

HUNGARY'S PATH TOWARD AN ILLIBERAL SYSTEM

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The Transformation of the Hungarian Party System. From Democratic Chaos to Electoral Autocracy

Abstract. This article describes the developments of the Hungarian party system in two radically different periods, the “democratic chaos” when there was a democratic yet weak government, and the subsequent “electoral autocracy” which saw a semi-authoritarian government. The first party system, between 1987 and 2010, was indeed both democratic and dynamic but because the state was unable to come to grips with the huge complexity of the systemic transformation it was fragile and chaotic too. But as a result of their great dissatisfaction, Hungarians were not ready to defend democracy against the attack of populist forces, so that by 2010 the second party system emerged based on a special version of authoritarianism. It was an electoral autocracy in which the ruling party comes to power through electoral manipulations, and supreme power is concentrated in the hands of very few individuals.

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“Democratic Chaos”. The Party System in Hungary before 2010

The Hungarian multiparty system emerged in 1987-88, and functioned for the next twenty years. It saw its first crisis in 2006 and finally collapsed at the 2009 elections to the European Parliament and at the 2010 domestic parliamentary elections, so that since the demise of state socialism there have been two markedly different party systems, one before, and one after 2010. In fact, a similar two-stage model applies to all East Central European countries, where the first party systems went through a crisis that resulted in a critical election that saw a second party system emerge.¹

Overall, changes to the economic and political systems have generated social deconsolidation in Hungary, with a huge contrast between the formal-legal pursuit of a democratization and the “substantive”, participative democratization.

¹ I have described the first party system in detail in Attila ÁGH, *The Relationship between Parties and Democracy in Hungary*, in: Kay LAWSON, *Political Parties and Democracy*, vol. 2: Europe. New York 2010, 185-207.

Hungary has witnessed three consecutive crises in the quarter century since the systemic change. First there was the transformation crisis in the 1990s, then the post-accession crisis in the 2000s and third came the economic crisis of the late 2000s, which was a global event. For what follows, socio-economic processes could not be analysed in detail, so I have relied largely on the analyses of the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI), the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), Freedom House (FH), and the World Economic Forum.²

The early history of political parties in the new democracies in most of East Central Europe has usually been described as a move from general mobilization to demobilization, resulting in low electoral participation and unrepresentative elections. However, in Hungary that general tendency showed itself much less in low turnout at elections and much more in increasing political and cultural polarization coupled with decreasing trust in parties and politics in general. There was a long and controversial process of change from the parties of an industrial society, mainly based on material values and class cleavages, to those of a post-industrial service society, based mainly on post-materialist values and social cleavages which are culturally oriented. The party landscape can briefly be characterized as a mixture of those two kinds of social background, and both the remnants of the industrial society and the new elements of the service society had a deep impact on the Hungarian party political landscape. Indeed, the usual description of European party developments, which sees parties lying somewhere between “irrelevance” and “omnipotence” applies very well to Hungary. In the two decades from the late 1980s until 2010, three main tendencies can be identified in the development of its party system:

(1) The continuous reduction in the number of parties from election to election, although Hungary already had a rather concentrated party system from the very beginning. The first turning point came in 1994 when the two leading parties in the early change to the system – the Hungarian Democratic Forum (*Magyar Demokrata Fórum*, MDF) and the Alliance of Free Democrats (*Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége*, SZDSZ) – lost their dominant positions. The second turning point came in 1998 and produced the two-party system that existed until 2010. The victorious parties usually gained a relative majority of seats and formed coalition governments in response to popular pressure for some kind of consensual politics.

² Cf. Attila ÁGH, The Socio-Economic Crisis and Social Polarization in Hungary. The Paradoxes of the European Integration Process, in: Sonja SCHÜLER (ed.), *Politische Kultur in (Südost-)Europa*. München 2012, 59-85; IDEM, Ten Years of the Catching-Up Story in the European Union: Differentiated Integration and Multilevel Governance in ECE, in: IDEM / Tamás KAISER / Boglárka KOLLER (eds.), *10 Years After: Multi-Level Governance and Differentiated Integration in the EU*. Budapest 2014, 31-61.

(2) Moving from the forum type parties, embracing a large spectrum of supporters, like the Hungarian Democratic Forum, the Left-Right divide became the dominant principle in the Hungarian party system, and was marked by the affiliation of the Hungarian parties to the appropriate EU transnational parties. The Hungarian Socialist Party (*Magyar Szocialista Párt*, MSZP) had already declared itself a social democratic party in October 1989, while in 1993-1994 Fidesz unified the right-leaning Independent Smallholders, Agrarian Workers and Civic Party (*Független Kisgazda, Földmunkás és Polgári Párt*, FKgP), the Christian Democratic Peoples' Party (*Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt*, KDNP), along with a faction of the MDF into one big catch-all party and took up a position on the right of the political spectrum, thereby bringing a two party system into being (see Table 1). While in 1990 the two biggest parties gained only 46.12 percent of the total vote, by 2006 their share had risen to 85.24 percent. However, trust in any of the Hungarian parties was usually below ten percent, meaning that the Hungarian party system was simultaneously strong and weak, stable and fragile.³

(3) Voter volatility decreased from 28.4 percent in 1994 to 8.4 percent in 2006, when an impressive 89 percent of the MSZP voters who had supported the party in 2002 voted for it again in 2006, and 85 percent of the Fidesz's supporters from 2002 continued their support in 2006. The percentage of "lost votes" too decreased, from 15.8 percent to 3.2 percent between 1990 and 2006. Most analysts – Hungarian and international – therefore concluded in the 2000s that the Hungarian party system had become consolidated. However, growing social dissatisfaction produced alternate Left- and Right-leaning governments in most of the elections until 2006, when for the first time a sitting government was re-elected. However, in 2009/2010 the party system as such collapsed under the pressure of both the global economic crisis and the general dissatisfaction of Hungarians with the results they had seen of the changes to the political system.⁴

The main characteristics of the Hungarian mainstream parties were that:

(1) they were "small size mass parties" or catch-all parties. Since individuals did not join parties in great numbers, the parties had a "head" but not much of a "body".

(2) Parties can therefore be characterized as "office-seeking" cadres, since their small membership was just enough to represent the competitive national and local political elite.

³ On the emergence and specificity of the Hungarian Socialist Party in East Central Europe see Patrick O'NEIL, *Revolution From Within. The Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party and the Collapse of Communism*. Cheltenham 1998.

⁴ For more on this period, with an overview of the literature, see e.g. Jürgen DIERINGER, *Das politische System der Republik Ungarn*. Opladen 2009; and Gabriella ILONCSI / Réka VÁRNAGY, *From Party Cartel to One-party Dominance*, *East European Politics* 30 (2014), no. 3, 412-427.

(3) The social foundation of the Hungarian parties was very weak, since their structuring principle was based much more firmly on cultural than on socio-economic cleavages.

(4) The parties were much more politically-ideologically than policy-oriented, which meant not least that the need to deal with the European Union's policy universe caused serious problems.

(5) There was a huge division between Left and Right, or between pro-EU and Eurosceptic parties. That division almost completely precluded compromises, coalition-forming and the reaching of consensus. There was an increasing propensity to create old-fashioned "spoils" systems, and with every change of government the new administration undertook its own series of political "purges", especially in the field of public administration.⁵

Altogether, Fidesz has shown some characteristic tendencies of the developments in the Hungarian party system. First, it has changed its name a number of times, although always keeping the "Fidesz" brand name. Fidesz is an acronym originally derived from Alliance of Young Democrats, but later Civic Party was added, and its full name has been Fidesz-Civic Alliance since 2003. The changes went in parallel with the incorporation of smaller parties into Fidesz, such as parts of the MDF and the KDNP. Hungary's first extreme right-wing party, the Hungarian Justice and Life Party (*Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja*, MIÉP), emerged from the MDF in 1993 under the leadership of István Csurka. Subsequently, it enjoyed the support of Fidesz, and that was how MIÉP managed to get into Parliament in 1998, although it failed to repeat the trick in 2002. An "old style" extremist party of the 2000s, MIÉP then merged with the "new style" *Jobbik* party (The Right /The Better) which included youngsters who had come from the radical wing of Fidesz. In the latest parliamentary elections, the KNDP stood on a joint list with Fidesz, so at the formal level in 2010 and 2014 Fidesz-KNDP coalition governments were formed, although the KNDP has only a proto-political framework and does not figure in public opinion surveys.

In general, until 2010 there were two major Left-leaning parties. At first, the MSZP was the dominant one, but after 2009-2010 it became seriously weakened and fragmented; then there was the liberal SZDSZ party, a coalition partner of the MSZP but which has in fact disappeared since 2010. On the Right there has

⁵ On party patronage in Hungary see Attila ÁGH, Bumpy Road of the Hungarian Administrative Reforms: From Political Over-Centralization to Public Policy Failures, *Croatian and Comparative Public Administration* 13 (2013), no. 4, 1115-1136; and Jan-Hinrik MEYER-SÄHLING / Krisztina JÁGER, Party Patronage in Hungary: Capturing the State, in: Petr KOPECKÝ / Peter MAIR / Maria SPIROVA (eds.), *Party Patronage and Party Government in European Democracies*. Oxford 2012, 163-185; and Vitalis NAKROSIS / Liutaras GUDZINKAS, Party Patronage and State Politicization in the Post-Communist Countries of Central and Eastern Europe, *The NISPAcee Journal of Public Administration and Policy* 5 (2013), no. 2, Special Issue: The Politics of Agency Governance, 89-121.

been a process of permanent splits and mergers, in which Fidesz eventually absorbed all the centre-right parties (MDF, KDNP and FKgP) and developed some kind of indirect cooperation with the extreme right-wing parties – the MIEP and later *Jobbik*. Fidesz has built up a huge system of party patronage, combined with increasing informal networks in Hungarian business life. Unfortunately here is not the place to compare the Visegrád Four (V4), or ECE countries with similar trends and key indicators leading to analogous collapses of their party systems, nor is it the place to compare certain party variables in a cross-country cluster, things like small-scale party membership, weak relationships between political parties and society, and low levels of trust in party political elites.⁶

*The Tendency to Populism
in the Hungarian Party System*

Hungarians had high expectations of the new democratic system, and they expected a close connection between democracy and welfare. Their expectations might indeed have been higher than those in other ECE countries, for during the 1980s Hungary had been a much more open country than the other socialist states, not least in that it allowed many Hungarians some direct experience of Western welfare societies. The emerging competitive party system reacted to those expectations by over-promising for the short term, within a given government cycle. As a result, Populism became the “childhood illness” of the young democracy and was an inherent tendency that affected all parties to varying extents, although it first appeared in the election campaigns of both the big parties – Fidesz and the MSZP. As a long term result of all this, declining trust has led to a general de-legitimation of parties and political elites, so that tackling populism seems to be the key to understanding the deviation in the development of the Hungarian party system within the EU.⁷

⁶ For a comparative perspective cf. Jack BIELISAK, Party Competition in Emerging Democracies: Representation and Effectiveness in Post-Communism and Beyond, *Democratization* 12 (2005), no. 3, 331-356; Ingrid VAN BIEZEN, Political Parties in New Democracies. Houndmills 2003; EADEM, On the Theory and Practice of Party Formation and Adaptation in New Democracies, *European Journal of Political Research* 44 (2005), no. 1, 147-174; Robert LADRECH, National Political Parties and European Governance, *West European Politics* 30 (2007), no. 5, 945-960; and Ferdinand MÜLLER-ROMMEL / Katja FETTELSCHOSS / Philipp HAREFT, Party Government in Central Eastern European Democracies: A Data Collection, *European Journal of Political Research* 43 (2004), no. 6, 869-894.

⁷ Populism is an often-used and much contested concept. Here I am discussing its social and national versions, as they appear in a combined way in Fidesz. On populism in general see e.g. André KROUWELL, Party Transformations in European Democracies. Albany/NY 2012; Ernesto LACLAU, On Populist Reason. London, New York 2007; and Cas MUDDE, Populist Radical Parties in Europe. Cambridge 2007. For the theory of electoral autocracy see e.g. Andreas SCHEDLER, Electoral Authoritarianism: The Dynamics of Unfree Competition, Boulder/CO, London 2006.

The social background of this controversial process is the triple crisis referred to above, in which two “lost generations” emerged up to the mid-2000s, and who were joined by a third when the crisis went global. The first generation was composed of those affected by the mass unemployment of the early 1990s, which was a consequence of privatization. The second generation, from the early 2000s, was composed of those who were unable to compete in the new context of EU membership. In fact, in the early 2000s the standard of living returned to its 1989 level, but with increasing social polarization that affected most Hungarians, with people suffering a great deal from decreasing social security and poor public services. In a word, there has been no social consolidation so far in Hungary but rather a “social shock” effect after two decades of change to economic and political systems.⁸

Thus, the history of populism in Hungary went through several stages before its climax in the present system of electoral autocracy. In its first stage, mass dissatisfaction with the new democratic order and the market economy triggered a demand at the political level for populist sloganeering, and provided a fertile ground for the combination of national and social populism seen in both the MDF and Fidesz. During the 1998 elections Fidesz introduced modern mass media political communication techniques, and won by promising, in a nationalist spirit, to end the misery of the transition phase, and by making an electoral alliance and government coalition with the traditionalist-populist Smallholders Party (FKgP). However, during the following elections in 2002 there was a high turnout as a reaction to the perceived “return to the past” of the first Orbán government. The national-conservative line of Fidesz was accordingly defeated by a narrow margin.

In the second stage, after the lost 2002 elections, Fidesz turned to the mass mobilization of its supporters by organizing “civic circles” and large street demonstrations in order to put pressure on the government. Fidesz claimed that it alone represented the “nation” and emphasized that “the nation could never be in opposition”. Party leader Viktor Orbán was the “Prime Minister of the Hungarian nation”, contrasting “nation” to “country” and declaring himself the leader of the “15 million Hungarians” at home and abroad. Although Fidesz lost both the 2002 and 2006 domestic parliamentary elections, it won the 2004 elections to the European Parliament, a result which can be interpreted as the first manifestation of emerging Hungarian Euro-scepticism (Table 3).

The characteristic process for the second stage was the emergence of *Jobbik* in 2003 as a small political organization of young extremist groups. Actually, it was born within the Fidesz party family, since Gábor Vona, the President of *Jobbik*,

⁸ Cf. Attila ÁGH, The Triple Crisis in Hungary: The “Backsliding” of Hungarian Democracy after Twenty Years, *Romanian Journal of Political Science* 13 (2013), no. 1, 25-51; and IDEM, Decline of Democracy in East-Central Europe, *Journal of Comparative Politics* 7 (2014), no. 2, 1-26.

had been a member in one of the Fidesz "civic circles" led by Viktor Orbán. However, *Jobbik* soon became the "black sheep" of the family, finally turning against the parent-party and establishing a separate organization. Yet, after the violent mass demonstrations of September and October 2006 against the leftist government, *Jobbik*'s supporters participated in all Fidesz public events, although they displayed their own symbols and slogans. Fidesz developed a more nationalist agenda, which overlapped with many of *Jobbik*'s demands, both politically and culturally, and in some local governments Fidesz even cooperated with *Jobbik*. In fact, *Jobbik* echoed the Fidesz type of nationalist discourse and symbolism, but simply shouted their anti-European as well as anti-Jewish or anti-Roma slogans more loudly, messages which in any case stemmed originally from more subtly coded Fidesz messages. However, *Jobbik* openly directed their slogans against the democratic system, demanding change based on Hungarian chauvinism. The main slogan of *Jobbik* was "Hungary for Hungarians", mobilizing "real" Hungarians against "traitors" and heaping blame on the Romani and Jewish minorities. *Jobbik*'s rallies were attended by the Hungarian Guard, a notorious and paramilitary organization that although banned was continually being re-organized under various new names. *Jobbik* recruited its followers mainly from either young middle class people who perceived themselves as the "losers" in the transformation, or from those deeply concerned by the "law and order" type of security, because poverty was concentrated in small settlements with high levels of social tension and high percentages of Roma among them. *Jobbik* made close references to Hungarian fascist traditions, combining it with "modernity" through the professional use of internet mobilization tools.

In 2006, Fidesz led a negative campaign based on the slogan "we live worse than before" and lost the elections by a greater margin than in 2002. As a result, it turned to an even more robust street mobilization, which ushered in the third stage of Hungarian populism. The high rate of mobilization occurred through mass street demonstrations and mass meetings of Fidesz supporters, often accompanied by violent street actions of an extremist right wing mob.

Thus, the political parties were transformed again, as the vital matter of political mobilization and demobilization came to the fore in what had become an all-party crisis. There was a sharpening paradox in party-society relationships, characterized by a highly mobilized and polarized society with a very low level of real political participation, which brought about the destabilisation of the party system since Fidesz was not ready to accept its second failure at the elections. Instead, Fidesz began a general attack on the government through both parliamentary and non-parliamentary means, stigmatizing the government as anti-national and representing foreign interests. International observers noted this aggressive populist turn in Hungary in 2006:

“An extreme right has emerged on the margin of public politics with a nationalist and racist profile that has been encouraged, or at least never directly and unambiguously condemned by the main opposition party, Fidesz. [...] The violent street demonstrations have had serious consequences for future political developments and societal attitudes, since they have undermined the role of the police and called the constitutional order into question; in this respect, they have led to the habituation of antidemocratic practices.”⁹

Immediately after assuming office, in June 2006, the governing coalition of the MSZP and the SZDSZ introduced drastic measures to decrease the high budget deficit in its EU convergence programme. That, combined with the fact that no mention had been made of such intentions during the election campaign, led to a sharp drop in popular support for both parties, and neither ever recovered. The main programme of the governing coalition was the structural reform of taxation, health care and education, but all were drastic reforms and highly unpopular, meeting implacable resistance from the electorate. On 9 March 2008, there was a “social referendum” about the reforms and all three were rejected by a large majority of more than eighty percent of those who voted. That sequence of events prepared the way for the third stage of populism, which began in 2009/10. The *Nations in Transit* Report emphasized the role of Fidesz in organizing a referendum against the necessary reforms:

“The rejection of government reforms at the March referendum created a risky precedent that may result in the country’s long-term inability to reform. The growing radicalization of Hungarian nationalists took a progressively racist turn [...]. The radical tendencies detectable in parts of Hungarian civil society during 2006 and 2007 continued, in fact, intensified in 2008. The openly xenophobic, antisemitic and anti-Roma Magyar Gárda (Hungarian Guard) continued to recruit members [...] the extreme right-wing civil society groups *Jobbik* and the Hungarian Guard successfully thematized the public discourse around the issue of ‘Gypsy criminality’.”¹⁰

Thus, as a reaction to the global crisis, according to the analysts of the European Policy Centre in Brussels, “countries like Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Czech Republic appeared to take a ‘populist turn’ [...] the incidents [*sic*] of threats to the EU’s democratic principles and values has increased”. It is particularly true in ECE, as Daniel Gros has pointed out, that “populists can easily project

⁹ See Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2010 – Hungary Country Report. Gütersloh 2010, 2, 7, available at <http://www.bti-project.de/uploads/tx_itaio_download/BTI_2010_Hungary.pdf>. According to a Freedom House Report on Hungary, “the main political parties are the MSZP and the conservative Fidesz, which has moved in an increasingly nationalist direction. [...] the opposition leader, Fidesz’s Viktor Orbán, stressed populist themes”. Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2008, Hungary, available at <<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2008/hungary#.VTfZgfDRZQ0>>. All internet sources were accessed on 23 April 2015.

¹⁰ Balázs Áron Kovács / Bálint MOLNÁR, Nations in Transit 2009 – Hungary, Freedom House, 30 June 2009, available at <<https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2009/hungary#.VTjDHvDRba0>>.

these problems onto 'Europe', which in this case merely represents fear of the outside world in general."¹¹

The negative campaign of Fidesz finally succeeded in the late 2000s when people were suffering severely from the global crisis and were looking for miracles. By the summer of 2009, Fidesz had a substantial lead over the MSZP (about 50 as against 20 percent support) which they were able to maintain right up to the national elections held in spring 2010. Prompted by the hostile political atmosphere, the radical right organized violent actions on national holidays and all other possible occasions, and although Fidesz half-heartedly condemned the violent street demonstrations, in fact it supported them through the national and social populist public discourse. Its mantra was "we have been living worse and worse in Hungary due to the misdeeds of the government". This "crisis discourse" with an anti-parliamentary approach of "voting against the government in the streets" served to increase popular dissatisfaction and went beyond the democratic rules by declaring that the incumbent government elected in free and fair elections was "illegal" and "illegitimate". The populists, in popular parlance, called it "bolshi-libi" (Bolshevik-liberal, with a reference to Jews) – traitors of the nation. In addition, Fidesz kept up a constant public discourse about "police brutality" against the demonstrators. In fact of course, the truth was precisely the opposite, for many demonstrations were extremely brutal, and in total many more policemen than far-right demonstrators were wounded. There were, however, some cases of police violence in these turbulent days, still the Fall 2006 events can be characterised in general as an aggressive attack of Fidesz and its extreme right allies against the parliamentary democracy in Hungary.¹²

In summarizing the subject of Fidesz and populism, it should be noted that first, social populism has been a general trend in Hungarian political development, with deep socio-economic roots in the great contrast between the expectations of the population and reality. Therefore, all governments and parties have resorted to representing the "man in the street" and have tried to bridge the gap by overpromising for the immediate future.

¹¹ Ibid., 236, 243, 248; Rosa BALFOUR / Corina STRATULAT, The Enlargement of the European Union, EPC Discussion Paper, December 2012, 2, available at <http://www.epc.eu/documents/uploads/pub_3176_enlargement_of_the_eu.pdf>; and Daniel GROS, Europe is Still Standing, CEPS Commentary, 6 June 2014, 2-3, available at <<http://www.gulf-times.com/opinion/189/details/395310/europe-is-still-standing>>.

¹² "FIDESZ tried to oust the Gyurcsány government by mobilizing a protest movement. [...] Orbán's aggressive mobilization campaigns encourage right-wing extremists and hooligans to stir up violent protests against the government in Budapest. [...] However, FIDESZ leader Orbán repeatedly demonstrated his disrespect for democratic institutions and conventions by resorting to extraparlimentary strategies and means of opposition." Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2010 – Hungary Country Report. Gütersloh 2010, 8, available at <http://www.bti-project.org/uploads/tx_itao_download/BTI_2008_Hungary.pdf>.

Second, Fidesz has practised its social populism more assertively than other parties and has extended it to national populism with a reference to the Treaty of Trianon, which it has done in order to create the image of an enemy – the Left as “the enemy of, or traitor to, the nation”. By the time of the late 2000s there was already widespread discontent with the social or welfare effects of economic developments, and that discontent was even further exacerbated by the painful consequences of the global economic crisis. At that particular moment in history Fidesz’s long-developed and ever-repeated crisis discourse became the successful political strategy and it led to its victory in both the 2009 European Parliament elections and the 2010 domestic Hungarian parliamentary elections. Even before the 2010 elections, social-national populism had emerged as the main danger to the democratic political system in Hungary.

Third, Fidesz turned to anti-democratic political actions and slogans and organized violent street demonstrations that have destabilized parliamentary democracy and the whole democratic order. All in all, as a result of both long term deception and the latest crisis management efforts, the Hungarian electorate in 2010 became receptive to Fidesz’s promises about starting again, offering economic growth, jobs and no further austerity measures.

There was an anti-democratic transformation within the Fidesz party itself, too. Simultaneously, mass mobilizations served as a substitute for the party’s small number of members, and later for disciplining them when their numbers did increase. Membership of Fidesz was already hierarchically organized in the 1990s, with no intra-party democracy and an all-powerful president enshrined in the party statute, an internal authoritarian feature who could become ever more dominant. Indeed, Fidesz’s emerging “party autocracy” foreshadowed its future “government autocracy” after 2010. Renata Uitz has given the following general evaluation of the Fidesz activity in this period:

“The party which has consistently relied on populist rhetoric since its successes as a conservative catch-all party is Fidesz. Becoming increasingly leader-centred and clearly capitalizing on the charisma of its leader, Viktor Orbán, Fidesz succeeded in polarizing the political sphere in an ‘us against them’ fashion, constantly questioning the legitimacy of the transition elites and constitutional arrangements resulting from the transition compromises.”¹³

Hungarians paid a high price for the emergence of the first party system because the emerging parties largely neglected the relationship between party and society, for political actors showed no sensitivity to genuine popular demands for long-term social consolidation. The period of the first party system can be briefly characterized as a sociopolitical senilization of parties and party leader-

¹³ Renata Uitz, Hungary, in: Grigorij MESEŽNIKOV / Ol’ga GYÁRFÁŠOVÁ / Daniel SMILOV (eds.), *Populist Politics and Liberal Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe*. Bratislava 2008, 37–68, 40, available at <<http://www.isp.org.pl/files/7832124490738466001218629576.pdf>>.

ships even after a mere twenty years. As a result, Hungarians became some of the most pessimistic people in the EU, so that their protracted post-accession crisis provoked a general crisis for the parties themselves that became evident at the 2009 European Parliament elections.

The Worst Case Scenario. The Emergence of Electoral Autocracy

The Collapse of the First Party System at the 2009 Elections for the European Parliament

The breakthrough of populism at the 2009 elections to the European Parliament was actually the prelude to the complete collapse of the first party system seen at the 2010 parliamentary elections in Hungary. The 2009 EP election's political atmosphere, and the post-accession climate in general were determined by the negative perception of both the twenty years of system change and Hungary's five years of EU membership. In 2009 while the Europeanization of the party system appeared stronger than it had during the 2004 EP elections, domestic factors were still dominant. Fidesz was by far the largest and best organized soft Eurosceptic party in East Central Europe, issuing ambiguous declarations about the EU as "double talk" at home in order to placate anti-EU voters among their own supporters. The Hungarian centre-left supported EU integration more strongly, but it was constantly frustrated in its efforts to approach significantly closer to the model of "social Europe", so its leftist character was often questioned by friends and adversaries alike. Accordingly, the dual divide distorted both sides, the centre-left suffering from the effect of material lack resulting from management of the severe economic crisis, while the centre-right struggled with the contradictions of Europeanization. The result was blurred and uncertain identities on both Left and Right, and there was no true pro-European centre-right party in Hungary, nor is it possible to identify a centre-left party with a markedly leftist programme. Thus, actors of the sort typical in Western European democracies simply never emerged. The Europeanized rightist party failed to fit the bill because, although successful in winning the EP elections, Fidesz was not able to avoid the dual trap of national-social populism and Euro-scepticism that endangered its acceptance by the Western partners. On the other side, the MSZP was more interested in Europeanization than in elaborating its own leftist character, since the Left was weakened by its failure to achieve social consolidation which had led to the fragmentation and weakening of the Left as a whole.¹⁴

¹⁴ The causes of the Left's crisis after 2010 would merit a separate analysis. About the first period see Attila ÁGN, *The Hungarian Left and the European Integration Process: The*

At the June 2009 EP elections there was a relatively high turnout (36.28% – slightly less than in 2004 with 38.42%) and the left-right balance was clearly shifting, since the centre right Fidesz party won an overwhelming victory with 14 seats, and the centre left MSZP suffered a decisive defeat, gaining just 4 seats. A large number of protest votes went to *Jobbik* on the extreme right who gained 3 seats, and the small conservative MDF just managed to remain above the threshold, winning a single seat. (see Table 3). That outcome illuminates the electoral fortunes of the Left and the Right, indicating the Golden Age of populism and of virulent protest parties. The results of the 2009 EP elections were remarkable in three respects. First, electoral turnout in Hungary was the highest in the new member states, since protest votes played a big role. Second, the Hungarian Left (MSZP) suffered the biggest defeat among the leftist parties or governing parties in the EU, seeing a decline from 9 to 4 seats. Third, the success of *Jobbik*, the Hungarian extreme right and militant anti-EU party, was the biggest surprise, coming rather as a bolt from the blue. Altogether, the results of the 2009 EP elections showed the polarization between traditionalists and modernizers, as dissatisfaction with the domestic democracy and the EU membership generated a veritable “Kulturkampf”.

Public opinion surveys in 2009 indicated a shift of preoccupations among Hungarians to both jobs and public security matters, and to fears about the prolonged social crisis and increasing unemployment. The party landscape too changed beyond recognition because the anti-systemic, extreme-right *Jobbik* party became so strong. At the EP elections there was still a large overlap between Fidesz and *Jobbik* supporters, with frequent shifting between the two parties. Most *Jobbik* voters were also Fidesz supporters and vice versa, since people moved rather easily between the soft and hard Eurosceptic parties. A large proportion of *Jobbik* voters were recruited from among young, first-time voters and from those living in small settlements who had been most severely hit by the global economic crisis. The split between transformation-period winners and losers was deep in Hungary, and the new global economic crisis provoked a much deeper shock effect than the usual short crisis cycles. All in all, there was political turbulence with high government instability, since the global economic crisis hit Hungary particularly hard, which caused further disillusionment.¹⁵

Bittersweet Success of “Return to Europe”, in: Michael HOLMES / Knut RÖDER (eds.), *The Left and the European Constitution: From Laeken to Lisbon*, Manchester, New York 2012, 219-236, available at <http://www.academia.edu/4036579/12_The_Hungarian_Left_and_the_European_Integration_Process_the_bitter_sweet_success_of_return_to_Europe>.

¹⁵ The post-crisis socio-economic situation in Hungary has been well documented, see e.g. OECD, *Going for Growth: Reforming Balanced Recovery – Hungary Country note* 2013, available at <<http://www.oecd.org/eco/growth/Hungary.pdf>>. In Hungary “the income disparity [...] has significantly increased” and the “at-risk-of-poverty rate also climbed

In the period of the global economic crisis, seizing the opportunity of the widespread discomfort, Fidesz used its national-social populism in its electoral campaigns with its usual “double game – double discourse” attitude to the EU. It tried to show a European face to the EU with a balanced, moderate conservatism, while at the same time sending coded messages to the domestic audience, especially to the extreme right, in an attempt to widen its own electoral support. Its double discourse was greatly facilitated by the slogans of national-social populism because that common denominator provided continuity between moderate and extremist statements. Fidesz refused to distance itself unambiguously from the anti-systemic right and echoed all the excuses for the extremist mob, maintaining its strategy of downplaying the importance of *Jobbik* while accusing the Left of exaggerating the size, influence and danger of the extreme right. With that strategy, Fidesz hoped to recruit the voters of the extreme right, and it was for that reason that it was not ready for any kind of meaningful confrontation with *Jobbik* and managed only limited actions through a “velvet distinction” from that party. After the 2009 EP elections, however, Fidesz has begun to worry about *Jobbik*, since it lost its former control over this party.

The Emergence of the Second Party System after the 2010 Elections

The main result of the 2009 EP elections was the drastic decline of the governing MSZP and SZDSZ parties and a push for a basic transformation of the party system. Popular support for MSZP was fatally damaged and SZDSZ became fragmented into small groups until it finally dissolved. The management of the effects of the global economic crisis produced a huge wave of protest against the government, and due to Hungary’s protracted experience of the socio-economic crisis, its old party system collapsed in 2010. The aggressively populist strategy of Fidesz engineered the takeover of power in 2010 and the subsequent electoral autocracy in 2014 (Table 2). Hence, the hard or mature version of populism has appeared with Fidesz in the form of “populism from above”.

The overwhelming victory of Fidesz at the April 2010 elections effectively saw the contours of a new party system emerge. The MSZP was significantly weakened and pushed into second place, while the MDF and SZDSZ disappeared from parliament. *Jobbik*, the extreme right-wing party, and the new

sharply”. Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2014, East-Central and Southeast Europe Regional Report, 49, 58, available at <<http://www.bti-project.org/reports/regional-reports/east-central-and-southeast-europe/>>. I have written a Progress Report on NMS with a large database, see Attila ÁGH, Progress Report on the New Member States. Twenty Years of Social and Political Developments, Together for Europe Series 17, Budapest 2013, available at <http://www.academia.edu/4037008/23_Progress_Report_on_the_New_Member_States_20_Years_of_Social_and_Political_Developments>.

socio-environmental protest party Politics Can Be Different (*Lehet Más a Politika*, LMP) entered parliament, and their arrival changed the party landscape beyond recognition. The results of the 2010 elections demonstrated that national-social populism was very attractive with its politics of symbolism, promising both welfare and the adherence to the idea of an imagined “Hungarian nation” in the Carpathian region. The populist temptation was formulated in the government programme of Fidesz, called the “Programme for National Cooperation”.¹⁶

The second Orbán government claimed to be starting a new historical era in Hungary thanks to what it called the “two-thirds majority revolution” or “revolution by election”. The victory of Fidesz, which gained a two-thirds supermajority in parliament, meant the entry of a state party able and willing to take the first steps to establish a new semi-authoritarian rule. It was characteristic that the second Orbán government had begun its activity in 1998 with harsh criticism of systematic change in general, and with the criminalization of the former centre-left government in particular, which Fidesz blamed for all Hungary’s economic and social problems. It was a political retaliation promised by Fidesz before the elections, and was called for even more loudly by *Jobbik*, whose electoral slogan: “giving twenty years (in prison) for twenty years (of systemic change)” had referred to those concerned in the previous administration. However, the *Jobbik* slogan was also discomfiting for Fidesz, because it implicitly referred to Fidesz politicians who had been involved in governing the country between 1998 and 2002. Nevertheless, such criminalization of politics was introduced by Fidesz in order to divert public attention from its new and painful austerity measures and to keep political tension high for as long as possible, to balance the emerging economic difficulties.¹⁷

In general, the electoral competition changed the love-hate relationship between Fidesz and *Jobbik*, since in the 2010 parliamentary elections *Jobbik* had

¹⁶ On 18 February 2010, before the elections, Orbán gave a conceptual or strategic speech in Kötöcs for the Fidesz leaders on creating the “central” or hegemonic party system: Megőrizni a létezés magyar minőségét – Orbán kötcsei beszéde szóról szóra, *hirextra.hu*, 18 February 2010, available at <<http://www.hirextra.hu/2010/02/18/megorizni-a-letezes-magyar-minoseget-orban-kotcsei-beszede-szorol-szora/>>. Fidesz produced a populist programme for the 2010 elections, called “A Nemzeti Együttműködés Programja: munka, otthon, család, egészség, rend” [Program for national cooperation: work, home, family, health, order], available at <<http://www.parlament.hu/irom39/00047/00047.pdf>>. In 2014, Fidesz did not put forth any programme, just a declaration that “we continue”.

¹⁷ On the backsliding Hungarian democracy cf. Jonathan BIRDWELL et al., *Backsliders. Measuring Democracy in the EU*. London 2013, available at <<http://www.demos.co.uk/publications/backsliders>>; Economist Intelligence Unit, *Democracy Index 2012: Democracy at a Standstill*, London et al. 2013, available at <https://portoncv.gov.cv/dhub/porton.por_global.open_file?p_doc_id=1034>; and Freedom House, *Nations in Transit 2013: Authoritarian Aggression and the Pressures of Austerity*. Lanham/MD, New York 2013, available at <<https://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/NIT%202013%20Booklet%20-%20Report%20Findings.pdf>>.

already received mass support, and the two parties had turned against each other. *Jobbik* had to begin a frontal attack on Fidesz in order to avoid its own disappearance from the political scene – something it had seen happen to the Smallholders Party (FKgP) during the first Orbán government. Therefore, *Jobbik* usually produced extremist demands and slogans, with Fidesz adopting a milder version of them after a “decent interval” and then using the argument that they had had to react to popular pressure. Fidesz contrived to position itself at the centre, and it became the party’s main ideological claim that it prevented extremist actions from both the far right and the far left. That characteristic “marketing” of Fidesz in the EU was to present itself as the best bulwark against *Jobbik*.¹⁸

The new tension between Fidesz and *Jobbik* produced many ambiguities, and blurred borders as voters and supporters switched allegiance between the two parties in the usual way of things between soft and hard Euro-sceptic parties. In fact, the Euro-scepticism that was on the increase in Hungary was tending to evolve in support of the sort of “hard” types which include objection to EU membership in itself, rather than simply contesting individual EU institutions or policies, as the “soft” types do. To indicate its all-out confrontation with the EU, or “protesting against colonization by the EU”, *Jobbik* publicly burned an EU flag on 14 January 2012. Similarly, as a symbolic action, on 13 February 2014, the last day of the former legislative cycle, two *Jobbik* MPs threw the EU flag from the windows of the Hungarian Parliament, and neither the Speaker of Parliament, a member of Fidesz, nor his parliamentary staff lifted a finger to prevent their action. Altogether, in what was certainly a decidedly ambiguous relationship, cooperation between Fidesz and *Jobbik* remained rather intense. Fidesz used *Jobbik* on the streets rather as an iron fist for its velvet glove, with the intention of threatening the democratic opposition; but at the same time Fidesz weakened its contacts with *Jobbik*, since *Jobbik* was making such a success of attracting Fidesz voters. The common features and strong ties between Fidesz and *Jobbik* still dominated during the second Orbán government, but were kept much more in the background, while in public, confrontations between the two parties became more prominent.¹⁹

¹⁸ The main points of *Jobbik*’s electoral programme in 2010 were: (1) foreign trade reorientation from the EU to the “East”; (2) full support for the historic churches, including the incorporation of the ancient Hungarian religion (shamanism) into the state and as part of social activities; and (3) the Hungarian constitution should be based on the concept of Saint Stephen’s crown.

¹⁹ This situation has created a high level of xenophobia in Hungary. Two Hungarian research institutes – *Political Capital* and *Policy Solutions* have been deeply involved in the DEREX (Demand for Right-Wing Extremism) international network, and have also produced many papers on *Jobbik*. See their respective internet sites, available at <<http://www.politicalcapital.hu>>; <<http://www.policysolutions.hu>>; <<http://www.derexindex.eu>>.

For a better understanding of the second party system, the Western and Eastern types of populism – or Old Member State and New Member State (NMS) – have to be distinguished as well. A widespread judgment on populist parties still haunts European Studies, and essentially holds that “one size fits all”, and so fails to make the proper distinction between the two types. That is highly misleading, since the Western type is based first on the resilient *post-welfare* societies now struggling with the problems of decreasing “well-being”; and second, on the matter of *migration* and the question of new migrants. The Eastern type, on the other hand, is based first on the crisis-prone *pre-welfare* societies, very far from “well-being”, sustainability and life-satisfaction; and second depends on the tensions between the majority population and *autochthonous* “ethnic minorities”. The political borders in ECE do not follow the ethnic borders, therefore the same ethnic groups live on both sides of the border, in one case as the majority, in the other case as minority.

The evolutionary model, suggesting that the New Member States will sooner or later catch up, does not apply. Actually, since the very beginning of systematic change the NMS populations and the political parties have been diverging from the “Western Path”. Social consolidation and local democracy in these countries are in a worse shape than twenty or even ten years ago. As Abby Innes has noted,

“The stable party competitions and Weberian states of post-war western Europe were founded on strong elite commitments to democracy and socially embedded through sustained productivity growth and universally rising living standards. But these conditions have never existed in central Europe”.²⁰

The ECE new member states, the “East”, are further different from Europe’s “South” because the negative externalities of the EU’s Eastern enlargement have produced a dependent development, due to the close contacts in production with the West, which have split the ECE countries into two parts – a modernised one and a backward one. That political geography, that split, in fact crosses the ECE region from Poland to Croatia where some regions have succeeded while others have not. The success stories have produced a Western type of development and a relatively successful economic “catching-up” in the “West of the East”, in the Western parts of the ECE countries, while in the “East of the East”, in the Eastern parts of the ECE countries the regions have actually declined economically, with high unemployment rates and a considerable brain drain. In those “failing” parts of the ECE countries, both “soft” and “hard” Eurosceptic parties have found large popular support, as they have too in the declassed middle strata. The term “precariate”, to describe a permanent state

²⁰ Abby INNES, The Political Economy of State Capture in Central Europe, *Journal of Common Market Studies* 52 (2014), no. 1, Special Issue: Eastern Enlargement Ten Years On, 88-104, 88.

of socioeconomic insecurity, has entered the vocabulary of the ECE countries for the declining middle classes.

After 2010, in the second emerging party system in Hungary, Fidesz penetrated the entire society, all sectors, from the economy to the media. In reality, rather than a mere political party, it has become a complex, comprehensive and well-organized political, economic and social actor. The second Orbán government fundamentally weakened the political system of checks and balances and replaced the heads of important institutions with loyal party foot-soldiers. Its main political weapon was to use the legal apparatus for direct political purposes, since the government was able to exploit its two-thirds parliamentary supermajority to amend the constitution to suit its own agenda. The government produced many more acts in the former legislative period (2010-2014) than had been decreed previously (859 acts), and in addition they were very often amended (538 amendments). The reason for the amendments is that many laws and acts were of poor quality, or they were changed frequently to adapt them to new demands and changing circumstances. Finally, in 2011, the Orbán government passed a new Constitution, in the spirit of legal traditionalism and nationalism, thereby constructing a democratic façade around an undemocratic institutional system. On the surface everything looks legal, but this Potemkin village-like constitution in fact masks semi-authoritarian rule in practice. In the first half of its legislative cycle, the second Orbán government conducted a complete overhaul of the political system. In the second half it focused on changing electoral legislation to consolidate its constitutional majority, and did so even until just before the 2014 elections. The resulting quasi one-party rule aggravated the socio-economic crisis that has produced a mass migration to the West, while causing only soft protest and deep apathy at home. Altogether, this decline of democracy as a form of “populism from above” tended towards becoming a new kind of authoritarian rule which has been documented by a European Parliament report and comprehensively assessed by international analysts.²¹

Summarizing the period from 2010-2014, the 2014 Bertelsmann country report gives the full picture. It concludes that the period can be characterised as “the challenge of populism and polarization” in ECE, and “protest parties are on

²¹ Cf. the Tavares Report of 2013, passed by the European Parliament with a large majority, on the historical deviation of Hungary from democratic pursuit during the second Orbán government, European Parliament, Draft Report on the Situation of Human Rights: Standards and Practices in Hungary, 2012/2130(INI), 2 May 2013, available at <<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONGSML+COMPARL+PE-508.211+02+DOC+PDF+V0//EN>>. On the danger of the Hungarian, and also the Romanian, cases “contaminating” other states see Irina BOULIN-GHICA, Are Threats to Democracy in Certain Central and Eastern European Member States a Potential Test for Europe?, Fondation Robert Schuman, Policy Paper 272, 3 April 2013, available at <http://www.robert-schuman.eu/doc/questions_europe/qe-272-en.pdf>.

the rise". As one of the worst cases, Hungary is said to have become a defective democracy:

"In the case of Hungary, these trends are also associated with a weakening of the institutions and principles underpinning the country's market economy. Hungary, along with Romania and Serbia, has been classified as a defective democracy."²²

Moreover,

"A model of dominance-oriented power politics according to which ruling parties utilize their legislative majority to weaken the 'checks and balances' stipulated by the constitution in order to consolidate their own power in state and society was particularly prevalent during the review period in Albania, Hungary, Macedonia, and Romania."²³

The Turn to Electoral Autocracy at the 2014 Elections

In 2014 a very polarized, disillusioned society faced domestic parliamentary elections as well as those for the European Parliament. It is indicative of the history of Hungarian populism that according to the July 2014 Eurobarometer, 46 percent of Hungarians fear falling into deep poverty.²⁴ The 2014 parliamentary elections renewed the supermajority for Fidesz (Table 2), although before its own changes to the electoral rules, Fidesz could have achieved only a simple majority. To be sure then, their overwhelming victory was made possible by the manipulative law-making mentioned above. Many international observers have commented that the 2014 elections were "legal but unfair".²⁵ In sum, Fidesz received a two-thirds majority in parliament with the support of a quarter of the electorate, and that is the outcome that justifies the term electoral autocracy.

In its usual diplomatic style the OSCE International Election Observer Mission's monitoring report mentioned a series of violations of democratic electoral rules:

(1) The election acts were "passed and modified without public consultation".

²² Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2014, 50. See also Bertelsmann Stiftung, Sustainable Governance Indicator (SGI), Hungary Country Report 2014, available at <<http://www.sgi-network.org/2014/Hungary>>.

²³ Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2014, 52.

²⁴ Public Opinion in the European Union, Standard Eurobarometer 81, June 2014, available at <http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb81/eb81_first_en.pdf>, 27.

²⁵ Cf. Kim Lane SCHEPPELE, Legal But Not Fair (Hungary), *The New York Times*, 13 April 2014, available at <http://krugman.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/04/13/legal-but-not-fair-hungary/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0>; Cas MUDDE, The 2014 Hungarian Parliamentary Elections, Or How to Craft a Constitutional Majority, *The Washington Post*, 14 April 2014, available at <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/04/14/the-2014-hungarian-parliamentary-elections-or-how-to-craft-a-constitutional-majority/>>.

(2) There was an unfair electoral system with gerrymandering in the electoral districts and the new districts were highly unequal in size.

(3) There was an increased electorate from ethnic Hungarians living abroad;

(4) "The tone of the campaign was dominated by alleged corruption cases at the expense of discussion on substantive issues".

(5) The National Election Commission was "a partisan commission" serving the Orbán government, and the use of government advertisements "did not fully respect the separation of party and state".²⁶

Kim Scheppele has pointed out that the legal tricks were designed quite systematically: "The new system was designed precisely to give Orbán a vastly disproportionate two-thirds parliamentary majority". Specifically, due to the several tricks, including a winner compensation system such that "1 Fidesz vote = 2.1 left alliance votes [...] the Fidesz seats were acquired with many fewer votes than the others", since for Fidesz 31,833 votes were needed for a seat, whereas for the left alliance (Unity) 66,309 were needed. Thus, Hungary's electoral system certainly was tailor-made for Fidesz' needs. What constitutes the electoral autocracy is rather the combination of the winner-compensation system with the Hungarian party structure. Scheppele concluded that "[Orbán's] supermajority came from a variety of legal tricks contained in the laws that were written by Fidesz, for Fidesz".²⁷ Cas Mudde drew similar conclusions. He sees the Fidesz supermajority as illegitimate and declares Fidesz "the electoral loser but political winner".²⁸

Indeed, the new electoral legislation has seriously restricted the media campaign possibilities for political parties, while a Fidesz-sponsored pseudo-civic organization, the Civic Alliance Forum (*Civil Összefogás Fórum*, CÖF) conducted an expensive and extremely negative campaign against the allied democratic opposition (Unity). In addition, the electoral system has privileged ethnic Hungarians, new citizens living in the neighbouring states (of these 128,000 voters about 95 percent voted for Fidesz).²⁹ It has, on the other hand, disadvantaged non-resident Hungarian citizens working in the West (of these 600,000 voters, who are usually non-Fidesz voters, only 28,161 voted), since their large majority was excluded from voting – as a result of alleged administrative mistakes, or for technical reasons. Voting was made possible only at embassies and consulates. Ethnic Hungarians in neighbouring countries were granted postal votes,

²⁶ OSCE, International Election Observation Mission: Hungary – Parliamentary Elections, 6 April 2014, 2, available at <<http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/117205?download=true>>.

²⁷ SCHEPPELE, *Legal But Not Fair (Hungary)*, 3, 5, 9, 11.

²⁸ MUDDE, *The 2014 Hungarian Parliamentary Elections*.

²⁹ Nemzeti Választási Iroda, Országgyűlési képviselők választása, 2014 április 6. A levélben leadott listás szavazatok megszámlálása, available at <http://valasztas.hu/hu/ogyv2014/861/861_0_index.html>.

whereas non-resident Hungarians working in the West were not.³⁰ Scheppele concluded her analysis of the 2014 elections with a warning:

“The European Union imagines itself as a club of democracies, but now must face the reality of a Potemkin democracy in its midst. EU is now going into its own parliamentary elections, after which it will have to decide whether Hungary still qualifies to be a member of the club.”³¹

Indeed, a year after the EP elections her statement can only be endorsed. The question needs to be raised whether the present party system with an electoral autocracy has not in fact been consolidated by the EU’s almost turning a blind eye to it. Hungary’s socio-economic crisis has been deepening and its international competitiveness drastically declining, even compared to other ECE states. Two comprehensive analyses on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the EU enlargement into East Central Europe have described Hungary as having entered a transition to semi-authoritarian rule.³²

Conclusion

Hungarians harboured very high expectations for systemic change in the late 1980s. However, their expectations of a Western-style standard of living and sociopolitical system have evolved into a demand for populist politics, with parties promising quick development. Populism has become the main feature of Hungarian party politics, and Fidesz has been its major representative. Although the other parties too have tried to extend their political powers to the economy, Fidesz has become by far the most dominant party in this field. By the late 2000s, Fidesz had built up a comprehensive system of political, economic and media power and at the 2010 elections completed its capture of the state. Reaching complete political and social dominance during the second Orbán government, Fidesz has managed to put itself into a position to change the entire political system, including creating a new Constitution and extensive new legislation.

³⁰ All electoral regulations and data are available, also in English, on the official website of the National Election Office, available at <<http://valasztas.hu>>.

³¹ SCHEPPELE, Legal But Not Fair, 17.

³² Klaus SCHWAB (ed.), *Global Competitiveness Report 2012-2013*, World Economic Forum, Geneva 2012, available at <http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GlobalCompetitivenessReport_2012-13.pdf>. It is important to add that Hungary’s democratic performance and economic competitiveness had already declined seriously in the 2000s. Even more drastic however, have been developments since 2010, during the new Orbán governments. Among the literature on ten years of Hungary’s EU membership, see Ulrich SEDELMEIER, *Anchoring Democracy from Above? The European Union and Democratic Backsliding in Hungary and Romania after Accession*, *Journal of Common Market Studies* 52 (2014), no. 1, Special Issue: Eastern Enlargement Ten Years On, 105-121;; and Jacques RUPNIK / Jan ZIELONKA, *The State of Democracy 20 Years On: Domestic and External Factors*, *East European Politics and Societies* 27 (2013), no. 3, 1-25.

Table 1. Parliamentary elections, 1990-2002 (votes in percent, 386 seats).

<i>Parties</i>	<i>1990 votes</i>	<i>1990 seats</i>	<i>1994 votes</i>	<i>1994 seats</i>	<i>1998 votes</i>	<i>1998 seats</i>	<i>2002 votes</i>	<i>2002 seats</i>
MDF	24.72	164	12.03	38	3.12	17	(41.07)	24
SZDSZ	21.40	93	18.62	69	7.88	24	5.57	20
FKgP	11.74	44	7.88	26	13.78	48	0.75	–
MSZP	10.89	33	31.27	209	32.25	134	42.05	178
Fidesz	8.95	21	7.70	20	28.18	148	(41.07)	164
KDNP	6.46	21	7.37	22	2.59	–	–	–
MIÉP	–	–	–	–	5.55	14	4.37	–

Table 2. Parliamentary elections, 2006-2014 (votes in percent, 386, 386, 199 seats).

<i>Parties</i>	<i>2006 votes</i>	<i>2006 seats</i>	<i>2010 votes</i>	<i>2010 seats</i>	<i>2014 votes</i>	<i>2014 seats</i>
Fidesz	42.03	164	53.64	263	45.04	133
MSZP	43.21	190	21.28	59	(25.67)	29
Jobbik	–	–	16.36	47	20.30	23
SZDSZ	6.31	20	–	–	–	–
MDF	5.04	11	1.42	–	–	–
LMP	–	–	5.07	16	5.36	5
DK	–	–	–	–	(25.67)	4
E-PM	–	–	–	–	(25.67)	4

Table 3. EP elections, 2004-2014 (votes in percent, 24, 22, 21 seats respectively).

<i>Parties</i>	<i>2004 votes</i>	<i>2004 seats</i>	<i>2009 votes</i>	<i>2009 seats</i>	<i>2014 votes</i>	<i>2014 seats</i>
Fidesz	47.40	12	56.36	14	51.49	12
MSZP	34.30	9	17.37	4	10.92	2
Jobbik	–	–	14.77	3	14.68	3
SZDSZ	7.74	2	2.16	–	–	–
MDF	5.33	1	5.31	1	–	–
LMP	–	–	–	–	5.01	1
DK	–	–	–	–	9.76	2
E-PM	–	–	–	–	7.22	1

Electoral turnout: 38.42% (2004); 36.28% (2009); and 28.92% (2014).

Fidesz uses its two-thirds supermajority in parliament to strengthen its rule by the use of legal instrumentalism, which has enabled manipulative electoral legislation that led to another new supermajority in 2014. The present “elected autocracy” has caused serious conflicts with the EU and the US, but so far no meaningful domestic political alternative has appeared.

There were ten independent MPs in 1990 and one in 1994 and in 1998. Fidesz and the MDP ran together in 2002, gaining 41.07% on the common party list and with separated seats (164+24). Electoral turnout in (first and second round):

65.11% - 45.54% (1990); 68.92% - 55.12% (1994); 56.26% - 57.01% (1998); 70.53% - 73.51% (2002) (see Table 2).

There was one independent MP in 2006 and also in 2010. MSZP, DK and E-PM ran with a common party list in 2014, winning 25.67 percent on the common list and 38 seats altogether, allocated as 29+4+4 seats, one seat being given to a liberal MP. Electoral turnout: 67.83% - 64.39% (2006, first and second round); 64.20% - 46.62% (2010, first and second round); and 60.09% (2014, one round). Fidesz support in absolute figures from the 8.1 million electorate: 439.481 (1990); 416.143 (1994), 1,263.522 (1998); 2,306.763 (2002); 2,272.979 (2006); 2,743.626 (2010); and 2014 (2,142.142 plus 122,638 votes from Hungarians living in the neighbouring countries). Fidesz lost 600,000 voters but with the new manipulated rules the supermajority was reached again (see Table 3).