed both objectively and interpretively (as done here). In total, 511 passages were analysed.

Random Effects Version of The Four Models

Regression Results random

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	welfare_state_e xpansion	welfare_chauvinis m_additive	welfare_state_e xpansion	additive_welfare_c hauvinism
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
new_member_state2	-0.036 (1.094)	-0.897 (2.535)		
party_type1			1.376 (1.449)	-2.671 (2.250)
party_type0			-4.319** (1.902)	4.394 (2.960)
new_member_state1			0.814 (0.773)	0.601 (1.348)
ethnic_fractionalizi on	-0.360 (3.567)	-3.010 (7.944)	1.438 (1.638)	0.228 (2.617)
exp(immigration_rate _log)			0.505	0.476

			(0.636)	(0.903)
inflation_rate			0.035	-0.045
			(0.110)	(0.152)
social_security	-0.173	-0.088	-0.200**	-0.470***
	(0.185)	(0.385)	(0.096)	(0.156)
share_elderly			0.314***	0.393***
			(0.090)	(0.133)
max_welf_exp_left			0.443***	0.459***
			(0.034)	(0.047)
efparele	-0.528*	-0.709	-0.240	-0.161
	(0.296)	(0.602)	(0.166)	(0.250)
max_welf_progr_left	0.106	0.281*		
	(0.088)	(0.162)		
max_welf_exp_middle	0.262***	0.300*		
	(0.095)	(0.177)		
max_vote_left			-0.036	-0.037
			(0.033)	(0.046)
unemployment_rate			0.033	0.121
			(0.057)	(0.087)
vote_share_left_lag			-0.084**	-0.098*
			(0.036)	(0.051)
party_type1:new_member_state1			0.122	0.469
			(1.092)	(1.883)
party_type0:new_member_state1			0.027	-2.505
			(1.428)	(2.592)
party_type1:vote_share			0.039	0.064

re_left_lag			(0.045)	(0.066)
party_type0:vote_sha			0.123**	0.094
re_left_lag			(0.061)	(0.089)
Constant	8.723**	15.754*	3.658	10.847***
	(3.904)	(8.099)	(2.670)	(4.119)
Observations	109	109	606	606
R ²	0.228	0.171	0.313	0.301
Adjusted R ²	0.182	0.122	0.293	0.281
F Statistic	30.043***	17.901***	252.835***	160.470***
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01			

Passage of The 2015 Manifesto of The Law and Justice Party

“Upadek systemu komunistycznego w 1989 roku zapoczątkował budowę nowej rzeczywistości społecznej, gospodarczej i politycznej w Polsce. W powszechnym, choć nie od razu ukształtowanym przeświadczeniu, nowy kształt Rzeczypospolitej miał być określony przez dwie wielkie instytucje społeczne: demokrację, a dokładnie mechanizm demokratyczny, który zastąpił monopartyjną dyktaturę oraz rynek, który zastąpił gospodarkę nakazowo-rozdzielczą, czyli kierowaną metodami administracyjnymi. Powrót rynku miał łączyć się z prywatyzacją, choć jej kształt nie był jasno określony. Całkowicie zapoznano natomiast sprawę budowy nowego aparatu państwowego i nowej nie wywodzącej się z komunizmu stratyfikacji społecznej. Główni twórcy III RP odrzucali rozważanie problemu beneficjentów prywatyzacji i skutków utrzymania dawnego aparatu państwowego, spraw funkcjonalnie ze sobą związanych. W przypadku państwa zasadniczymi posunięciami zmieniającym sytuację były: wprowadzenie w pełni demokratycznych wyborów (od lat 1990-1991), przeniesienie ośrodka decyzyjnego z partii komunistycznej do konstytucyjnych organów władzy (prezydent, parlament, rząd) oraz wprowadzenie samorządu gminnego. Służb wojskowych nie zmieniono w ogóle, tak samo postąpiono w przypadku wojska, milicji przemianowanej w policję, centralnego aparatu państwowego (ministerstwa, urzędy centralne). Były nowe nominacje

personalne, ale ciągle dominowały zdecydowanie stare kadry. Stare kadry pozostały też w bankach. Powolne i rzadkie były zmiany w przedsiębiorstwach, których kierownictwa także wywodziły się z części dawnego aparatu PRL. Przebudowa cywilnych służb specjalnych – powołanie UOP – było realizacją planów przygotowanych przez władze komunistyczne, przy stosunkowo niewielkich zmianach personalnych – elementy kontynuacji zdecydowanie przeważały nad elementami zmiany, chociaż zakres działania i sposób realizacji zadań był w dużej mierze zmodyfikowany.

W aparacie państwowym uruchomiono procesy dostosowawcze do nowej sytuacji. Najważniejszy z nich łączył się z ekspansją ideologii liberalnej, która w praktyce przybierała formy czegoś w rodzaju darwinizmu społecznego maskowanego hasłami wolności jednostki. Lecz ta wolność oznaczała coraz częściej permissywizm, czyli daleko idące przyzwolenie na łamanie norm społecznych. Sytuacja taka stworzyła znakomite warunki dla przejmowania własności przez komunistyczną nomenklaturę. Proces ten rozpoczął się wyraźnie przed 1989 rokiem, tak jak i przed upadkiem komunizmu nastąpiła zmiana komunistycznego aparatu w grupę mocno powiązaną nie tylko wspólną działalnością, ale na wiele innych sposobów, w tym rodzinie. Interes ekonomiczny tego środowiska ewoluował od własności zbiorowej w kierunku własności indywidualnej, a także polegał na

zajmowaniu przez nią innych strategicznych punktów struktury społecznej. Te cechy okazały się konstytutywne dla nowego systemu, nazwanego przez socjologów postkomunizmem. W III RP zostały dokooptowane do komunistycznej nomenklatury niektóre środowiska opozycyjne w PRL oraz osoby uprzednio niezaangażowane politycznie. Komunizm we wszystkich swoich fazach łączył się ściśle ze społeczną patologią, w tym z przestępczością, która narastała gwałtownie w latach osiemdziesiątych. Sprzyjała jej głęboki kryzys gospodarczy oraz ogromny deficyt dóbr konsumpcyjnych. W nowym systemie te patologie nie osłabły, lecz nabierały siły w zetknięciu ze słabo opłacanym aparatem państwowym i z rynkiem oferującym znaczne możliwości zarobkowe. To zderzenie prowadziło do przechodzenia wielu pracowników państwowych, między innymi z wymiaru sprawiedliwości, do pracy w sektorze prywatnym, czego konsekwencją było wyprowadzanie do tego sektora zarówno informacji, jak i kontaktów, łatwych do wykorzystania w nowej działalności. Innym skutkiem wskazanego zetknięcia była korupcja będąca swoistym urynkowaniem i prywatyzacją funkcji państwa. Takie właśnie mechanizmy rodziły nową a jednocześnie starą (dokładnie w dużym stopniu symetryczną wobec starej) stratyfikację społeczną, na której szczytach znaleźli się w dużej mierze (choć nie wyłącznie) ludzie wywodzący się z nomenklatury. Szczególną rolę w tych mechanizmach

odegrały kontakty ze służbami specjalnymi. Trzy zabiegi, które mogły doprowadzić do rozbitcia albo przynajmniej osłabienia sieci wywodzących się z poprzedniego systemu powiązań, czyli likwidacja dawnych służb (opcja zero), lustracja oraz dekomunizacja odnosząca się także do sfery finansów nie zostały przeprowadzone w ogóle albo też zostały przeprowadzone z opóźnieniem, w formie wysoce ułomnej, nie spełniając podstawowego celu. W opisanych warunkach społecznych ani mechanizm demokratyczny, ani reguły rynkowe nie mogły działać w sposób właściwy, a odchylenie od podstawowych założeń, które te instytucje winny spełniać, było tak znaczne, że można mówić o nowej jakości systemowej, nazwanej postkomunizmem. Mechanizm demokratyczny, na który składają się procedury wyborcze, prawa obywateli i pluralizm mediów, był od początku poważnie zakłócony. Rynek, którego głównym zadaniem jest selekcjonowanie podmiotów gospodarczych, nagradzanie dobrego gospodarowania i karanie lub eliminowanie złego w niewielkim stopniu spełniał swoje funkcje. Istniała wielka ilość barier blokujących wejście na rynek nowych firm, a sukces rynkowy w dużym stopniu od wejścia w różne sieci powiązań, mających swoje źródło w patologii starego lub nowo tworzącego się systemu. Patologia aparatu państwowego łączyła się z patologią rynku oraz z przestępczością zorganizowaną. Tego rodzaju połączenie miało ogromny wpływ na kształt systemowy III RP. System ten działał i działa na zasadzie, którą można określić jako odwrotność reguły pro publico bono. Z natury rzeczy

koncentruje się na interesach partykularnych, także i wtedy, gdy nie chodzi o działania przestępcze. Można śmiało stwierdzić, że preferuje organizowanie się wokół nieekwiwalentnego przejmowania własności wspólnej lub cudzej, a łatwość tego rodzaju organizowania się nadaje szczególną cechę całemu systemowi. Jest on też całkowicie nieodporny na wpływy zewnętrzne, przede wszystkim na działania obcych służb i na zewnętrzny lobbying.

Obok odrzucenia zasady pro publico bono duże znaczenie mają też predyspozycje nowo-starej elity do podporządkowywania się wpływom zewnętrznym również na poziomie tożsamościowym. Przybiera to różne formy, w tym najbardziej widoczną, niemal ostentacyjną jest kwestionowanie wartości polskości i przeciwstawianie jej „europejskości”. Takie nastawienie łączy się często z całkowicie bezkrytyczną gotowością, interesowną bądź bezinteresowną, przyjmowania płynących z zewnątrz postulatów odnoszących się do polskich spraw. Tego rodzaju postawę, spotykana nie tylko wśród elity, naukowcy i publicyści nazywają postkolonializmem z powodu analogii do poglądów i zachowań warstw przywódczych w koloniach uzyskujących niepodległość, ale ciągle podporządkowanych metropolii oraz

odnoszących się z niechęcią do własnych obywateli. Niezależnie od poprawności naukowej pojęcia „postkolonializm”, rezygnacja znacznej części elity z lojalności wobec państwa polskiego jest bez wątpienia poważną cechą systemu utworzonego po 1989 roku. Do początku XXI wieku system ten działał sprawnie w tym sensie, że eliminował siły go kontestujące oraz zyskiwał wsparcie znacznej części opozycji antykomunistycznej, która nie wykazywała woli, a w każdym razie wystarczającego zdecydowania, by działać na rzecz jego zmiany. Dochodziło co prawda do korekt, takich jak uchwalenie łagodnej ustawy lustracyjnej, powołanie IPN, ale system pozostał w swojej istocie ten sam.

Kryzys i odbudowa systemu Kryzys nastąpił w momencie, gdy zbiegły się dwa wydarzenia. Po pierwsze, pierwotna dynamika gospodarcza związana z odrzuceniem komunizmu i uwolnieniem drobnej inicjatywy prywatnej zaczęła gasnąć. Po drugie, siły postkomunistyczne, które doszły do władzy po upadku AWS poczuły się tak silne, że postanowiły zaatakować, ograbić i całkowicie uzależnić od siebie najpotężniejszy z filarów systemu III RP; ten zaś broniąc się doprowadził do ograniczonego i wywołującego szok odsłonięcia głębokich mechanizmów systemu, które za przyczyną nastawienia głównych mediów pozostawały dotychczas ukryte przed zdecydowaną większością społeczeństwa. Kryzys doprowadził do wyborczego zwycięstwa w 2005 roku zjednoczonych w Prawie i Sprawiedliwości sił dążących do rzeczywistej zmiany. Powołana w momencie kryzysu PO także głosiła potrzebę zmian, w niektórych dziedzinach bardzo radykalnych. W momencie próby okazało się jednak, że jej hasła miały charakter zabiegów taktycznych. Już po przegranych wyborach i mimo deklaracji chęci uczestniczenia w przeprowadzeniu zmian PO zastosowała podwójną taktykę z jednej strony popierała, chociaż w wersji łagodnej projekty zmian, których odrzucenie obciążałoby ją politycznie, a z drugiej strony podjęła wraz z mediami głównego nurtu potężny, niespotykany poprzednio atak na nowo wybranego Prezydenta RP oraz Prawo i Sprawiedliwość. Uruchomiono gigantyczną akcję propagandy oczernia, kłamstwa i obelg, nazwaną trafnie przemysłem pogardy.

Dezawuowanie przy pomocy mediów, próby niszczenia przy udziale służb specjalnych, wezwania do podejmowania działań prawno-karnych, a w pewnych przypadkach nawet podejmowanie śledztw i formułowanie aktów oskarżenia było metodą znaną już przedtem, szczególnie z lat 1991-1993. Na ogół w tych wcześniejszych ekscesach służb, instytucji państwowych i mediów, nie uczestniczyli bezpośrednio czołowi politycy, a przede wszystkim nie formułowano wprost tezy o potrzebie zakwestionowania praw politycznych dużej części

społeczeństwa, a taka teza została sformułowana przez Donalda Tuska już w 2005 roku (moherowe berety), podjęły ją następnie media. Atak rozpoczęty w 2005 roku okazał się skuteczny na tyle, że przekonał znaczną część społeczeństwa, że okres, wedle obiektywnych kryteriów, bardzo udany gospodarczo i społecznie, a także bardzo spokojny (w 2006 roku zanotowano najmniejszą ilość strajków i demonstracji po 1989 roku) został odebrany jako czas niepokojów. Poziom skuteczności manipulacji był tak wysoki, że wielu obywateli zostało przekonanych, iż sytuacja, w której rząd jest ze wszystkich stron ostro atakowany, a Prezydent RP obrażany, opozycja ani opozycyjne media nie doznają najmniejszych ograniczeń w swych działaniach, to okres rządów autorytarnych albo przynajmniej zdążających do autorytaryzmu. Powołana w 2007 roku nowa władza wykonawcza okazała się, zgodnie z formułowanymi już w trakcie kampanii wyborczej przewidywaniami, typową ekipą restauracji. Postawiła sobie za cel przywrócić, a niekiedy nawet wyostrzyć osłabionego w latach 2004-2007 systemu. Różnica polegała na tym, że główną siłą dokonującą tej operacji stała się formacja, która poza nielicznymi i nieważnymi wyjątkami, nie wywodziła się, przynajmniej w sensie biograficznym, z komunistycznej nomenklatury. Można powiedzieć, że w ten sposób właśnie powstał „system Tuska”. Dynamika tego systemu doprowadziła do ujednoczenia władzy na wszystkich poziomach ustroju i do ogarnięcia przez jedną partię wszystkich kluczowych instytucji. W ten sposób partia ta stworzyła wielki mechanizm rozdawniczy i sama stała się jedynym dysponentem przywilejów, awansów oraz wszelkiej gratyfikacji. Zachowuje ważność ocen sformułowana we wniosku o wotum

nieufności dla rządu Donalda Tuska: „Jest on [system Tuska] bardzo szkodliwy, nie spełnia nawet najbardziej minimalistycznie sformułowanych wymagań stawianych demokratycznej władzy, jest niezwykle kosztowny i skrajnie nieefektywny. System ten zagraża zarówno demokracji i prawom obywatelskim jak i wszystkiemu, co decyduje o zdrowym, wszechstronnym i zrównoważonym rozwoju naszej ojczyzny, rozwoju tworzącego warunki udanego życia Polaków, zarówno w wymiarze ekonomicznym jak i społecznym”.

Fundamentalną zasadą, na której opiera się „system Tuska”, jest traktowanie utrzymania władzy jako celu nadrzędnego. Z tej zasady Tusk i jego otoczenie wyprowadzili wnioski natury socjotechnicznej, określające praktyczny kształt polityki rządzącej koalicji, w której dominująca rola przypada Platformie Obywatelskiej. Do wniosków tych należy nakaz uwzględniania w możliwie najwyższym stopniu interesów skonsolidowanych – wewnętrznych i zewnętrznych – grup nacisku. Idzie to w parze z lekceważeniem merytorycznych racji społeczeństwa jako całości oraz wielkich grup społecznych, a także z ignorowaniem ich

interesów. Ponieważ jednak funkcjonowanie procedur demokratycznych, w tym wyborczych, nie pozwala na całkowite lekceważenie odczuć i preferencji większości obywateli, politykę merytoryczną, odnoszącą się do interesów szerokich kręgów elektoratu, zastąpiła propaganda, zwana eufemistycznie „polityką wizerunkową”. Ta polityka jest w istocie masowym systemem manipulacji służącej promocji osoby premiera i jego otoczenia, przekonującej o bezalternatywności obecnej ekipy rządzącej, nieprzebiegającej w środkach w dyskredytowaniu głównej siły opozycyjnej i alternatywy programowej. Manipulacja o podobnie wielkim zasięgu jest możliwa tylko przy poparciu udzielanym przez grupy interesu, które bezpośrednio lub pośrednio dysponują mediami. Z takim w gruncie rzeczy bezideowym sposobem uprawiania polityki łączą się wzmacniające go elementy ideologii, nawiązujące do ułomnej wersji liberalizmu, którą lansowano w Polsce po 1989 roku. Dwa z tych elementów trzeba wymienić. Pierwszy – lekceważący i wręcz niechętny stosunek do państwa jako zorganizowanej wspólnoty, ale także bytu historycznego i wartości moralnej. Drugi – dążenie do wyprzedzaży majątku narodowego, która stała się niemal manią prywatyzacyjną. Skutki tego rodzaju polityki odnoszą się do wszystkich dziedzin życia, poczynając od gospodarki a kończąc na polityce zagranicznej. Zaczniemy od gospodarki. Nietrudno zauważyć, że aktywność w tej dziedzinie wypełnia dwa podstawowe wymogi „systemu Tuska”: uwzględnienie interesów silnych grup nacisku, w tym grup zewnętrznych, i polityka wizerunkowa. Uwzględniane są także aspiracje ścisłego zaplecza władzy. Korekty tego stanu rzeczy nastąpiły dopiero w ostatniej fazie. Wymownym przykładem takiego wizerunkowego działania była całkowicie pozbawiona merytorycznych podstaw i nierealna propozycja bardzo szybkiego przyjęcia euro. Ten projekt, mimo że całkowicie oderwany od rzeczywistości i ekonomicznie absurdalny stał się podstawą długotrwałej kampanii, do której wciągano także partie spoza koalicji rządzącej (tylko Prawo i Sprawiedliwość od razu stwierdziło, że pomysł jest całkowicie nierealny i szkodliwy). Chodziło bez wątpienia więc o skupienie uwagi publicznej na działaniach premiera, który występował jako autor historycznej decyzji i o demonstrowanie, zarówno przed wewnętrznym pronijnym elektoratem, jak i przed najważniejszymi centrami decyzyjnymi Unii europejskiej poprawności. Kampania trwała długo (jeśli wziąć pod uwagę miarę czasu, jaką jest jedna kadencja parlamentu) i dopiero dziś mamy do czynienia z zapowiedziami postawienia sprawy euro na właściwym miejscu. Nie możemy mieć też pewności czy premier ze względu na swoje polityczne kalkulacje nie uruchomi tej kampanii jeszcze raz”

Further Materials

To access the entire list of coded manifesto passages and further documentation (e.g., R script of the quantitative analysis and the two crafted data sets), please either click [here](#) or consult the files uploaded in conjunction with this thesis. Please note that – for the sake of completeness – the two data sets also contain created variables beyond the ones mentioned in the thesis. These variables correspond to alternative indexing and measuring approaches that did not prove helpful over the course of the thesis.