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VIKTOR ORBÁN AND JÁNOS KÁDÁR

A post-Communist and a Communist autocrat in Hungary: A comparative analysis (Kádár: 1912–1989; Orbán: born 1963)

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Looking at the past 75 years of Hungarian politics since World War II, we realize that during most of this time, Hungary was ruled by just two politicians: János Kádár and Viktor Orbán. Together, the two leaders were almost half a century in power. János Kádár ruled Hungary from 1956 to 1988, while Orbán first emerged as a liberal democrat (from 1998 to 2002) and later in 2010 turned into a populist autocrat. Both leaders have had a significant impact on Hungarian politics. What connects these leaders, what are the differences between them, and how did they manage to come to power and stay in power?

János Kádár

János Kádár (1912–1989) was born in Fiume (today Rijeka) as János Csermanek during the monarchic era. He was raised in difficult circumstances, first by foster parents and then by his mother. He met the illegal activists of the Communist movement when he worked as a mechanic at the age of 17, and his deep concerns regarding social inequalities and injustice led him to join the movement.

The young Communist activist, who later changed his name to Kádár, was not a well-educated ideologue. He held only an elementary school education and preferred practical matters over theories. He once claimed that the only piece from the oeuvre of Marx and Engels that truly appealed to him and which he read all the way through was *Anti-Dühring*. This was Friedrich Engels' relatively down-to-earth survey and exposition of the main ideas of Marxist theory.¹ Kádár was jailed in 1933, due to his membership in the party, and spent the next three years in prison.² He later joined the Social Democratic Party in order to act publicly while hiding his ongoing Communist Party membership. He was a simple, socially conservative man who found joy in the simple life of a proletariat. He met his wife through the party apparatus, and the couple remained together for the rest of their life.

After World War II, Kádár grew suspicious toward Mátyás Rákosi,³ Hungary's de facto leader from 1947 to 1956, as well as the other new Communist leaders in Hungary. Kádár was not part of the group of Communists who returned from Moscow after the end of the war. He was one of those who had stayed in the homeland – comrades, in other words, whom Stalin did not consider reliable. In 1943, Kádár and his peers had changed the name of the party to Peace Party to avoid detention and recruit more supporters. The name change was not viewed favorably by Moscow.

Still, at the beginning of the Rákosi era, Kádár belonged to the wider circle of the party's leadership and even served as the Minister of Interior from 1948 to 1950. In this position he contributed to the imprisonment and execution of László Rajk,⁴ the former foreign minister who lost out in a power battle with Rákosi and was accused of espionage for the West. He also helped to persecute some of Rajk's Communist comrades. In 1951, however, Kádár himself fell out with Rákosi and was arrested. He was tortured and sentenced to life imprisonment after a show trial but spent only two years in prison.

Released from prison in 1954 after Stalin's death, Kádár was officially rehabilitated but he became extremely cautious: he not only distanced himself from the pro-Rákosi hard-liners but also did not join the emerging reformist wing within the party, led by Imre Nagy, though it had been Nagy who had given order to free him from prison.⁵ Kádár was a disciplined party soldier who stayed in the middle of the political road and managed to hide his own ambitions. That cautious attitude, which served him well, became the most characteristic feature of his leadership style.

At the outbreak of the Hungarian revolution in 1956, Kádár saw the uprising as a counterrevolutionary attack against the rule of the working class.⁶ Nevertheless, he realized that he could not turn to the Communist hard-liners who had imprisoned him five years before; he would always be seen as a traitor in their eyes. In parallel with the radicalization of the country, he moved closer to the reformist group and finally became a member of Imre Nagy's cabinet during the revolution from October to November 1956. But he never fully belonged to the Nagy camp.

Kádár's treasonous behavior took shape during the 1956 Hungarian Revolution after he declared as then minister of state in the Nagy cabinet that he would fight the incoming Soviet tanks with his bare hands, if needed. Instead, he disappeared the day after; the Soviets flew him to Moscow. Arriving in the Soviet capital he did not know whether he would be executed by his Soviet comrades or given another political task to prove himself. Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev⁷ opted for the latter option, and following the advice of Yugoslav president Josip Tito, he made Kádár the new leader of the Hungarian Communist regime and thus Rákosi's successor. Kádár returned to Budapest as the representative of the postrevolutionary retaliation policy while the city was still in flames. He was given the title of First Secretary of the reestablished Communist Party. The military clashes between the Soviet Red Army, which had invaded the Hungarian capital, and the scattered Hungarian military forces supported by young, civilian freedom fighters were ongoing.

As the new leader of Hungary, handpicked by the Soviet general secretary Nikita Khrushchev, Kádár was at an advantage for not being a Muscovite and, despite his imprisonment and having served in Nagy's cabinet, having no track record of being a particularly loyal supporter of revolutionary leader Imre Nagy.⁸

Still, one could hardly find a man more hated in the country at the turn of 1956–1957. Originally, Kádár promised impunity to those who had participated in the revolution, but within a few months, large-scale arrests commenced. A year and half later, Imre Nagy, the prime minister of the revolution, was hanged. Kádár had not been ordered to do so by Moscow; Nagy's execution was entirely on Kádár's own initiative. This terrible and treasonous legacy accompanied him throughout his life.

Kádár was an effective local dictator, but his powers were always strictly controlled from Moscow. His local adversaries therefore understood that they could only hope to remove Kádár if they found new supporters among the Soviet leaders and more reliable communication channels to the Soviet party elite. As long as Kádár maintained political stability in Hungary, however, Moscow backed him. Thus, the contradictory goals of maintaining political stability while pushing through reforms deeply shaped Kádár's strategies. While he moved away from the legacy of Communist totalitarianism of the 1950s, he did it incrementally and with great caution.⁹

Kádár walked his own path, even though it wasn't always obvious. He remained loyal to the successive Soviet leaders, but in exchange for that loyalty, he attempted to leverage increased autonomy for economic reforms. By the 1970s he had created a nondemocratic yet liveable system of "goulash communism" in an attempt to make Hungarians forget his political treason of 1956/57.¹⁰ Hungarians' forgiveness lasted as long as Kádár managed to deliver economic and political stability. But it soon became clear that his regime suffered from a terminal illness and had outlived itself.

The nature of Kádár's regime

The Communist era provided different legacies for the countries of Central Europe. The era proved to be most damaging for those countries that had inherited democratic traditions and well-developed social structures from pre-Communist times. This damage could be most clearly seen in the Czech part of the former Czechoslovakia and also in East Germany and other relatively developed parts of the European periphery. Here, the subsequent Communist policies systematically destroyed the functions of civil society and possibilities of a market economy. In other countries of East Central Europe, the damage was less wide-ranging and severe. In these nations, totalitarianism did away with social solidarity and civil society, but it also destroyed the semi-feudal structures of the pre-Communist regimes.

In the relatively modernized countries of Central Europe, on the other hand, state socialism led to a sort of re-feudalization: the Communist Party hierarchy eliminated horizontal social relations with vertical and politically dominated ones.

The regimes also prevented the people of Central Europe from experiencing the impact of the Western cultural revolution of 1968, which transformed in particular how youth thought about social relationships in Western Europe.¹¹

State socialism was not the result of an endogenous political development in Hungary: it was forced on these societies from the outside, implemented by the Moscow-trained party apparatchiks who copied the Stalinist model.¹² With the partial exception of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, Communist movements never obtained a mass following in Central European societies.¹³

However, in many ways, state socialism still led to modernizing regimes, especially in the Soviet republics, but also, to some degree, in Central Europe. In the 1950s, it fostered urbanization and an outdated model of industrialization by forcing millions of people from the countryside to urban centers. By opening up the labor market for women on both economic and ideological grounds, state socialism officially pushed society toward the acknowledgment of some sort of female emancipation. The positive side of the Communist legacy thus includes social and geographical mobility, urbanization, stress on equality, available health care and housing, as well as free, though restricted, access to higher education. The great emphasis on elementary through high school education went far to eradicate remaining pockets of illiteracy throughout Communist-ruled regions.

Despite these homogenizing educational effects, Communist policies did not have the same impact on countries in Central Europe. Instead, those same policies actually harmed the most developed countries and regions. Here, the deficiencies of the respective regimes left long-lasting legacies of damage during the post-Communist era.¹⁴ Most notably were the erosion of every-day liberties, trust, and civic virtues within Central European societies; the growth of a culture of corruption and fear; the existence of both formal and informal rules, which often contradicted each other; and the increased dependence on the omnipotent party-state. Restrictions against Western influence and foreign travel turned these countries into satellite states of the Soviet Union. These states in turn formed closed societies, breeding cynicism surrounding the public good and forming new hierarchies based on loyalty and party membership.¹⁵ Women were emancipated in the workforce only, while still expected to perform their traditional role at home. Female suffrage was granted, but in the face of minimal political freedom and genuinely free elections, these women's newly gained power to vote carried little meaning.

Kádár learned from the Rákosi regime and the 1956 revolution that political oppression can only be sustained if the leader provides material compensation to his people in exchange for their liberty. Kádár's postrevolutionary retaliation had ended by the early 1960s. In 1963, he declared amnesty for political prisoners, ushering in the "real Kádár era," which lasted until the late 1970s. This era was characterized by a rise in the quality of life for the people and their concomitant pacification. There existed a conscious relativization of national identity in the name of internationalism, but there also was only moderate political indoctrination in exchange for pragmatism.

“Whoever is not against us is with us,” Kádár declared in the early 1960s and ensured economic reforms and a higher level of cultural openness from then onward.¹⁶ Hundreds of thousands of Hungarian citizens bought their first apartments, cars, and television sets, along with weekend houses near Lake Balaton. Citizens could even travel to Western countries every third year. People realized that the regime would provide them with relative security as long as they did not demand political freedom. Thus, Hungary became the “happiest barrack in the camp”, a prime example of state socialist consumerism.

The original sin – the revolution of 1956 – had yet to be forgotten by the Hungarian people, however. Kádár, a pragmatist, did not want to force another ideology upon society. As he knew that Communist propaganda irritated people, he left it alone and concentrated on preserving his power. Although 1956 was officially regarded as a “counterrevolution,” the regime chose not to speak about it. As the good chess player he was, Kádár managed to avoid being replaced like other leaders in the Eastern bloc, such as Dubcek,¹⁷ Ulbricht,¹⁸ and Gomulka.¹⁹ He was open to cautious economic reforms but rejected political ones. He had always denied that his politics resulted in the creation of a “Hungarian model,” as he did not want to provoke Moscow’s anger. Nevertheless, the mixture of economic decentralization and political monopoly made the Hungarian system rather special within the Soviet bloc.

This unique Kádarian compromise could only be sustained as long as the economy grew. When the economic recession of 1978 hit, Kádár tried to counter it with the help of foreign loans. The borrowed sums were spent on sustaining consumption. However, when it turned out that reforms were needed, it also became apparent that the indebted state socialist system could not be reformed. Even full employment was not properly achieved. Although it was a key tenet of state socialism, often employment was in fact “invisible unemployment” within factories, which employed many more people than needed.

The aging Kádár was not capable, nor did he desire to follow the model of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev’s reforms.²⁰ Eventually, Gorbachev allowed the Hungarian party elite to deprive Kádár of power. He was removed from office through the quick rebellion of the intraparty apparatus in May 1988. The following year his mental and physical health deteriorated rapidly.²¹ It was symbolic that he died a year later on July 6, 1989, the day when the country’s highest court ruled in favor of the rehabilitation of Imre Nagy and his peers, whose execution Kádár had orchestrated in 1958.

Kádár’s legacy is ambivalent for many. On the one hand, Hungarians refer with nostalgia to the period in which relative social equality was coupled with economic growth, when even manual workers could afford a two-week holiday at Lake Balaton. On the other hand, the Kádár regime was a soft but clear dictatorship, where “elections” were organized as mere formalities and did not provide alternative political choices. While Kádár is credited for creating better living circumstances in Hungary than existed in the other countries behind the Iron Curtain, it

nevertheless remains that his downfall in 1989 was due to a popular demand. No one wanted the continuation of the regime, not even most members of the party.

Viktor Orbán and his party

Viktor Orbán was born in Székesfehérvár in 1963, was raised in a nearby village, and aspired to become a football player. He was brought up in a family dominated by a violent father, while his mother remained in the background. Orbán entered politics during the international fall of the Communist regime and as a dedicated supporter of liberal democracy. He was highly ambitious, and it became obvious within a few short years that he was a man mesmerized by power.²² In this essay I largely focus on his early years in politics and on the development of his Fidesz party before analyzing his increasingly autocratic regime in the years since 2010.

The young Orbán played a leading role from the beginning of his political career. The Fidesz party (*Federation of Young Democrats*) was founded with his active participation on March 30, 1988, as an independent youth and political organization. The young men²³ who convened the first party conference initially wanted to issue a memorandum of understanding about launching the organization. They planned to go ahead with creating the association only after enough people had indicated their interest to join. However, the then 24-year-old Orbán opposed this principle of gradualism and pushed for the immediate formation of the organization. He also insisted that the word “socialist” should not be included in the name of the new organization. His arguments convinced the majority, and Fidesz was founded that evening as a youth organization.²⁴

Although the police summoned and threatened them, the government did not take any particular measure to undermine the new organization, although it issued arrest warrants for some of the founders. Despite widespread knowledge of the arrest warrants, hundreds joined Fidesz in a matter of weeks. In its founding declaration, Fidesz did not only lay down overarching liberal principles but also identified itself as an opponent of the regime with the objective of breaking up the power monopoly of the Young Communist League (KISZ).

The young people who founded Fidesz had first met in the advanced college movement of the 1980s. This peculiar, semi-intellectual group was the first to transform into an openly political organization during the democratic transition period. Most members were jurists, economists, scholars, and tutors at the start of their careers. However, their professional training was gradually overshadowed by the opportunity to become involved in politics. Most thus entered politics straight from the university lecture halls. Orbán finished his legal studies and wrote his thesis on the Polish solidarity movement. Then, thanks to the Soros Foundation, he joined the Central Europe Research Group and was even able to attend the University of Oxford for a year as a visiting fellow. However, he returned in January 1989 after only four months in England to immerse himself in Hungary’s rapidly changing political developments.

The collectivist world of university dorms favored future politicians who had strong verbal skills, the determination and readiness to act, and the ability to make a significant impression on one's peers. As they received no significant opposition from the Communist bureaucracy, the group's criticism of the regime was dominated by pragmatic behavior from the outset. Fidesz opted for quick hit-and-run-style type of actions that found their political opponents unprepared and left them reeling. The enemy was initially just the KISZ, but eventually the whole regime became the enemy.

The new Fidesz group had not had time to put down roots in the Kádár regime during its last years in power. The most influential figures of Fidesz were first-generation intellectuals born in the countryside who studied at Budapest universities and developed ties with the nascent democratic opposition during their student years. In an interview Viktor Orbán stated:

From 1983 on, I saw that this political regime was constantly retreating. I never saw the communist regime in its full power, in its sheer brutality. Not even when I was beaten and detained for twelve hours on the 16th June 1988, because the interesting thing was not that I was detained, but that they had to release me.²⁵

Fidesz mostly attracted young people who had a strong desire to move up in the social hierarchy. They put all their eggs in one basket – that of political success. Many of them climbed the social ladder within a span of ten years, which for those before them had often taken many decades. They viewed not only the Communist party-state establishment but also the university leadership with suspicion, and after a while they also lost all trust in the opposition elites. They did not want to assimilate into the Budapest elite; instead, they wanted to surpass and defeat it. In the ranks of Fidesz, the strongest aspirations for power could be found in those who came from the countryside.

Transition to democracy occurred in a peaceful and negotiated way at the Hungarian national roundtable talks in 1989.²⁶ Fidesz was one of the most active organizations of the opposition. Men were extremely overrepresented within the Fidesz delegation at the roundtable negotiations: out of the 28 members, only two were women. Of the 26 men, 22 had done their military service before attending university, and 14 attended colleges for advanced studies during their university years. Seven stayed in the colleges as tutors after their graduation. Two-thirds of the negotiators of Fidesz were made up of the cohort born between 1959 and 1964. This indicates a very strong cohesion within the party leadership. While the informal network of Fidesz has been replaced almost entirely within the past 32 years, the inner core of the party has surprisingly remained intact.²⁷

This core was cemented by the Fidesz leadership's common origins from rural towns, shared masculinity, and ambition to scale the social ladder, as well as by the years spent together in the military and college dorms. The social conservatism they brought from their rural home towns, however, was temporarily replaced by

the liberal *Zeitgeist* at the dawn of their careers. Still, due to their successful rise, the party leadership quickly became part of the new political elite, though after 1994 they had no problem abandoning Fidesz' founding principles and returning to their traditional rural roots.

From the 28-strong Fidesz delegation that attended the 1989 negotiations, only seven have remained members of the party, six of whom came from rural towns. To this day, they have remained influential politicians within Fidesz. They include Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, President János Áder, and Speaker of the House László Kövér. The leaders of Fidesz did not use ideological references to draw a contrast with the state ideology that was on the brink of collapse in any case. Rather, they made use of the existing legislation. They were radical and anti-ideological at the same time. This seems like a paradox, as radical movements are usually ideologically based, but in the Hungarian case, radicalism meant merely the radicalism of action, not of ideas. Fidesz supported the unity of the various opposition forces but was against premature talks with the regime and did not like the politics of "national reconciliation" proposed by the state party. The Fidesz leadership believed that there was no reconciliation without a breakup. That's why Viktor Orbán said at the 1989 reburial of Imre Nagy that the young respected Imre Nagy for having broken up with his Communist commitments for the sake of the Hungarian people.²⁸

From time to time, Fidesz played the role of a "battering ram" at the 1989 talks. First, it was the least convinced of all opposition parties that negotiations were necessary and perhaps inevitable. Fidesz's radicalism was shaped not only by its demand for an immediate transition to democracy but also by its demand for elite replacement. As one of the Fidesz negotiators explained in 1997: "I believe that a total generational change is needed in the Hungarian elite. Fidesz was the start of this generational change, they were the ones who radically claimed that the past needed to be left behind."²⁹ This generational angst was shared by many in this circle.

During the roundtable talks of 1989, Fidesz allied itself with the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ), a liberal party that grew out of dissident intellectual movements. The representatives of the two parties agreed on the most important questions. The principal role of Fidesz during these talks was to speed up the transition process. As one of their leaders said in an interview, "Fidesz was the light cavalry of the opposition. We always took the most radical position, which then served as a basis for compromises."³⁰ This behavior was not only tactical; it was also driven by Fidesz's deep-seated anti-Communist attitude.

In what way was Orbán's approach different from that of the dominant politicians of the era, such as the conservative József Antall³¹ or the liberal Péter Tölgyessy?³² According to Orbán himself, it was he who could best translate opposition ideas into specific political measures.

There is a good idea, but what derives from it? Recognizing the position of our opponent, how can we use this argument? If the argument is excellent, how should it be used in a way to get what we want as an outcome? So, I could see immediately that no one else there possessed this skill but me.³³

The year 1998 saw Orbán's rise to power as prime minister of a center-right coalition government, which he then led for the next four years. What the Fidesz elite experienced during their careers also permeated Orbán's first term in government: the unlimited scope of opportunities. For them, the road from rural working class to the world of metropolitan bourgeoisie was a road of double mobility. It was not only cultural elevation as first-generation intellectuals but also adaptation to a metropolitan lifestyle as former students of the universities of Budapest who came from the countryside. At the same time, they picked up the language of the era (the discourse of democracy), enjoyed the fraternal college milieu, and adopted a "new elite" mindset, which contributed actively to the quick dissolution of the Communist dictatorship. All of these factors reinforced Orbán's conviction that any obstacle on the way to success and power can be surmounted by team spirit and generational solidarity.

However, the obstacles in their way stemmed precisely from Fidesz's speedy mobility. Orbán and his followers acted as if every day brought a new challenge, which needed to be dealt with as a matter of urgency. Since his youth, fighting had been a zero-sum game for Orbán, where compromise was interpreted as a sign of weakness. Understanding this phenomenon requires not only a political and sociological approach to the regime but also the use of social psychology. The latter approach suggests that a person who ventures out of his community of origin, culture, or even mother tongue suffers trauma, which may repeat itself every time he needs to adapt to a new group.

"Emotionally and psychologically," it seems, "these people experience a life-long process of social learning, often unconsciously. This often manifests itself in the operation of the psychic system as overload. The lack of security and safety calls for the search for a sanctuary. . . . Often a lifetime is too short for the development of an intra-psychic asylum. Locomotion and projection tend to become fixated."³⁴

Social climbers are often motivated by the urge to prove themselves to others and, scholars have concluded, develop a

very strong new personal identity, which paradoxically covers their weakness: it is indeed a self-armour. It is characterized by self-restraint and the hetero- and auto-aggressive qualities of influencing their environment. Achievement itself is a narcissistic shell. It is difficult to be in contact with these people. They are smart, precise, arbitrary, irritable and irritating. This is how they are able to carry on amidst constant resistance. They live in a fever of ruthlessness, outwardly as well as inwardly.³⁵

These lines describe the founding members of Fidesz (and Orbán himself) almost exactly. In view of this social psychological approach, college dorms were nothing but sanctuaries for the elite. They believed that success alone would justify their actions.

Contrary to the positive myths about these colleges, they were not schools of liberal democracy. Living under the same roof, roommates knew all about each other. There was no private sphere, and there were only limited opportunities for free, uncontrolled individual action. Charismatic leadership was appreciated; a man was worth only as much as the recognition he managed to obtain. Thus, the life experience of the participants was limited to living and operating within a small and closed community. This was important because this set of similar – individual and collective – past experiences was preserved in the collective memory of this subculture. They were thus built into the culture of the new political elite and the behavior of its followers. Later, these elements were inherited as part of the party's identity, even by those who had not originally lived through this experience. But the ritual identification with the now canonized form of this political culture became a condition for their later group membership and prospects for career advancement.

The problem of the first Orbán government (1998–2002) arose from its desire to achieve a different kind of regime change than circumstances allowed. They could not be too radical in reforming the already developed democratic institutions when the country was on the verge of entering the European Union (EU). No “second revolution” can be easily started in a consolidated postrevolutionary society. Therefore, Fidesz focused on maintaining the support of its heterogeneous voting groups. Its radicalism only manifested itself in the practice of power politics, the disregarding of established norms and unwritten rules, as well as the creation of new procedural frameworks. Truly changing the regime, however, could only take place after 2010, when Orbán formed his second government.

Fidesz has continued to function as a parliamentary party since 1990. It spent 15 years in government and is still in power at the time these lines are being written. The first Orbán government lasted four years before being voted out in 2002. After spending the subsequent eight years opposing the regime in power, Orbán's Fidesz party managed a comeback in 2010. The first five years of Fidesz were characterized by collective leadership, but in 1993, Orbán became the party leader and has remained so for a quarter of a century.³⁶ During the past decade, the party has played a subordinate role in shaping politics, however, and currently only serves as one of the many vehicles that support Orbán.

During the past three decades, Viktor Orbán has made three major political turns. The first turn was of an ideological nature and occurred in 1993–1994 when he reoriented his party from a liberal to a more conservative direction. Once this was achieved, however, the party soon left its conservatism behind and embarked on yet another departure. It began to pursue a nationalist, ethno-populist course. This ideological turn was only surprising initially as it became quickly obvious that Orbán was an opportunistic politician who was driven not by ideology but by his ambition for power. Fidesz has therefore traveled the ideological spectrum and always acted in response to political necessity.³⁷

The second organizational turn occurred in 2003, when Orbán monopolized authority in his party through changing its bylaws. The new regulations gave veto

power to the party's president at every point of decision-making when building up the party hierarchy. Members of the Fidesz party had thus experienced Orbán's arbitrary rule well before 2010.

The third turn came in 2010 when Orbán abandoned his views that he had articulated between 2002 and 2010 and instead started to dismantle the liberal-democratic system in Hungary, ultimately creating the first nondemocratic regime of the EU. It is thus important to distinguish between the still democratic Orbán government of the years 1998–2002 and the current autocratic Orbán regime that has governed Hungary since 2010.

The nature of Orbán's regime

Between 1990 and 2010, Hungary was considered a liberal democracy. By the mid-1990s the country's democratic system had been widely regarded as stable and secure. The turmoil that accompanied the years of political and economic transformation after the fall of Communism had also given rise to steady economic growth. Foreign investment in Hungary was the highest among the countries of Central Europe. Economic development, however, did not quite reach all segments of Hungarian society. The post-Communist state created opportunities for the younger, educated, and most competitive elements of society while proving to be much less concerned about the rural inhabitants, the lower middle classes, and the poor. Hundreds of thousands lost their jobs within a few years. Most of them requested early retirement when they saw the writing on the wall.

Between 1994 and 1998, the coalition of socialists and liberals³⁸ in Hungary followed Third Way economic policies. As a result, left-leaning voters struggled to find a political party with whom they felt at home and gradually drifted to the radical right. Since the turn of the millennium, and due to the lack of a genuinely left-wing party, Hungarian politics have become increasingly polarized between left-liberalism, which was losing ground, and the rising populist and radical right.³⁹ Despite the successful accession of Hungary to the EU in 2004, by the second part of the decade it became clear that the rise of the populist radical right was unstoppable.⁴⁰ The transfer of power occurred parallel to the disintegration of the left-liberal coalition government just after the beginning of the global financial crisis in 2008–2009. The general election of 2010 was the decisive turning point, with Viktor Orbán's party winning 53% of the vote, which led to a qualified majority of parliamentary seats for Fidesz.

The Orbán regime can be described as a “postmodern tyranny,” to use the term coined by Ágnes Heller.⁴¹ It does not follow the recipe of twentieth-century authoritarian regimes but relies upon selective, socially targeted, initially soft, but gradually intensifying forms of oppression. This brand of pragmatic oppression can be sustained through powerful propaganda to create social support for discrimination against carefully selected target groups. This process might seem haphazard at first, but at the end of each action, its systemic nature always becomes apparent.

In Hungary, the process of undermining the democratic system, which was widely perceived as elitist, started in late 2006. The opposition Fidesz party, led by Orbán, behaved not so much as a rival but as a definitive enemy of the coalition government. An already polarized political discourse became increasingly driven by hatred. The economic crisis of 2008 led to the 2010 election results when Fidesz received a qualified majority in Parliament. Since that time, the quality of democracy in Hungary has steadily deteriorated and a definite trend of autocratization has taken shape.

At the beginning, supporters of the regime talked about “majoritarian democracy,” as if liberal democracy had survived unharmed. Retrospectively, one can conclude that Hungary must be characterized as a damaged, broken, or illiberal democracy between 2011 and 2015. Democratic institutions were gradually less respected by the government, but important democratic principles were still in place. These included open political debates, freedom of speech, freedom of association, legal equality, egalitarian conceptions of citizenship, and gender-neutral civic status, though all of them were already somewhat distorted. Eventually, however, the regime left “illiberal democracy” behind and began relying on increasingly authoritarian measures.⁴²

In 2016, Hungarian citizens were prevented by paramilitary forces and with the government’s tacit consent from initiating a domestic referendum. They were thus barred from exercising their constitutional right to vote, and it was questionable whether at this stage Hungary still qualified as a democratic state in any sense. With the help of its outsourced violence and amendments to the Constitution on the basis that there existed a “state of terrorist threat,” the Orbán regime took several steps on the road to establishing a power monopoly. For reasons of political propaganda, the regime proudly claimed that its enforcement agencies did not use direct force. Instead, it had come to rely on threats and intimidation, outsourced to paramilitary groups and football clubs.⁴³

The policy perfectly fits the Orbán regime’s governance strategy, which has always been characterized by deliberate efforts to blur the differences between official and unofficial, responsible and unaccountable, agents. Decisions are made outside the established institutions, behind their back, in an invisible gray zone of a world of shady organizations bearing no political responsibility or liability. In this context, acts of violence that may embarrass those in power are performed by paid hitmen, from whom Fidesz can easily distance itself.

Similarly, the budget was drafted not necessarily by the minister in charge but by private firms acting as money-laundering operations, with no legal ties to the government and whose members may also have been granted access to classified information.⁴⁴

There is a point when even a broken democracy comes to an end: it is where the line between private and public interest is swallowed up, when the difference between nationalization and privatization disappears, when public interest becomes indistinguishable from the interests of political and economic actors capturing the

state, and when *mutatis mutandis*, the system ends up defending these entrepreneurs. Corruption in Hungary has been legalized. It is no longer seen as deviant behavior but as an integral part of the system. Breaking the law has become the new normal.

What was once described as the abuse of power has today become a defining feature of the regime. As Bálint Magyar put it: “The mafia state is a privatized form of the parasitic state,” where the patron–client relationship no longer refers to the patronage system also seen in democracies; essentially, it is the “eradication of the foundation of individual autonomy and the shoehorning of all existential issues into a system of dependencies.”⁴⁵ This already comes dangerously close to the definition of an authoritarian regime.

The concept of the “mafia state” is one of the most consistent theoretical arguments to describe the Orbán regime. The regime’s Orwellian communication mode can be used not only as opposition criticism of the regime but also for an academically sound analysis of Hungary’s political system. It is no wonder that several authors have made attempts to understand and describe the fundamental components of the Orbán regime over the past decade.⁴⁶

The following are the main building blocks of Orbán’s current regime: the centralization and personalization of power, the propaganda of “national unification” coupled with the discrimination against and marginalization of underclass elements and different minorities of the society, the forced replacement of the old elites by the predatory (or mafia) state, and the practice of power politics. The regime is rooted in the prime minister’s conviction that “revolutionary circumstances” give him the right to embark on exceptional policies.

The Orbán regime of today is largely different from its early days of 2010–2011, although one can trace the origins of its authoritarianism to that period. The regime has experienced a gradual process of transformation since 2010. Excessive majoritarian arguments dominated the early stage of its development. The first step toward a hybrid regime was the unilateral writing and approval of a new constitution, the Fundamental Law, by the governing party. Abusing its democratically legitimized power, the government has done away with the rule of law step by step. The best example of this is the fourth modification of the Fundamental Law in the spring of 2013. This modification enabled the Constitutional Court to legally disregard its decisions from before 2010.

Up until the 2014 general elections, there existed free and fair elections in post-Communist Hungary. The 2014 elections, however, failed to meet the minimal requirements of the democratic process, due to the creation of an uneven playing field of the parties and candidates who stood for office. Orbán’s statement of July 2014 about his creation of an illiberal state did not indicate the launch date of a new order but simply promised further measures aimed at entrenching his semi-authoritarian system. By that time the regime had managed to put the unfair elections of 2014 safely in the past and was already planning to change the rules for the municipal election in Budapest only a few months before the ballot was to take place. Thus, by 2014, the Orbán government had already moved beyond the era of illiberal democracy.

Since then, the regime's move toward authoritarianism has continued, best demonstrated by actions such as the hiring of enforcers to violently block the opposition's attempt at initiating a referendum and the public prosecutor's failure to press charges. Controlling oligarchs in a neo-patrimonialist or neo-prebendalist way⁴⁷ and outsourcing violence to paramilitary groups conjure up the image of the early years of Putin's rule in Russia. Moreover, the regime's vehement anti-immigrant campaign during the government-initiated referendum in 2016, as well as in the electoral campaign of 2018, contradicted the basic norms of democratic procedures.

By using its overwhelming political and economic power, the government closed the biggest 60-year-old left-liberal daily newspaper *Népszabadság* in October 2016.⁴⁸ It also took over the largest internet portals.⁴⁹ Beyond the recurring attacks on freedom of speech and freedom of the press, the regime has also campaigned against nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). As an official of the governing party declared, independent NGOs "must be swept out of Hungarian public life" because they interfere with politics.⁵⁰ This statement was followed by discriminatory legislation against NGOs, which receive foreign funds.

The Orbán regime has also carried out strong attacks on academic freedom. Between 2017 and 2019, it forced the Budapest-based Hungarian-American private university, the Central European University (CEU), out of the country.⁵¹ In 2020, the European Court of Justice's verdict annulled this legislation, but it came too late, as the university had already moved to Vienna. The government changed the legal status of several state universities by making them "foundations," that is, privatizing their control by political loyalists.

The language used by the regime serves to hide reality. Propagandistic mass communication such as a questionnaire sent to all citizens with a set of manipulative questions is called "national consultation," used by Fidesz to refresh the list of its supporters. "Protection" stands for the collection of protection money. In reality, the "defense" of retirement benefits meant the requisitioning of private pension funds by the State in 2011. "Utility-cost cuts" have led to higher prices and deteriorating services. "The protection of the Hungarian people" has resulted in the impoverishment of large segments of the population. With corruption normalized, it has become invisible to the public. Except for the public works programs, changes in public services have only benefited the wealthy. For instance, utility cost cuts as well as the introduction of a flat tax have only benefited the well-off. At the same time, the system attempts to gain legitimacy through the demonstration of the symbolic power of the ruling elite (e.g., with the prime minister's new office, which is a palace on the Castle Hill in Buda, and by means of nationalist campaigns and government-generated xenophobia).

The Orbán regime has gradually evolved from its original nebulous shape and stands today fully formed. This is not to suggest that the leader of the regime followed a pre-calculated blueprint. The authoritarian direction was clear, but there were many incidental events, spontaneous reactions, contradictory policies, and periods of slower or faster speed of change, as the political situation allowed and

required. By the second half of the 2010s, the regime had become not simply illiberal or “leader-democratic” but actively antidemocratic.

Due to the constraining power of the EU, the Orbán regime appears to be more liberal than democratic. The EU is better equipped, after all, to sanction deviations in human rights than to counter the deconstruction of democracy. In this regime, a few fundamental rights (freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, right to privacy, freedom of movement) remain somewhat protected, despite the autocratic monopolization of politics. In essence, it is an emerging authoritarian setup, which was moderately tamed by the EU with regard to basic human rights and civil liberties.⁵² In other words, the international embeddedness of the Orbán regime hinders its slide toward complete authoritarianism.

Because of this external constraint, the leaders of the Orbán regime have been forced to engage in Janus-faced methods, employing double talk and double standards to ensure that, at the very least, lip service is paid to democratic values. The government also tries to justify its antidemocratic policies by appealing to democratic norms. The regime uses a rhetoric that exploits xenophobia and facilitates a nationalist interpretation of Christianity in order to reject the EU’s liberal-democratic rule of law, albeit with limited success so far. Lately, in view of antidemocratic developments abroad, particularly in Turkey and Russia, the opponents of pluralist democracy have felt further emboldened to weaken the liberal elements of the regime.

Orbán created a fluid, electorally authoritarian, hybrid regime type, which is relatively free of violence, though not entirely. The contradictory character of the regime can also be explained by the real tension between internal and external forces within the EU. This regime can be described as consisting of the temporary coexistence of overlapping political structures that often contradict each other.

The regime is led by an authoritarian leader who came to power through elections and is supported by similarly authoritarian-minded leaders internationally. Orbán has created a highly personal, informal, centralized, system of rule in which loyalty overrides expertise and where social autonomies (like independent media and independent groups of civil society) are considered dangerous.

The political clique that occupies the state from the inside behaves like a political family, which includes formal party members and selected loyal clienteles. The regime is in constant flux, a “moving target” for observers, where consolidation is improbable. Orbán, who claims to speak in the name of the Hungarian people, condemns international elites (the United Nations, EU politicians, multinational business circles, etc.) and foreign migrants and considers them enemies. However, he prefers “clean,” non-violent methods, as well as regular (but unfair) elections, to secure his long-term rule and to legitimize himself internationally as a “democrat.”

The regime originally promised to re-politicize the public sphere and to mobilize the political community, but instead, there is nothing but propaganda and a rather chaotic public administration system. The so-called strong state is a particular site of political relations where corruption is not external but an embedded, legislated, and networked phenomenon. In the post-Communist context, hybrid

regimes often include a rough redistribution of property among the old and new elites. Members of the new power elite use legislation to renationalize private property temporarily in order to reprivatize it for themselves and their clients afterward.

The regime is based on fear and the traditional social-conservative thinking of most of Hungary's citizens rather than any coherent ideology. Leaders of such semi-authoritarian regimes learn from each other; similar autocratic methods and narratives circulate among them, which can be labeled as autocracy promotion. Yet there are many spontaneous actions and accidental and unpredictable events that occur in such regimes. Although authoritarian leaders learn from each other, they do not necessarily implement the same models or follow a premeditated political project.

Politics is more complicated for authoritarian leaders if their country belongs to a community of democratic states. As mentioned earlier, this is the case with Orbán's Hungary.⁵³ The principle of subsidiarity, formal commitment to basic democratic values, multilevel governance, institutional cooperation, and other factors all exist in the EU and condition the behavior of individual national leaders. At this point, the leader of an illiberal, competitive authoritarian regime has no option but to enter into a cynical and hypocritical game with representatives of the international community by taking the available material benefits from the common basket while disrespecting the common democratic norms.

While opposition forces may win by-elections, their hope for victory in the general elections is limited. The ruling political clique combines political and economic tools to maintain its power, yet it lacks the intellectual and moral support of the largest part of society. The regime relies on its political loyalists while dividing and neutralizing potential opponents, whether they are passive or active. The Covid-19 pandemic in 2020–2021 was used by Orbán to strengthen the regime's grip over Hungarian society, and by introducing extraordinary security measures, moving the country toward an authoritarian governance.⁵⁴

Since 2010, Orbán has used his qualified majority to write a new constitution and define himself as opposed to what he once stood for in the years of transition to democracy in the late 1980s and the early 1990s. He has set out to destroy what he contributed to building three decades ago.

In sum, the Orbán regime can be described as a competitive authoritarian regime that has the following features: personalist rule, predatory state, patron-client relationships, economic policies that serve social inequality, ethno-populist propaganda, an uneven electoral playing field, dishonest elections, and re-feudalized society.

Conclusion

Having looked at the political careers of two Hungarian leaders, Kádár and Orbán, there are some fundamental similarities as well as a host of differences. What points do they have in common?

Neither leader was driven by ideas or ideologies. As part of the Soviet bloc, the Kádár regime could not deviate from Communist ideology in principle, but in

practice it did. Kádár was able to deviate from the totalitarian ideology of the 1950s through securing a stable every-day life for the Hungarian people. The Orbán regime does not have a coherent ideology either, yet it relies on aggressive propaganda: the regime's pompous ethno-nationalism sounds unusual in the EU, whose basic values the prime minister now blatantly ignores.

Both leaders have shown an inclination for a pragmatic approach toward politics. Neither held a solid set of values. Kádár was a smart player as a politician who followed the clichés of a puritan lifestyle. For Orbán, the only goal has been to achieve success defined by gaining both political and economic power. Out of the two, it was Orbán who used his power to enrich himself and his family. It was also he who has built his image on the folkloristic figure of the "ordinary boy from the countryside."

Both Hungarian leaders betrayed their past commitments: Kádár betrayed the ideals of the 1956 revolution, while Orbán betrayed the democratic transition of 1989. By turning against their old selves, however, both politicians ensured themselves a long tenure in politics.

Both leaders spent their youths in communities built on solidarity, and none of them held a single a civic position. Kádár spent his youth in the illegal Communist movement, while Orbán was in the army and attended a college of advanced studies. Orbán was socialized in a macho environment, while this was not the case for Kádár. Still, both of them had to first demonstrate their rigor and aptitude in a narrow and closed community before obtaining power nationally.

Kádár came to power as a mature man, Orbán as a much younger adult. But both entered politics at a very young age. However, Kádár had to walk a much tougher road to come to power among extreme circumstances. His rise to power was decided in Moscow, not in Budapest. Paradoxically, Kádár's room for maneuvering within the socialist bloc had been expanded by the failed revolution of 1956. Orbán's scope for movement has been much wider from the outset, as he started his second term in government in 2010 from the position of a winner, with a parliamentary majority qualified to amend the constitution within democratic boundaries. And by then Hungary had already been a long-standing member of NATO. Orbán, moreover, could assume the position of head of government as the leader of an EU member state that received significant financial support from the EU. Orbán has spent the period from 2010 to the present on further expanding his power. The dismantling of the rule of law and democracy in domestic politics (and also with respect to foreign policy his focus on the politics of "Eastern opening") served this goal.

The hands of Kádár were stained with blood, while those of Orbán are stained with money. Surveillance has become more useful to him than open sanctions. Intimidation of a preventative, invisible kind is proving more effective than bloody encounters that could be easily broadcast for the world to see.

To a certain extent, both of these leaders were "peacock dancers," or to use an old expression, "swing politicians." Orbán has pursued a flexible foreign policy on a large scale. Kádár followed this strategy at times ruthlessly, at other times

with moderation. Kádár left a crumbling dictatorship and a (still) occupied country behind. He died in Budapest in a mentally disrupted state – “in a bed, among pillows,” to use one of Hungarian poet Sándor Petőfi’s famous lines.

Throughout the Kádár and Orbán eras, the nature of the political establishment was in constant flux. During Kádár’s time, the regime was a one-party, late totalitarian dictatorship, which started with retaliation and intimidation and pursued the neutralization and atomization of society only to give in without a fight at the end. Orbán’s period is characterized by permanent backsliding from an early democratic peak: the reestablishment of democracy in Hungary in 1989 was followed by the creation of an illiberal regime, which in turn was succeeded by an electoral authoritarian system. So far, the downward spiral has proven unstoppable. Only in 2019 did the anti-Orbán opposition parties realize the need to unite their forces. It took them almost ten years to arrive at such an agreement. But none of the previous regimes have been toppled through parliamentary means, and it remains to be seen whether this will be Orbán’s fate.

Kádár could not fully distance himself from daily political battles, although he wished to do so. There were prime ministers in his era, but the important decisions were all made by Kádár himself as the country was controlled by the party-state. Compared to this Orbán’s rule is personal.

Kádár ruled and partially governed, while Orbán rules and governs. As prime minister, Orbán has always stood at the frontline and holds almost all power.

Politicians in liberal democracies lose elections from time to time, but that does not surprise anyone: it is considered to be part and parcel of the normal routine operation of a parliamentary democracy. Hungary has not been fortunate enough to have the leaders of its political eras reelected at free and fair elections. The experience of the past 75 years demonstrates that the failures and flaws of those who launch a new era can also ruin the regimes that bear their names.

Notes

- 1 Friedrich Engels, *Anti-Dühring* (London: Routledge, 1907).
- 2 Kádár was jailed in two installments: A year in detention between 1933 and 1934 and for two more years after the trial as a convicted political criminal in 1937–38. In the meantime he was excluded from the Communist Youth League of Hungary. Cf. Tibor Huszár, *Kádár politikai életrajza*, vol. 1 [*Kádár’s Political Biography*, Vol. 1] (Budapest: Szabad Tér and Kossuth, 2003).
- 3 Mátyás Rákosi was communist party leader after World War II until 1956. He was a Stalinist and followed direct orders from Moscow during his rule. As he was less autonomous than his successors, I decided not to discuss his leadership in this study.
- 4 László Rajk was a communist leader and the Interior Minister in the early Rakosi era. He was executed by his own comrades after a fake trial in 1949.
- 5 Imre Nagy was a communist leader and Minister of Agriculture who was marginalized during the Rakosi era, but returned to power after the death of Stalin in 1953 to correct Rákosi’s “mistakes.” Nagy became the Prime Minister during the 1956 revolution and declared the neutrality of Hungary. He was executed in 1958.
- 6 Radio speech of János Kádár on October 24, 1956.
- 7 Nikita Sergeievich Khrushchev, communist leader of the Soviet Union between 1955 and 1964, initiated the destalinization in the Soviet Bloc.

- 8 János M. Rainer, *Imre Nagy: A Biography* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009).
- 9 Tibor Huszár, *Kádár politikai életrajza*, vol. 2 (*Kádár's Political Biography*, vol. 2) (Budapest: Szabad Tér and Kossuth, 2003).
- 10 Paul Ignotus, "János Kádár, Hungary's Quisling Redeemed," in *Leaders of the Communist World* (London: Routledge, 1971), 317–329.
- 11 Mihály Vajda, *Orosz szocializmus Közép-Európában* [*Russian Socialism in Central Europe*] (Budapest: Századvég, 1989).
- 12 Charles Gati, *Hungary and the Soviet Bloc* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1986).
- 13 Joseph Held (ed.), *The Columbia History of Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).
- 14 András Bozóki, "The Deficit of Legitimacy: Theorising East Central European Communism," in Rüdiger Frank and Sabine Burghart (eds.), *Driving Forces of Socialist Transformation* (Vienna: Praesens, 2009), 113–139.
- 15 Charles Gati, *The Bloc That Failed* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).
- 16 Charles Fenyvesi, "Hungary 20 Years Later," *New York Times* (October 17, 1976): www.nytimes.com/1976/10/17/archives/hungary-20-years-later-a-veteran-of-the-1956-uprising-finds-the.html.
- 17 Alexander Dubcek (1921–1992) was a reformist leader of the Czechoslovak Communist Party who promoted the 'Prague Spring', a move towards democratic socialism in 1968. This provoked the Soviet military intervention, which resulted in Dubcek's removal from power and re-Stalinization of the country. Cf. William Shawcross, *Dubcek and Czechoslovakia* (London: Hogarth Press, 1990).
- 18 Hardline Stalinist communist leader of East Germany, Walter Ulbricht (1893–1973), spent twenty years in power and was forced to leave office in 1971. Cf. Carola Stern, *Ulbricht, A Political Biography* (New York: Praeger, 1965).
- 19 Wladyslaw Gomulka (1905–1982), a national communist leader of Poland, came to power as response to the pro-reform and pro-independence mood of society in October 1956, but eventually lost his popularity and was responsible for the killings of protesters in December 1970. He was forced to resign immediately after the clash. On postwar Poland see Anthony Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism: A Cold War History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
- 20 András Oplatka, *Németh Miklós – Mert ez az ország érdeke* [*Miklós Németh – Because This Is the Country's Interest*] (Budapest: Helikon, 2014).
- 21 Kornis Mihály, *Kádár János utolsó beszéde* [*The Last Speech of János Kádár*] (Pozsony: Kalligram, 2006).
- 22 Publications on Orbán include: László Kéri, *Orbán Viktor* (Budapest: Századvég, 1994), József Debreczeni, *Orbán Viktor* (Budapest: Osiris, 2002); József Debreczeni: *Arcmás* [*Portrait*] (Budapest: Noran Libro, 2009); Paul Lendvai, *Orbán: Europe's New Strongman* (London: Hurst & Co., 2017) and others. For a proregime approach see Gábor G. Fodor, *Az Orbán-szabály* (*The Orbán Rule*) (Budapest: KKETTK, 2021).
- 23 Out of the 36 founders of Fidesz only two were women. Cf. András Bozóki (ed.), *Tiszta lappal: A Fidesz a magyar politikában* [*With a Clean Slate: Fidesz in Hungarian Politics*] (Budapest: Fidesz, 1992).
- 24 About the early Fidesz. Cf. András Bozóki (ed.), *Tiszta lappal: A Fidesz a magyar politikában* [*With a Clean Slate: Fidesz in Hungarian Politics*] (Budapest: Fidesz, 1992).
- 25 Viktor Orbán, "Interview" In László Kasza (ed.), *Metamorphosis Hungariae, 1989–94* (Budapest: Századvég, 1994), 111.
- 26 András Bozóki, „Building Democracy: Institutional Transformation in Hungary” In Stuart S. Nagel, William Crotty, James Scarritt (eds.), *Political Reform in Developing Nations*. (Greenwich, CT – London: JAI Press, 1996), 237–256.
- 27 András Bozóki and Ágnes Simon, "Rolling Stones: Dissident Intellectuals in Hungary, 1977–1994," *East European Politics* (2020): <https://doi.org/10.1080/21599165.2020.1813115>.
- 28 Orbán Viktor: "Beszéd 1989 június 16-án" (Speech on June 16, 1989), In András Bozóki (ed.), *Tiszta lappal: A Fidesz a magyar politikában, 1988-1991. (With a Clean Slate: Fidesz in Hungarian Politics, 1988-1991)*, (Budapest: Fidesz), 154–156.

- 29 Interview with István Harmati by the author (1997).
- 30 Interview with László Kövér by the author (1997).
- 31 József Antall (1932–1993), the president of the Hungarian Democratic Forum, was the first prime minister after the collapse of state socialism. He stayed in office from 1990 until his death. Cf. József Debreczeni, *A miniszterelnök [The Prime Minister]* (Budapest: Osiris, 1998).
- 32 Péter Tölgyessy, a young liberal lawyer, played a significant role at the national round-table talks of 1989 representing the Alliance of Free Democrats (the political party of former dissidents).
- 33 Interview with Viktor Orbán by the author (1990).
- 34 Szerdahelyi Edit, “A felélelő törekvőről [On the Upwardly Mobile People],” *Thalassa*, vol. 3/1 (1992): 121.
- 35 *Ibid.*, 122.
- 36 The reason why that is 25 years and not 27 is that he handed over party leadership to two other party leaders for one year each.
- 37 This turn was documented in the book by György Petőcz, *Csak a narancs volt (It was the Orange Only)*, (Budapest: Irodalom Kft, 2001).
- 38 Socialists were represented in the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP), while liberals at the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ).
- 39 Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Parties in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
- 40 András Bozóki, “Consolidation or Second Revolution? The Emergence of the New Right in Hungary,” *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, vol. 24/2 (2008), 191–231.
- 41 Ágnes Heller, “Orbán is a Tyrant,” *Krytyka Polityczna* (2018).
- 42 András Bozóki, „Broken Democracy, Predatory State, and Nationalist Populism” In Péter Krasztev and Jon Van Til (eds.), *The Hungarian Patient*. (New York – Budapest: CEU Press, 2015), 3–36.
- 43 Cf. András Bozóki, “Magyarország liberális autokrácia,” *Political Capital Blog* (March 3, 2016).
- 44 József Debreczeni, *A fideszes rablógazdaság [Fidesz-Type Predatory Economy]* (Miskolc: De.Hukönyv, 2013).
- 45 Bálint Magyar, *Post-Communist Mafia State: The Case of Hungary* (New York: CEU Press, 2016), 12–13. For further elaboration see: Bálint Magyar and Bálint Madlovics, “From Petty Corruption to Criminal State,” *Intersections EEJSP*, vol. 5/2 (2019): 103–129.
- 46 Some general analyses of the Orbán regime: Peter Wilkin, *Hungary’s Crisis of Democracy: The Road to Serfdom* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2016); József Debreczeni, *Az Orbán-rezsim [The Orbán regime]* (Debrecen: De.Hukönyv, 2017); János Kornai, *Láttelel: Tanulmányok a magyar állapotokról [Report: Studies on the Hungarian Situation]* (Budapest: HVG Könyvek, 2017); András L. Pap, *Democratic Decline in Hungary* (London: Routledge, 2018); Gábor Scheiring, *The Retreat of Liberal Democracy* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020); András Körösiényi, Gábor Illés and Attila Gyulai, *The Orbán Regime* (London: Routledge 2020); János Mátyás Kovács and Balázs Trencsényi (eds.), *Brave New Hungary: Mapping the ‘System of National Cooperation’* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2020).
- 47 Iván Szelényi and Péter Mihályi, *Varieties of Post-Communist Capitalism* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 189–198.
- 48 Andrew Byrne, “Leftwing Newspaper Critical of Hungary’s Leaders Shut Down,” *Financial Times* (October 13, 2016): www.ft.com/content/e2755324-907b-11e6-a72e-b428cb934b78.
- 49 *Origo* (in 2013) and *Index* (in 2020).
- 50 Quoted in András Bozóki and Sarah Cueva, “Xenophobia and Power Politics: The Hungarian Far Right,” in Sonja A. Strube et al. (eds.), *Anti-Genderismus in Europa: Allianzen von Rechtspopulismus und religiösem Fundamentalismus. Mobilisierung, Vernetzung, Transformation* (Berlin: Transcript, 2021), 117.
- 51 Zsolt Enyedi, “Democratic Backsliding and Academic Freedom in Hungary,” *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 16/4 (2018): 1067–1074.

- 52 András Bozóki and Daniel Hegedűs, “An Externally Constrained Hybrid Regime: Hungary in the European Union,” *Democratization*, vol. 25/7 (2018): 1173–1189.
- 53 Ibid.
- 54 Cf. Imre Vörös, *Államsínytevők (Makers of Coup d'état)* (Budapest: Noran Libro, 2021)

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