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CONFIGURATIONS OF POPULISM IN HUNGARY

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Abstract

Populist rhetoric always promises a new, more inclusive political community but very often this only achieves new ways of exclusion. Populism is one of the most flexible terms in the history of ideas and in political science therefore it can often co-exist with different regimes and ideologies. In the case of Hungary, populism appeared first as a reaction to Western capitalism and to the lost World War I, and offered a dream-like “garden country” against major international regimes, totalitarian or democratic. However, populism changed its character from time to time: it revived nationalism in the communist period, it expressed reservations to the elite-driven regime change, it featured anti-liberalism, and finally it presented itself as a renewed rhetoric of “nationalist neoliberalism”. Among the several understandings of populism, Edward Shils’ definition is accepted – this states that in populist discourse the will of the people enjoys top priority in the face of any other principle, right or institutional standard. Populism identifies the people with justice and morality. The discourse analytic approach to populism is broad enough to discuss different historical epochs with regard to populism without inflating the concept.

Keywords

Populism, Socialism, Nationalism, Inclusion, Hungary

Introduction

Populism, which once a feature of the Hungarian ‘népi’ (popular) writers’ movement, and was preserved in cultural tradition throughout the 20th century, appeared in different waves in the last decades. Populist ideas and policies never had the chance to provide a political alternative in a totalitarian and authoritarian dictatorship. At the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, the faith of these political ideas was not clear. Moreover, its form – whether it would be a political idea, or a political style, or a political practice that is suitable for every purpose – was not clear either. Recently, populism re-appeared in a form of nationalist “package” of neoliberal economic policies.ⁱ

With regard its nature populism has induced many radical ideas. Some thought it to be the ideological cover of fascism or the radical right, others believed it to be a statist economic policy, that could appear not only on the right but on the anti-liberal left as well, which was defending its position. Others thought that populism is a rather harmless phenomenon, because democracy cannot exist without some elements of populism in it; therefore populism is simply a demagogic way of speaking, a political style. Judging populism proved to be as controversial as the attempts at describing it, not only for those in politics but for observers as well.ⁱⁱ

According to the class theory approach, populism is an expression of the interests of one or more classes (farmers, urban settlers, intellectuals, informal proletariat etc.) depending on the social and historical context. Others regard populism as a flexible, opportunistic, anti-ideological concept: much more of a syndrome than a doctrine.ⁱⁱⁱ Many scholars insist that populism is an ideology which comprises some typical elements, for instance: “hostility to the status quo, mistrust of traditional politicians, appeal to the people and not to classes, and anti-intellectualism”.^{iv} Recently, populism was defined as “an ideology which pits a virtuous and homogenous people, against a set of elites and dangerous others”.^v Some say, populism is not an independent ideology but a variant of socialism, while others claim that populism can also be an expression of nationalism,^{vi} radical right,^{vii} or even neo-liberalism.^{viii}

Others follow a functionalist explanation by suggesting that populism is a premature incorporation of the masses into political life at times when political structures are unable to institutionalize participation.^{ix} The weakness of the structures of representation, the lack of autonomous workers’ organizations, and the rising expectations of the masses create a particular social context favorable for populism.^x Students of democracy may also use populism as indicator in distinguishing between liberal and illiberal democracies.^{xi}

Finally, populism can be analyzed within the framework of discourse analysis. Here, in the populist discourse politicians express the supposedly uniform interests of the people as an ultimate reference. Good and evil, workers and oligarchs, producers and parasites are presented as polar opposites in this political discourse, in which elites and migrants, minorities do not “truly” belong to the people. Therefore populism is not a singular phenomenon linked to a certain age and phase of development. It can accommodate itself in different social contexts and political regimes.

In this paper, my approach is based on Edward Shils’ classic definition of populism, the one that I found most comprehensive. This approach can be interpreted as the forerunner of the discourse analytic school of thought, which gained prominence in research on populism as well. “According to populism the will of the people enjoys top priority in the face of any other principle, right, and institutional standard. Populists identify the people with justice and morality.”^{xii}

Generally populism promises a broad inclusion of the people to the political process. In the following, I will demonstrate that populist attitudes and policies served just the opposite goal in the European semi-periphery. Populism has not only been applied flexibly to different, contradictory politics, but it is often used for exclusionary political purposes. I aim to establish a typology of Hungarian populism as 1. fusion of nationalism and socialism in the interwar period (1919-45); 2. cultural nationalism in

the communist period (1948-88); 3. a form of discourse by intellectuals in politics during and after the transition (1987-94); 4. a form of anti-liberal discourse at the millennium (1998-2002); and 5. a fusion of nationalism and neo-liberalism most recently (2010-12). I will demonstrate that most of these forms of populism were presented rhetorically as new forms of political inclusion while those were mostly serving exclusionary policies. The many types and long durée dynamics of Hungarian populism seem to be one of the permanent characteristics of policy-making in the last decades.

1. The Birth of Hungarian Capitalism and Its Social Discontents (1867-1914)

The development of Hungarian society was induced from above and from the side of the border, and compared to the modernization of the West it was belated. The defeated Hungarian revolution of the mid-19th century failed to reach national independence, and it was at first part of the Habsburg Monarchy, and after the 1867 Compromise with the Austrians, it became equal to Austria in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. In the period between 1867 and 1914 the economy developed rapidly, the railway network of the country was developed; and the capital Budapest became a metropolis. The Czech and German skilled workers as well as emigrating Jewish traders played a significant role in this economic boom. An urban-bourgeois Hungary was in the making, its growing attraction was in direct contrast to the backward rural peasantry. However, in the relationship between the gentry and the unfolding bourgeois, the former remained decisive, it was not the nobility that developed a bourgeois mentality, but the thinner bourgeois stratum was adjusting itself to the gentry.^{xiii} Assimilation to the Hungarians was synonymous to assimilation to the values and attitudes of the gentry middle class as an estate. Thus embourgeoisement, capitalist development and modernity were expressed in contrast to the ‘organically’ developed character of Hungarians: those who expressed the values of Hungarians often confronted them with the bourgeois-European values. The elements of the “homeland and progress” program, elaborated in the Reform Age in the first part of the 19th century, were fatally simple to be turned against each other. The true ‘patriot’ looked at the ‘Jewish’ capitalism with suspicion, while the representatives of the growing capitalist class cared very little about the problem of national independence.

The Social Democratic Party of the age was just as much an urban phenomenon as the representation of the bourgeois political parties, hence it was unable to channel and handle the social tensions accumulating in the countryside. In the 1890s strikes by the harvesters and movements of the poor peasantry came in quick succession in the Plains. The agrarian movement of 1897-98 involved tens of thousands and turned against large estates as well as against big capital and social democracy. The political rise of these strata that were squeezed below society was equally suppressed by the politics of the gentry and the big estates and of liberalism. Thus, a broad-based authentic agrarian party could not develop in Hungary. What developed, however, represented the interests of landed Smallholders only, and the party gradually lost some of its social sensitivity and hence much of its significance in its bargains with gentry politics. The poor peasantry turned to religious sects that were advocating anarchistic principles, and instead of making new attempts to express their political will they turned away from politics.^{xiv}

World War I. meant an end to the hegemony of liberalism and conservatism all around Europe; new collectivist ideologies and movements (replacing the former ones in several cases) appeared: nationalism and socialism. World War I. and its tragic ending, which meant for Hungary the loss of two-thirds of its previous territory, deeply shocked the whole of society.

2. Populism as fusion of nationalism and socialism in the Horthy era (1919-44)

The first significant Hungarian populist ideologist, the writer Dezső Szabó already assessed the outbreak of the World War as the "failure of individualism." According to him, liberalism committed the sin of neglecting the collective identity of society and the war was a punishment.^{xv} Ideologists of liberalism were forced onto the defensive, at first against socialists and syndicalists, then against nationalists. Following the revolution of 1918, the social-liberal government could not dissolve the tensions caused by the shock of the defeat in the war. Although, it tried to pursue a radical policy in the social field it proved to be weak; and for a transitory period of four months power was shifted to the communists. After the fall of the communist dictatorship, in the autumn of 1919, a right-wing 'Christian-national' restoration began, and gradually consolidated itself. The ruling circles blamed liberalism for the war and for the temporary expansion of Bolshevism. Therefore, the moderate liberalism of the pre-1914 period could not return; the new regime could be characterized by a conservative, authoritarian, revanchist policy. In contrast to Peronism, the interwar Horthy-regime was unable and did not intend to involve the anti-liberal democratic forces. The politically articulated part of Hungarian society was split in two: besides the dominant 'neo-baroque' national-historical society, there was a weaker bourgeois society, which had developed under the capitalist growth. Below them there was a big mass of rural uneducated peasantry, which was left without political representation and was equally despised by the politics of the gentry and the bourgeoisie.^{xvi}

In the 1920s the ideologists of the Hungarian 'népi' (populist) movement realized that if they wanted to make a stronger impact they must unite the national and the social radicalism. In their opinion the two revolutions (the bourgeois one in 1918, and the Bolshevik one in 1919) failed because they were socially radical but not nationally. Also, the emancipatory movements against social oppression could renew themselves only if they were able to open to the nation, or more precisely to the people. This renewal must come from the suppressed strata, from the peasantry, the new Hungarian middle class should be created out of them (because the existing middle class is of alien origin) and this new class, which is committed to the people, would be the promoter of social transformation. Peasantry means the people, and the people must be identical with the nation. This program was drawn up by Dezső Szabó in the early 1920s, in his series of articles entitled: "Towards a New Hungarian Ideology."^{xvii}

The 'népi' (populist) movement was recruited from the company and followers of the populist writers,^{xviii} and although it had members of peasant origins, it remained largely a middle class group of intellectuals. The populist writers of the 1930s were the 'Hungarian Narodniks' who, similar to their 19th century Russian predecessors, considered it their mission to mingle with 'the people,' and to document the problems of rural Hungary; the decreasing population, the spread of religious sects, poverty and the issue of land ownership. They hoped to achieve the reformation of government politics by honestly exhibiting the real and cruel life of the peasants.^{xix} Their intention proved to be illusory, even though populist writers personally contacted members of the governing circles. Later on, some of them drifted towards the political extreme right, whereas others moved towards the extreme left (the illegal Communist Party); but the core of the group of writers remained together and founded the National Peasant Party in 1938. This party however, never became an influential, mainstream party and after 1945 it became a 'fellow-traveler,' a closely co-operating ally of the communists.

According to critics of this movement of writers in the 1930s, the initiative was not populist but *völkisch*, which paid service to anti-Semitism in the shadow of German Nazism.^{xx} The sympathizers of the 'népi' (populist) movement, on the other hand, emphasized the plebeian, radical-democratic nature of the movement and stressed its social sensitivity.^{xxi} As this present paper does not aim to discuss the populist vs. urban disputes in detail^{xxii} in the following we only dwell upon problems linked to the nature of populism.

The main issue concentrated on the unity or separation of political democracy and social reforms. Was social equality possible without democracy? Would the intentions of social reforms of an authoritarian

system be acceptable? Those who were thinking in the dichotomy of democratic left and right, refused to co-operate with representatives of the regime, saying that “neither popular self-government nor social progress can be imagined without personal freedom.”^{xxiii} However, the system of co-ordinates of the populist was not left and right, rather upper and lower; thus when searching for a vertical alliance of classes they were more inclined to compromise with the authoritarian power, than were those urban thinkers, they called the doctinaire.^{xxiv} They were convinced that the people must be lifted out from their suppressed state, and questions of “dogmatism of the sides” were considered secondary. Although there are certain analyses that sharply separate left and right wing populisms,^{xxv} populism is primarily characterized by a denial of this dichotomy, and is a mixture of the elements of Left and Right.

While the Hungarian movement of *népi* (populist) writers considered the solution of the peasant issue to be one of its most important tasks, its attitude towards the peasantry becoming bourgeois was rather ambivalent. Besides the need for social democratization, it wanted, rather romantically, to preserve certain traits of the peasant way of life, more over, it wanted to base a specific Hungarian democracy on this, which was considered ‘deeper’ than the one in Western Europe.^{xxvi} Putting emphasis on the national and social aspects laid the course for many of the representatives of the movement towards the racist extreme right or towards the communist extreme left. Characteristically, in Eastern Europe, the populist movements received greater sympathy from proto-fascist and communist groups, than liberals, social democrats and ruling national conservatives. The latter expressed reservations towards such movements. For communists however, the appearance of the populist movements represented the possibility of a future alliance between the working class and the peasantry, in the spirit of the revolutionary strategy and the policy of alliances of Lenin. The fascists regarded them as the natural continuation of the right wing movements of agrarian societies, who turned against the aliens symbolizing cosmopolitan life style and particularly against the Jews by an idealization of the peasantry.^{xxvii} The relationship of the Hungarian extreme right and the writers’ movement is fittingly described by the following fact: the former criticized the popular writers’ movement because by emphasizing the issue of land reform and large estates it diverted attention from the “Jewish question”. On the other hand, the majority of the populists, who did not interpret the social reforms in terms of protecting the races, felt that the extreme right was the one that diverted attention from the truly important issue: land reform.^{xxviii}

During the interwar period in Hungary, no populist government policy could evolve for the following reasons. The government – with the exception of the premiership of Gyula Gömbös (1932-6) when the interests of the lower middle class were represented verbally - was not inclined to channel the democratic demands coming from below.

Initiatives coming from below and induced by growing social tensions were attempted to be articulated by extremist political forces that were too radical to participate in the organization of a broad social coalition. The middle class was thin and weak: its majority of national sentiment made a compromise with the Horthy-regime its bourgeois groups, for reasons of their Jewish origins, were forced onto the defensive against the representatives of the regime, and their isolation made it impossible for them to form a broader social coalition.

The peasantry was squeezed below society, and for this reason it was unable to articulate its interests itself, and to enter into political alliance. The *népi* writers attempted to close this social gap with their activities, but they themselves proved to be of limited influence: neither the political class of the Horthy-regime, nor the national middle class, that entered into a compromise with the regime, or the isolated bourgeois strata, and not even the targeted peasantry could have been mobilized by them. Thus the function of their writings remained primarily to keep social self-conscience alive.

3. Populism as cultural nationalism in the Communist period (1948-88)

The defeat suffered during World War II, the following brief spell of democracy and the communist change of 1948 fundamentally transformed the structure of Hungarian society. The gentry elite was wiped out, a large part of the bourgeois middle class was destroyed by the War. In the 1940s many people migrated to West from both strata. In the 1945 land reform more than one million peasants were given land, which was subsequently forced onto kolkhozes. A larger proportion of the rural poor were absorbed by forced industrialization in the totalitarian communist regimes which was associated with the name of communist leader, Mátyás Rákosi (1948-56). This period of time was ended by the anti-totalitarian revolution of 1956.

The ‘soft dictatorship’ of the reformist politics of consolidation launched by János Kádár in the 1960s, was able to make society digest the shock of the 1940s and 1950s. The old issues raised by the populist writers (large estates, land, agrarian poverty) became obsolete. Populist thought however, survived in a cultural form, linked to literature, and in the meantime it did good service to the opponents of reform with the criticism of Western modernization and consumer society. It played a role in the revival of national traditions from the seventies onwards and, as a new element it put on the agenda the problem of Hungarian minorities living on the other side of the border, in other countries. Thus it tried to make populist cultural heritage a national one, and also to maintain the idea of “middle of the road” – which had a different meaning earlier – equally turning against Western liberal capitalism and Eastern internationalist communism. Populists found internationalism common to both, they condemned the economic influence of the Western multinational concerns as well as the power monopoly of the Soviet type system. They tended to regard both as foreign oppression. Although the messages of populist writers could not be explicit due to censorship it was this group which established the nationalist interpretation of populism with special attention to the situation of Hungarian minorities living abroad.

Communist cultural policy, associated with the name of György Aczél, culture boss of the communist party, tried to use the populist reappearance to divide the opposition; appearing also in the late 1970s, suggesting, that the two kinds of – Western and populist – criticism could not have a common platform, as the “urban” opposition groups were Jewish, and the ‘népi’ (populists) were not. This whispering propaganda, which was amplified by the populists at the rhyme of systemic change,xxix has again made anti-Semitism and the conflict between Jews and non-Jews a (not so transparent) political issue. It meant a past anachronism for the younger generations that have grown up in the shadow of the Kádár-system and have heard about the “Jewish question” and the populist vs. “urban” conflict only from history books.xxx

4. Populism as discourse of intellectuals who entered democratic politics (1987-94)

By the second part of the 1980s, the cultural criticism of popular origins was replaced by the organization of political movements with the pluralization of the intelligentsia and society,xxxi and the Hungarian Democratic Forum (Magyar Demokrata Fórum, MDF) which was established as a loose intellectual association in Lakitelek in September 1987, was transformed into a political organization a year later. Not accepting “either the tag of pro-government or of opposition and the pressure of choice,”xxxii initially the Forum did not function as a party, yet it was active as a party that collected groups from a wide range. Populist thinking emerged from its purely cultural forms and reappeared on the political stage. It reappeared under such historical conditions that its effect could become far greater than that of the former National Peasant Party. The disappearance of the Soviet oppression, the return of national sovereignty, the seeming ‘classlessness’ of the Kádár era, the desire for a welfare

society and the lack of new political ideas apparently strengthened the assumption that the time may have come for the renaissance of populism.

By then however, the anti-capitalism of the late successors of the populist writers was in contrast to the embourgeoisement of the majority of Hungarian society. Thus what they represented was rather romanticism, the respect of traditions, moralizing and nationalism – in addition to the demand for economic democracy and social security^{xxxiii} – that remained from populism. The advocates of the ‘middle-of-the-road’ attitude, setting out as leftists, allied themselves with those authentically center-right gentry-conservative politicians in order to ensure their success at the elections, and whose predecessors were the adversaries of the populist intelligentsia of the 1930s.^{xxxiv} The national issue, as separate from the popular radicalism, became the common denominator of their alliance. This political change that apparently parted from populism – coupled with the moderate message of the ‘calm force,’ successfully reaching the middle strata – brought about the electoral success of MDF, organizing itself into a party. The President of the party, the liberal-conservative József Antall became Prime Minister. Although the concept of the nation of conservatives and populists was initially different – the conservatives were thinking in terms of a historical nation-state and the populists in cultural nation – yet they were brought closer by the moral interpretation of their political mission. Their objective was to present the entire right (from center to the extremes) in a single, big party, but their co-operation did not prove to be lasting.

The difficulties of economic transformation, growing unemployment and the downward slide of one part of the middle class have again strengthened social dissatisfaction. The voice of radicalism growing stronger in the debates of the bills on “doing justice,” compensation and the returning of the property of the Church, suppressed that of the moderates representing the “calm force.” István Csurka, then vice-president of MDF and leader of his movement the Hungarian Road (*Magyar Út*) used this moment to launch an attack against professional politicians of his party – and through them, against the democratic system – in August 1992, and provoked the gravest crisis in the history of MDF. In his manifesto Csurka demanded that the wing of MDF that was of ‘national spirit’ (extreme right in essence) should remove the “liberal” Antall government that engaged in a “politics of pacts,” or should press it to settle the political conflicts by force and not by compromises. Csurka presented a theory of conspiracy, by which he explained why the “issues of Hungarian destiny” were not solved, arguing that the parties in opposition were intertwined with Western liberal finance circles, which – because they were Jewish – finance the representatives of the communist nomenclature, turned managers. Their common feature was that they were alien to Hungarians – as contrasted to the “national middle class rooted in the people” which recreates itself – therefore they were unable to understand the problems of Hungarians even if they wanted to. All this would excuse the national-populist forces from the pressure of seeking compromises.^{xxxv}

Nevertheless, Csurka failed to impress the middle class by his anti-Semitic proposals, for which the values of bourgeois welfare had been more attractive than the exclusivity and witch-hunt of the Hungarian Road. In his later writing Csurka did not strive to create a national middle class, rather, he tried to mobilize the “bitter hinterland” of the common people.^{xxxvi} With this he tried to return to the populism of the popular writers who turned to the underclass, instead of turning to the middle class populism of Dezső Szabó. Although Csurka sensed accurately the growing inequalities of Hungarian society, he was wrong when he thought that he would be able to mobilize those who were sliding towards the periphery, by anti-elitism and nationalism. Thus he found himself the representative of extreme rightist radicalism: he has become the Hungarian *Le Pen*. In his writings he has gone from anti-communism^{xxxvii} to a comprehensive, combatant criticism of liberalism.^{xxxviii}

To solve existing social tensions, a true populist policy would wish to find such political alternatives that can be realized (or are at least credible), rather than adjust the existing people to an imaginary political ideas. Despite all his qualities, Csurka could not become a populist politician because the preconditions of populist politics of the “Argentine type” that concern the people were missing for the realization of his program. The majority of the unemployed was unskilled, rather than skilled, thus was

in a far more disadvantageous position. In Argentina populist governmental policy could establish itself as a result of collective action of the large, mobile and skilled emigrant (and other) groups. In Hungary, however, the equivalent groups did not think of collectively asserting their political interests. They aimed at developing individual strategies instead or (less typically) at the protection of economic interests. The older and less educated people tended to turn away from the entire political order, while younger generations faced with increasing difficulties to enter the labor market.^{xxxix}

Successful populist politicians are popular, easy to understand and above all their political messages can be followed by the targeted masses. They tend to say what the people want to hear from them: for that they need flexibility and pragmatism. Csurka's political aims, however, were too radical for the masses. For these reasons, his message was not open and inclusive, but isolating, racist, and exclusive.^{xl} He represented a sort of 'old school' Right wing populism of literary intellectuals which gradually lost its appeal.

5. Why there was no chance for Peronism in Hungary

Social science literature often referred to Latin America – and the process of latin-americanization – as a possible scenario for Eastern Europe after the years of transition. Some exponents of this proposition argued that peripheral capitalism would probably produce illiberal democracies, if not hybrid regimes, with or without populism.^{xli} Some tended to see Peronism as an option for the post-communist regimes, or if not, as something like a lesson to be learned. The appearance of authoritarian political leaders like Vladimir Meciar in Slovakia, Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia, Lukashenka in Belarus or Franjo Tudjman in Croatia in the 1990s could indeed give ground to this impression. More than twenty years after the transition there are some strong signs of peripheral capitalism in the region, especially the widening gap between the rich and the poor, which might be reminiscent of Latin America. Nevertheless, the resurrection of Peronist populism in East Europe was not a realistic way to go in the post-transition years.^{xlii}

By his style and political tactics, the Hungarian József Torgyán the President of the Independent Smallholders' Party (Független Kisgazdapárt, FKGP) of the 1990s could be regarded as an ideal-typical populist politician. Although Torgyán was an excellent speaker, a real demagogue, in the original sense of the term, who understands all the tricks of "low speech," his relative lack of success was caused by his lack of political strategy and program: he demanded total re-privatization and to speak against (supposedly) foreign interests in defense of the homeland. His prime objective was to recruit followers at all cost,^{xliii} and his exaggerated promises with no concept only ended up ridiculous. His party was a party of 'nostalgia' for the pre-communist times that was unable to attract supporters from any other social groups beside the rural, uneducated and aged population and the easily definable, relatively small group of farmers. The methods used by József Torgyán to expand his electoral base, closely resembled the strategic steps of President Juan Domingo Perón in the 1940s in Argentina; his actress wife attempted to organize a "Torgyán party," and Ágnes Maczó the female populist ideologist, who had five children and who referred to herself as the "representative of the people", was pushed into the foreground.^{xliv} Compared to Perón, his possibilities were far more limited. Nevertheless, he remained an important figure of the Hungarian post-communist politics until 2002.^{xlv}

In Hungary, despite the occasional lack of legitimacy^{xlvi} of the new democratic regime, the chances of national and social populist politics were limited in the first part of the 1990s. It was equally due to the heritage of the "soft communist" past of the Kádár regime, and to the general economic and political characteristics of transformation. Among these features I mention the following ones:

In the Kádár-regime the majority of society followed individualist strategies of survival, and during the course of acquiring these strategies, people had become less susceptible to collectivist political demagoguery.

Long after the fall of communism, the size of those groups that had nothing to lose was limited, their conditions were deteriorating, and this kept them from supporting such political actions.

Politics appealing to the people, and alluding to a state-defined concept of justice, had been present in Hungary in extreme forms (fascism, communism), and have caused serious damage and backwardness. The memories of these were alive for a long time. Hungary after 1989 was more a “post-populist”, individualistic society than a pre-populist one.^{xlvi}

The soft dictatorship of the Kádár era had created the still functioning informal patron-client lines, along which people could assert their interests informally, and compensate for the losses suffered in the economic transformation.

In the first years of communist rule in Hungary, in the 1950s, people had the opportunity to see the disadvantages of ‘personality cult,’ and thus became sceptic towards it. The relative popularity of János Kádár was the result of the fact that he was against personalization of politics.

The small size of the country and its dependence upon world economy limited the space of economic nationalism, which is a feature of populism. The broad masses of Hungarian society see no alternative to the desirable, Western welfare democracies. There was no massive aversion to the penetration of Western capital can be experienced in Hungarian society, people rather wanted to have their share of the benefits.

In the society during the regime change the intelligentsia that was committed to the ideals of liberalism, democracy, and autonomy of the individual was quite influential.^{xlvi}

For the decisive social strata, those who could take part in a conflict, the concept of capitalism and democracy seemed to belong together. The social strata, which would have been able to produce Latin American type of populism, form an alliance and demand democracy as well as authoritarian paternalism was missing.

Populism usually evolves in places where considerable social groups believe that there is much to be distributed, so they hope that by changing the internal proportions of social redistribution, they might find themselves in a more favourable position. But due to the indebtedness of the country and the initial strength of the belief in “entrepreneurial spirit” no such belief was apparent in Hungary in the early years of post-communist democracy.^{xlvii}

A characteristic feature of populism is confidence in the central role of the state, but in Hungary such confidence and the expectations resulting from it were missing; and even if they had existed, the weak state heavily in debt was not in a position to meet these expectations.

Paradoxically, the relatively strong individualism of Hungarian society and its scepticism toward the state in the 1990s did not only weaken the credibility of the new democracy (which could not exist without an accepted authority of the state), but it also hindered the development of populism temporarily (which cannot flourish long without the belief in a strong, paternalistic, redistribute state).^l

The chances of populist mobilization were further reduced by the fact that there were underclass groups that were turning away from politics, were falling behind, and even formed ghettos, which could not be mobilized by any kind of political agitation, not even by populism.

Social, economic and cultural conditions did not favor the Latin America scenario. But this condition started to change with the austerity package of 1995, a late promotion of shock therapy by the socialist-liberal coalition government. At the beginning, dissatisfied groups, those that were sinking into poverty and falling behind, oriented themselves towards the extreme right to a lesser extent, and

to a greater extent towards the old-school socialists. Thus, the mixture of left and right, which crosses class boundaries, gained influence.

6. Populism from below: Failed attempts for a more inclusive polity in the 1990s

In Hungary, the strikes organized by the trade unions have been able to mobilize only few people, and they were not able to influence government policy in the 1990s. The strongest trade union the National Alliance of Hungarian Trade Unions (Magyar Szakszervezetek Országos Szövetsége, MSZOSZ) liked to use elements of populist politics (putting the values of ‘justice,’ which were difficult to grasp ahead of other social values, political demagoguery, etc.). However, this was not populism, because the anti-elitism and challenging the system of democratic institutions and the desire for independent political roles were rather limited to the trade unions. The largest unions more oriented towards 1) acquiring suitable positions for their negotiations with the employers and government in the field of economy; 2) acquiring political influence in the leftist parties, particularly in the Hungarian Socialist Party. Demagoguery itself cannot be identified with populism, though it is undoubtedly part of it. Demands that are not populist in their content, or their possible consequences are not populist, can be expressed in a demagogic way.

To some extent groups that have been disappointed by the regime change of 1989, strengthened the camp of populism,^{li} therefore they demanded the consistent completion of systemic change, or in other words, the replacement of the elite, a “second” or “permanent” revolution,^{lii} and also want the strongly state controlled privatization. In addition to Csurka’s Hungarian Justice and Life Party (Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja, MIÉP) this heterogeneous group comprises: some Smallholders groups; members of the Hungarian Market Party; former fighters of the revolution of 1956; political prisoners; former followers of plebeian democrat, György Krassólii and groups that are dissatisfied with compensation, or attack the Constitutional Court because it annulled their plans of doing justice. Here can be mentioned those as well, who believe that the revolution ‘withered,’ the original goals were betrayed; and who demand a broad-based national unity instead of the ‘policy of pacts’ of the parties.^{liv} The representative meeting of these groups was held in August 1993 in Balatonszárszó, in the spirit of anti-liberalism.^{lv} The addresses of this meeting indicated that the coalition of the populist-nationalist and national conservatives, created at the end of 1989, had been in disintegration.^{lvi} The anti-institutional argumentation was similar, but the rhetoric employed the concepts of civil society in the case of populist organizations such as the “Committee of Social Adjustment,” the “Intellectual-Moral Parliament,” or the “Civic Movement for the Republic.” Economic nationalism, almost always accompanying populist politics, appears in these groups: it is mostly they who object to, and hence wish to limit the inflow of foreign capital, or who want to prohibit the purchase of land by foreigners once and for all.

The initiative of the Association of People Living Below Subsistence Level (Létminimum Alatt Élők Társasága, LÁÉT) at the end of 1992 may be regarded in many respects as an “underclass” populist experience, because it aimed at creating a social coalition going beyond the poor strata and crossing boundaries for the support it demands. At first the Association organized a hunger strike against the anti-social policy of the government, and next it collected hundred thousand signatures for a plebiscite that would oblige the government to dissolve itself before the elections were due. This was an initiative coming from below, which successfully utilized the general dissatisfaction of the public against the Parliament and the parties, and could turn against the entire political elite. The plebiscite was not held; hence the real actual opinion of society remained unknown. However, when the Constitutional Court declared the initiative anti-constitutional, it did not provoke a new wave of protest across society, which shows that the action of the LÁÉT was not based on a real multi-class alliance, but expressed only the dissatisfaction of the poorest strata.

After the shock of political and economic transition, the political class in power had to face the challenge of democratic consolidation. In theory, consolidation is the policy of social peace, healing of wounds and the common prosperity to a gradually widening segment of the population. It is a policy that encourages a diversity of identities, instead of forcing them into the over-simplified, dichotomy-based worlds of the political left and right. Liberal democracy can secure both freedom in politics and freedom from politics at the same time – for this reason, the idea of “permanent revolution” is alien to its rhetoric and essence.

7. Reinterpreting democratic consolidation: Populism as anti-liberalism (1998-2002)

The coalition government of Fidesz and the Smallholders' Party, led by Viktor Orbán attempted to consolidate democracy by using the controversial slogan of “all-out attack” in the period of 1998-2002. This proved to be contradictory policy. As it soon came out, consolidation could not be concluded by further dividing society and widening the gap between social groups. Consolidation could not be done by reducing the political field to one dimension, namely to the dichotomy of friend or foe. In 1998 Viktor Orbán felt that it was the last moment to rearrange power structures and implementing elite change. The program “more than government change” was an effort to modernize the right. It intended to build a “Fidesz-Hungary” in order to help take root a new political structure in the name of second revolution. Orbán believed that it was better if two oligarchies compete for power, than if there is just one, therefore he made the effort to organize a possible economic and social base for the contest for a divided Hungary. Instead of social reforms he saw it as his mission to change the elite, secure key positions for his supporters, construct a new base of support, and construct an institutional background for Fidesz once and for all. He could not align the majority of the people with his program.

The first Orbán government consciously but mistakenly identified the political community with the cultural community (even though the latter notion was only with reference to the right) and it contributed to its electoral defeat in 2002. It is one of the basic characteristics of liberal democracy that political and cultural communities are utterly different: any number of cultural communities might peacefully coexist within a single political one. Anyone trying to force an existing (and culturally heterogeneous) political community to follow the norms of one specific cultural community loudly proclaims that he is not committed to the principles of liberal democracy. The first Fidesz government tried to balance the division of the political community with the reconstruction of the imaginary cultural community of the nation outside the borders.^{lvii} It became more important what Orbán considered himself to be the leader of a country or of a state? While he was constantly making reference to the 15 million Hungarians, the citizens felt that he was only realizing the interest of voters on the right; and it caused tensions in the policy of the Orbán-government. When he argued for the spiritual strengthening of Hungarians and reuniting them (which brought with it the suspicion of being nationalistic), the left side of the country could easily have felt that this rhetoric of the spiritual reunification of Hungarians across borders was only used to make people accept the symbolic and normative structure of an imaginary cultural community that was dear to the government. It was capable of causing fear.

It seemed that the first Orbán-government inclined to restructure the entire society from above, with the values and models of one particular cultural group. The government does have a function of organizing society, but the organization of cultural communities is not its responsibility or task, it generally occurs from below, following civic models. The Prime Minister sent the message that “the future is here” in vain, because as it soon became obvious: the past could not be wiped out for long. They could have won in 2002 with a calm, mature, conservative-liberal policy, but with anti-liberal radicalism it was defeated.

With the policy of social mobilization, Orbán re-drew the political map, as it had happened in the 1940s and 1950s in Argentina under Perón, or in the 1990s in Croatia under Tudjman, and in Slovakia under Meciar. All these countries saw the supporters of illiberal, populist democracy opposing the supporters of liberal democracy. A similar move was observable in Italy in 2001, where the former power of the multiple parties has disappeared, and the frontline of political struggle lay between pro-Berlusconi and anti-Berlusconi groups. Some observers compared it to the U.K. governed by Blair.^{lviii} The Hungarian election campaign of 2002 saw the fierce and emotionally overheated fright of the pro-Orbán and anti-Orbán political coalitions. The “cold civil war” took the shape of a hot campaign. Although Fidesz-MPP lost the election politically, Orbán could manage to create a “second Hungary” politically, with its own cultural milieu, which survived despite the electoral defeats.

This sort of political style is often called populist policy, i. e. when the democratic process is represented as a choice between life and death, truth and lie, past and future, good and evil. As I mentioned earlier, populism also entails a re-definition of the role to the state, by emphasizing its distributive role. Other characteristics of populism are: a kind of economic nationalism, a moralistic rhetoric constantly referring to the idea of the nation and justice, a steady process of searching out and stigmatizing the “enemies of the nation” (traitors within, communists, Big Business, financial oligarchy, cosmopolitan intellectuals and so on), and the polarization and reduction of political pluralism to a one single dimension. During those few years political competition did not center around different programs and rationally debatable arguments but was reduced to a passionate and symbolically mediated meta-political war of “us vs. them” which was justified with “cultural” reasons. National symbols (the flag, the circle ribbon, and the national anthem) that represent the unity of the nation were appropriated by Fidesz and its supporters, thus stressing the idea of division. The slogan known from football “Go Hungary” and “Go Hungarians” became the campaign slogan of the party, similarly to the ‘Forza Italia!’^{lix} The community of national politics was identified with the circle of Fidesz supporters, and they were called upon to “defend the nation.”^{lx} Soon it was evident that populism did not need intellectuals, rather propagandists.

One of the most important components of a populist policy that is centered on a leader is a technique of personalization of power.^{lxi} Modern democracy is, in many ways, a media democracy, a campaign democracy. In such a world, anyone who can simplify his ideas and communicate real or apparent truths in a watered-down but credible way gets the upper hand. Most people prefer parties that transform politics into a visual experience as opposed to those that convey their policies using the classic devices of verbal debates and programs. Feeling it becomes more important than conscious understanding and acceptance. These feelings are most accessible through those charismatic personalities who communicate the message of the party. The personality that conveys the message becomes the message itself.^{lxii} In this way the political leader becomes the leader of a charismatic group that is similar to a religious community, and becomes a figure who is central to the experience, and whose politics give those youth who are searching for identity the opportunity to “feel” it. In a “leader-democracy”,^{lxiii} for the followers of the policy, it conveys the message of experience, immersion and a sense of belonging together; ideologies become identities; the rational-argumentative type of policy becomes a policy of identity.

At the millennium it already became visible that some segments of Hungarian society felt a need for this type of claustrophobic, anti-liberal, commanding behavior.^{lxiv} Those living in the countryside needed it more than people living in towns. They could feel that there is someone who tells them what should be done in that irrational, decadent and confusing world in an understandable and simple way. During the period of the first Orbán-government changes took place in the manner of exercising power which had long lasting consequences.^{lxv} These include changes in political communication, in making politics more dynamic, in conditioning people to think long term, (a picture of the future), and aspiring to make politicians more comprehensible and clear to common people. The first Orbán-government looked beyond everyday problems, and focused on forming an understandable and attractive picture of the future in a more propagandistic way. The elections however, proved that voters were more

interested in the present, than in the past, and believed in the dreams and successes of the future if they could see it begin in their present. Hungarian voters were not in the situation to be able to disregard the circumstances of their everyday lives.

In his statements after the lost elections of 2002 Viktor Orbán found no connections between the performance of the government, and the defeat of Fidesz.^{lxvi} He tended to explain the defeat with transcendental causes, and started to establish a populist mythology about his own performance against those who allegedly served “foreign interests” and regarded their homeland as a “stock company”. To oppose this Orbán chose a mythical role to be the spiritual leader of the people, and made it clear that he did not want to get used to parliamentary politics again. For one year following the elections, he refused to accept posts in the party or within the faction, and had aversions from the traditional roles in opposition. By organizing “civic circles”, and spontaneously active groups, he transferred his political activities into the activities of a movement,^{lxvii} and announced his belief that his followers were not in a minority because the “nation cannot be in opposition.” He wanted to represent the “nation” by rising above opposition parties, and wanted organize the infrastructure and social base of a new, “Future-Hungary”, that he imagined. He was still the prisoner of his own campaign rhetoric. From leading Fidesz as a party campaigning for election victory, he moved to the idea of building a wide political movement, a future right wing party union. The first Orbán-government made an attempt, to realize goals, which confronted one another in one attack: the “revolution of souls” and consolidation. He prioritized confrontation to compromise in his politics, and voters did not like that. By the time he returned to Fidesz as President – after a year of internal emigration – he positioned himself as the unquestionable leader of his party and changed the internal party rules, procedures and regulations accordingly. Since 2003, Orbán has not simply been an elected representative of Fidesz, it is Fidesz which belong to him and represent him.

The New Right government of Hungary led to a campaign in 2002 in which the idea of “democracy”, “nation”, country” and “homeland” could be turned against one another. The government wanted to restructure the cultural community according to a (right wing) cultural value-system, and by doing so it suggested that whoever fails to agree with that, cannot be a member of the political community. It resulted in people, who did not believe in the “order-authority-homeland-work-discipline-family-will” type of value system communicated by the government, concerned. The government was offensive, because its members believed that the majority of the national political community was behind them, as well as identified with their system of values. They were wrong. With its voluntarism the cabinet alienated social groups which would have been easy to win over by a moderate center-right government.

The first Orbán government slowly turned out to be slightly anti-Western, anti-American and anti-liberal, but did not go as far as the old Left approach.^{lxviii} It was a gradual move because, in the meantime, the government successfully negotiated Hungary’s entry to the European Union and was already been a member of NATO since 1999. Negotiating with the EU had a moderating and restricting effect on internal politics in Hungary, which limited Orbán’s room for action. Fidesz, however, which used to be the member of the Liberal International, left the Liberals in Europe and joined the European People’ Party party-family in 2000.

The Hungarian New Right that had been created by Viktor Orbán between 1998 and 2002 turned out to be an unsuccessful political project in the short run, but it remained very strong culturally. Fidesz lost the parliamentary elections of 2002 and 2006. However, as we will see, it emerged as the only powerful opposition force afterwards.

8. From social populism to elitist reformism: The socialist modernizers (2002-2010)

Ten countries joined the European Union in 2004 among them were the Visegrád countries: the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary. On the day of the accession three countries, out of four, had

a center-left, social democratic government in power. A day later, Leszek Miller, the Polish premier was forced to resign. He was soon followed by the Czech Prime Minister, Vladimir Spidla and the Hungarian Péter Medgyessy. They were replaced by new faces from the same political camp.

The Hungarian prime minister enjoyed a high rate of popularity at the beginning of the term. By 2004, however, it appeared that the initial successes of his materialist-redistributive politics faded away in the memory of the people. Although Hungary was not in a bad economic state, political actors sensed that there was a crisis in leadership. They felt that leadership was in a way absent, because governance took an ad hoc character and political decisions did not constitute any part of a more or less coherent narrative. No one knew what was happening for what reasons. Political strategy was replaced by a merely reacting type of communication. Many felt that the socialist-liberal government would not be able to articulate why they were governing; what ideas and principles motivated their ambition. As long as the political right was mobilizing crowds on the streets, a message of social peace sufficed. As soon as the opposition calmed down, however, the slogans of peace and normalcy proved to be lacking for the platform of the political Left. Many had the impression, therefore, that following a promising start, things took a turn for the worse.

Why is it that such a “turn for the worse” happened to coincide with one of the most significant political steps Hungary ever took? This was the step the nation have wanted for so long: the true chance of catching up, the accession to the richer and more fortunate half of Europe, the membership of the EU that they were excluded from for decades. A national consensus supported the European accession almost everywhere. It appeared that it did not need any further arguments. The question arises whether one could find some regularity behind these changes of premiers that pointed beyond the personal character of these individuals. To answer to this question one should take a look on the process of transformation of reformist communists into post-communist technocrats.

People of the Visegrád countries, Hungarians included, expected some crucial achievements from the new political elite and those in charge of the regime change in 1989-90: first, they wanted democracy, second, a functioning market economy, third, a democratic political community and national identity, and fourth, they wanted their country to “join Europe”. Each wish contained one implicit desire for prosperity. These societies experienced being locked behind the Iron Curtain against their will as the utmost injustice history did to them – as indeed it was. Hungarians found it “natural” to demand that their living standards were on a level with those of the Austrians. Already at the time of the regime change, people associated democracy with prosperity in their minds. They wanted democracy, because they saw the wealth of the democratic countries. It seemed logical that those who have democracy prosper.

The term “capitalism” was already viewed with disdain, but the phrase “well-functioning market economy” sounded convincing. It was generally perceived that a working market economy was needed in order to usher in prosperity. Redefining one’s national identity and one’s political community was important – especially in the newly emerged post-communist nation states –, because it had to be clearly defined who could take part in that prosperity as the legitimate member of the “sovereign people”. That defined who belonged to the nation and could be considered as citizen of the country. Finally, the European and the Euro-Atlantic integration appeared in the target of siding with the strong and the successful.

As long as the expectations of society were matched with international expectations, and as long as these expectations could be answered by formal, institutional arrangements, the technocratic and pragmatic elite of the Hungarian communist successor party, the Hungarian Socialist Party, (MSZP) struck a note of accomplishment with their manager style modernization. The international academic world of political science cannot but acknowledge the proficiency with which the Hungarian successor party completed the democratic turnover after 1989, demonstrated a readiness to reform, and handled the crisis of the 1990s. It was no wonder: the leaders of that party – those who were socialized in the post-Marxist, anti-ideological reform period – preferred to see themselves as “neutral experts”,

standing against all ideologies. These pragmatic reformers abhorred political ideas, as those recalled the bitter taste of Marxism-Leninism in their mouths. Moreover, wherever they looked, they saw economic decline and political crisis. First they had to prove that they were able to think independently from the ideological outlook of the previous communist generation. They had to prove that they could identify a problem for what it was, without all the ideological dressing; that they were able to solve, or at least to handle the emerging issues. The great challenge of this generation was to do crisis management in the space between confined political opportunities and economic rationality.

By the 1980s there was not one member among the socialists who still believed in communism. For them, Marxism was an unclear concept of progress with a fuzzy, linear understanding of history with no world-shaking contents attached to it. After 1989, the general opinion among the socialists was that only the specific analysis of a specific situation, only conscientious management and the handling of the various crises mattered. So the flower of modernization was placed into an empty vase. The post-communist political elite wanted a normal, consensual world, free of ideologies. Since the desired consensus happened to be called the “Washington consensus” at the time, it came natural for these political managers to accept the international liberal discourse. They strove to attract capital, thinking it would bring about a society that functioned better.

Such politics could continue as long as only outside obstacles had to be eluded on this obstacle course of regime change, institution-building, economic stabilization, democratic consolidation, and historic EU accession. While the political right was occupied with rebuilding its base, it was the task of “the Left”, between 1994-98, to manage the economic crisis, to conduct the politics of privatization so far left unfinished by the previous rightist governments, and to show a friendly face towards the West.^{lxix} The Hungarian New Right, as I pointed out above, stepped on stage in 1998 testing its newly gained strength by a confrontational behavior. It yearned impatiently to legitimize its new, proud and very distinct identity by any means. In its eagerness, however, it went too far at that time. They divided the country into the “decadent powers” of the failed communist past and the ‘bulging forces” of the rising national future. This confrontational behavior of the first Fidesz government created a deep divide in society, between pro-Orbán and anti-Orbán masses, which gave a chance to the socialists. As it turned out at the 2002 elections, a slight majority of voters, preferring peace to war, turned back to the well-known Left. The fright of the larger part of society was resolved by their electoral victory. The ruling sentiment was that the time of symbolic politics was over, that it was only a residue of the past. To gain success, one simply had to make trustworthy accomplishments. However, as it turned out soon afterward, for the Left to be successful more was needed than remaining a “party of peace”.

The concept of “welfare regime change” was already introduced by the then Prime Minister Péter Medgyessy in 2002, which identified a social problem, a political debt of the new democracy to its own people. It turned out that democracy has no value for the people as long as a general poverty prevails over them. There is no value in the nation if it is poor, and there is no value in the European Union if it is only a club for the wealthy, by downgrading the new member states. It was no accident that for both the referendum held about the EU accession in 2003 and the EP elections in 2004, the turnout was low in Hungary and in Central Europe. People did not think that technical issues of EU enlargement concerned them. Not that they opposed them; they gave their passive support instead. Having put the unresolved welfare question into the spotlight, it became obvious that one parliamentary cycle was not enough to complete a change in welfare politics. The inability to solve the problem in the short term led to the crisis of the political forces so far only labeled as “the Left”. Although in the 1990s they were successful in crisis management, new issues emerged that could not be solved in the same old way, by following the old schemes. Increasingly, the correct reaction required strategic thinking, ability for innovation and commitment by political values. The new issues were not about technical task resolving, crisis management, but about the political contents of social democracy. Such values were not to be articulated by experts instead of politicians anymore.

“Expertise” is irrelevant when it comes to choosing political values. Value-less elitist politics could only provoke a new wave of populism.

Nonetheless, the promise of renewal of the socialist party along „Third Way” lines looked like a promising process. It offered a hope that after one-and-half decades of post-communism things were slowly being put in place. One can think that the political left stops acting as the right, and the other way around. Everything was the other way around in Central Europe in the 1990s: while the Left was busy privatizing, for instance, the Right was „building a nation”. This had to stop. A kind of change, a renewal was timely and the ex-communist socialist politics had to re-evaluate itself, but those of the west, too. The influence of the anti-global movement decreased after September 11, 2001, the new social democratic politics of the once successful “third way” had to face the challenge of renewal. One had to consider whether the increasing crisis of neo-liberalism in the 2000s would also destroy its central-leftist, alternative variants or it would revive its nationalist populist alternative.

What happened in Hungary after 2004 was the connection of the region to the present concerns of the western world. By the decade of the 2000s, it appeared that the opportunities of the sort of externally driven, follower, or “catching up from behind” type of technocratic politicking which gained its identity solely from external sources and which denied the autonomy and the social context, of politics, had been exhausted.

In 2004, Medgyessy was replaced by Ferenc Gyurcsány, a dynamic socialist Prime Minister whose rise was considered as the political answer of the “Third Way Left” camp to the New Right. Gyurcsány was able to keep the socialist-liberal coalition in power as a result of his successful electoral campaign of 2006. His warrior political personality proved to be not as far from the leader of Fidesz as the more reserved Medgyessy was – that is why Gyurcsány was able to beat his right wing opponents. From 2004 until the end of the decade, the sharp polarization of the country was symbolized by the increasing personalization of politics that centered around the two rivals: Orbán and Gyurcsány.lxx After a few years in power, the socialist-liberal government of Gyurcsány was widely judged as “Josephinist” in its top-down, modernizationist reforms, and also too technocratic, alienated from people. Although Orbán lost two consecutive elections, he stayed as party leader and managed to achieve his long-term political goal: the social integration of New Right and further polarization of Hungarian politics. The sharp opposition of political camps resulted in protest campaigns against the government in the Fall of 2006 which culminated in street battles between protesters and the police. Finally, partly as a result of the global economic crisis of 2008, Orbán was able to reintegrate the political center on populist ground, and returned to power with a qualified majority in the new Parliament in 2010.

Although the “negotiated revolution” of 1989 was largely elite driven, most people (rather passively) endorsed the new regime of freedom. They could travel, start their own enterprises and speak freely about their lives in public. Free elections and a representative government, a constitutional court, and democratic opposition were all firmly established. The years between 1990 and 2010 were far from being unproblematic, prime examples: a widening gap between the living standards of the capital city and the rest of the country, and between the life chances of educated classes and the Roma population. Still the regime was liberal democracy, governing parties lost elections, and the media aggressively criticized politicians. Democracy was consolidated, and the country successfully joined the European Union.lxxi

The first signs of deconsolidation occurred in 2006 which were followed by the rapid decline of GDP during the economic crisis. The regime could not keep its original promises and was widely judged as corrupt. By the end of the decade of the 2000s, it became vulnerable to a new populist challenge.lxxii

An era had come to an end, but anti-elitist, populist politics survived in the opposition. It represents a mix of nationalism and neo-liberalism in the form of a new populist politics delivered by the Fidesz government since 2010. With all of its problems, Hungary after 1989 has been a relative success story

in a worldwide comparison. But the success has been challenged in ways that were very much unexpected.

9. Populism as a mix of nationalism and neoliberalism (2010-12)

The victory of Fidesz in the April 2010 elections altered the developments of the previous twenty years in several instances. Although Fidesz received 53 per cent support from voters at the general elections, due to the oddities in the proportional electoral system, this translated into a two-third majority in Parliament. With such a super majority, the second Fidesz government was willing and able to change all fundamental laws, including the Constitution.

The returning leader, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, conceived of this victory as „new social contract” or even as „revolution”, declaring the need for fundamental political changes, purportedly as the „will of the people”. Orbán declared the installation of his “System of National Cooperation” that sought to replace the „troubled decades” of liberal democracy. In a characteristic populist fashion, Orbán announced a “declaration on national cooperation,” a text which had to be put on the walls of all institutions of public administration.^{lxxiii} As it reads:

„We, members of the National Assembly declare that we shall elevate the new political and economic system emerging on the basis of the popular democratic will to the pillars that are indispensable for welfare, for living a decent life, and that connect the members of our diverse Hungarian society. Work, home, family, health and order – these will be the pillars of our common future.”^{lxxiv}

Many people asked whether it was possible to roll back history. They wondered whether it was possible to make a reverse transition, back to a hybrid regime within the European Union.

Although the electoral campaign of Fidesz said nothing about these steps, the governing majority started a fundamental restructuring of the political system. The state has been fully captured and centralized. Public offices have been renamed as government offices. Those in the civil service became easily and legally dismissible. Central and local public administration has become heavily politicized, and the former colonized the latter ones. All leading positions in the purportedly independent institutions were filled by Fidesz party-cadres. Retroactive taxation regulations have been introduced to punish the personnel of the previous governments. Almost all major government promoted businesses were offered to entrepreneurs close to Fidesz, or personal allies of the Prime Minister. Central campaigns have been initiated against the “criminal elements” of the previous governments, as well as the cultural and intellectual elite. The government press has started a campaign against the intellectuals and it fiercely attacked philosophers related to the former Georg Lukács School who allegedly received overly generous state funding for their research (which turned out to be untrue). Off mainstream artists, actors and actresses became targets of populist propaganda. Anti-intellectualism, intolerance of marginal groups and toward alternative lifestyles all belong to the characteristic features of populism.^{lxxv}

As opposed to mainstream European standards, a rare combination of anti-social policies have been enacted. Populist and ethno-nationalist rhetoric overshadowed the ongoing neoliberal economic policy processes. By introducing a flat tax system, the cabinet has aimed to win the support of the wealthy against the interests of the poor. Welfare benefits for the homeless and unemployed have been cut from six to three months only, while more money has been given, in “the national interest,” to stay at home mothers for raising more children, promoting a traditional concept of family. New laws on public and higher education control high school and university students more strictly, aiming to significantly reduce the number of university students. These restrictions were presented as bonuses to the Hungarian middle class which was described as the holder of national interests. This middle class populism went effectively hand in hand with the exclusion of lower classes and the unemployed from the nation.

Strict regulations on trade unions effectively have limited the right to strike, and the government has campaigned against some trade union leaders, seeking to discredit the unions. A so-called anti-terrorist organization was set up, mainly to defend the personal security of Viktor Orbán and members of his cabinet. Electoral laws have been changed just a few weeks before the municipal elections (held in October 2010) in order to narrow the chance of smaller parties to enter local governments. The broad powers of the Constitutional Court have been significantly curtailed. Citizenship has been given to ethnic Hungarian who lived outside Hungary in order to gain more potential voters for Fidesz in the next elections. The private pension system was nationalized in a coup like manner, forcing people into the state pension system. By doing this, Fidesz kept the annual deficit low to get close to correspond to the Maastricht criteria of the European Union. Importantly, while Fidesz pursued scrupulously restrictive fiscal policies to please the EU leaders, in the terrain of politics, they took steps that drove Hungary away from the rest of democratic Europe. A new era of populism, in the form of nationalist neo-liberalism, has begun.lxxvi

Procedurally, all bills have been proposed, as “modifications” of previous regulations, by individual MPs of Fidesz, and not by the government, to avoid democratic public debates and to speed up legislation. Commentators, analysts and the press hopelessly lagged behind this breathtakingly speedy legislation.

In general, there has been an attempted “constitutional coup d’état” of sorts, by a single person, the prime minister. Government controlled public media (radio and television channels) did not give a chance for opposition figures to give their opinion. Central propaganda machine transmitted messages of nationalism, Christian and patriarchal family values, with demands for law and order. In the meantime, the governing majority changed the Constitution nine times in the past half year already, which effectively destabilized legal security, responsiveness and accountability. On top of that, in April 2011, the governing majority changed the Constitution of 1989 which is now named as Basic Law and it contains a long Preamble called the National Creed emphasizing Christian values, national history, plus unifying the nation as cultural and political community with state interests. Economic and social rights are fundamentally restricted, if not taken away from the employees. The country is not Republic of Hungary any longer, it is simply called Hungary, „as the people call it”, according to Orbán. Only one sentence refers to the existence of the republic in the constitution. The President, Pál Schmitt, hand-picked by Orbán, was a former Olympic champion in fencing who had little or no idea about constitutionalism at all. Since Schmitt had lacked any political autonomy, he was removed easily, a few months after signing the Basic Law, as a result of his plagiarism scandal.

Previous electoral defeats motivated Orbán for feverish wish for revenge. Strangely, these defeats did not weaken his unquestionable leadership position within Fidesz, which he transformed from a democratic to a highly hierarchical, centralized party which is controlled exclusively by him. He is simply transplanting the logic of a boss-controlled populist party to a leader-state. The high rate of unemployment and the increasing influence of the state to all aspects of life have silenced many potential critics. The popularity of Fidesz stayed for a relatively long time because new taxes were always presented as decisions that did not hurt ordinary people, but only banks and multinationals which served foreign interests anyway.

Internationally, Orbán was often compared to such populist leaders as Lukashenka (Belarus), Kaczynski (Poland), Chávez (Venezuela), Meciar (Slovakia), Berlusconi (Italy), Milosevic (Serbia), Erdogan (Turkey), Tudjman (Croatia) and others. Some of these comparisons might seem to be tempting but most of them miss the point. Orbán is *not* like Lukashenka, because Hungarian authorities did not kill journalists, and did not jail, or forced into exile, anti-government protesters. Despite the fact that both loved European soccer, Orbán is *not* like Berlusconi as the latter had already owned several TV channels before he entered government while Orbán used his newly acquired government position to capture the media. Kaczynski established the „Fourth Republic” in Poland but did not change the liberal economic policy of the country despite his nationalist rhetoric, and he failed very quickly due to the existence of a strong democratic alternative. Chávez nationalized certain

industries and campaigned against foreign investors but he favored the lower classes in Venezuela while Orbán prefers promoting the upper middle classes and the national bourgeoisie with his economic nationalist rhetoric and neo-liberal policies e.g. reducing unemployment benefits and introducing a flat tax). Tudjman was an uncompromising nationalist leader, the self-elected founder of a „new Croatia”, while Orbán is much more like an opportunistic populist who mixed leftist rhetoric and right-wing economic policies with nationalism – just as he was ready to mix traditional values with far right ideas (although he presented himself in Brussels as the last bastion against the rise of the far Right). He pursued unorthodox policies like Meciar did in Slovakia in the 1990s, but he was more consistent in attacking and monopolizing democratic institutions.

The Turkish prime minister Erdogan used his qualified majority to reshape his country’s political regime but the opposition gained strength after his first term and prevented him from further restructuring of the regime. As an opportunist, Orbán was not afraid to praise the effectivity of China’s „market Leninist” communist capitalism while on visit in Beijing, while he equally encouraged anti-capitalist, anti-globalist and anti-communist sentiments at home. As someone who is truly at home in populist politics, Orbán follows non-consistent policies: while aiming to reunite the nation with cultural nationalist arguments he redistributed the income of the state from the poor to the rich. His populism was based on middle class fears of being declassed and gave voice the antisocial, anti-underclass sentiments of the upper and middle classes in Hungary.lxxvii

Despite all efforts to the contrary, Hungary in 2013 still has a multiparty system, though its democracy is increasingly non-competitive and illiberal because of a rigging of the political, judicial, and media systems. Freedom of the press is increasingly restricted to the blogosphere and to opposition leaning journals. This is presented in the populist rhetoric of the government as a genuine „national freedom fight” against the European Union, the International Monetary Fund, and other Western, multinational institutions. Nevertheless these and similar attacks on the multinational firms and institutions just hid the fundamentally neoconservative-neoliberal character of his policies.

The government enjoys a democratic “input legitimacy”, due to the free elections in 2010, even if it has not been followed by a democratic “output legitimacy”. This can be called the „tyranny of the (qualified) majority” in the legislature which gives permanent backing to the Prime Minister to feel like being the embodiment of the „will of the people”. This underlines the importance of a visible, prevalent and consistent democratic resistance to the authoritarian-populist tendencies. If Hungarian civil society resists this neo-populist challenge, it is possible that democracy may become stronger than it was before.

Conclusions

The goal of this paper was to demonstrate that populism can go easily both with different political regimes (democracy, semi-democracy and non-democracy), and ideologies (socialism, nationalism, neoliberalism). It is one of the most elusive concepts in the field of the history of ideas and political science. Political changes in Hungary demonstrate that populism is flexible enough to complement both redistributive and neoliberal policies. Populist discourse always promises a new, more inclusive community, but at the end populist politics often promote new ways of exclusion.

In democratic societies the discussion of populism is related to the quality of democracy. As I mentioned above, some scholars distinguish between liberal and populist (i.e. illiberal) democracies.lxxviii Further research is needed to clarify whether illiberal democracy can be still considered as democracy or does it represent a milder form of a hybrid regime. The Hungarian „revolutionary” populist turn of 2010-13 offers a lesson for theorists of democracy as well: It demonstrates that the concept of modern democracy cannot be reduced to certain institutional frames,

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because those can be compromised by authoritarian-minded leaders in the „populist moment”. The regime of liberal democracy can survive only if it is supported by committed and active people. This support for participation, on the other hand, is often channelled into populist movements, which use their popular democratic demands to achieve not necessarily pro-democratic but anti-elitist political purposes.

Endnotes

- ⁱ Cf. Neil Davidson (2008), „Nationalism and Neoliberalism” *Variant*, No. 32. Summer. 46-54.; Joachim Becker (2010) 'Nationalist Neo-liberalism. On the eve of Hungary's European Presidency', *World Economy & Development In Brief*, December 30.; Adam Harmes (2012), “The Rise of Neoliberal Nationalism” *Review of International Political Economy*. Vol. 19. Issue 1. 59-86.
- ⁱⁱ Among the most important works on populism I mention the following ones: Edward Shils (1956), *The Torment of Secrecy*. London: W. Heinemann; Andrzej Walicki (1968), “To Define Populism” *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 3. No. 2. 138-72.; Ghita Ionescu & Ernest Gellner eds. (1969), *Populism, Its Meanings and National Characteristics*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson; Lawrence Goodwyn (1978), *The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Margaret Canovan (1981), *Populism*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich; Michael L. Conniff ed. (1982), *Latin American Populism in Comparative Perspective*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press; Torcuato Di Tella (1990), *Latin American Politics: A Theoretical Framework*. Austin: University of Texas Press; Paul Taggart (2000), *Populism*. Buckingham: Open University Press; Francisco Panizza ed. (2005), *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*. London: Verso; Cas Mudde (2007), *The Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Daniele Albertazzi & Duncan McDonnell eds. (2008), *Twenty-First Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Peter Wiles (1969), “A Syndrome Not a Doctrine” in Ghita Ionescu & Ernest Gellner eds. *Populism, Its Meanings and National Characteristics*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 166.
- ^{iv} Ernesto Laclau (1977), *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*. London: Verso, 147.
- ^v Daniele Albertazzi & Duncan McDonnell (2008), “Introduction: The Sceptre and the Spectre” in Albertazzi & McDonnell eds. op. cit. 3.
- ^{vi} Andreas Wimmer (2002), *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict: Shadows of Modernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- ^{vii} Cas Mudde (2000), *The Ideology of the Extreme Right*. Manchester: Manchester University Press
- ^{viii} Christoph Butterwege (2002), “Traditioneller Rechtsextremismus im Osten, modernisierten Rechtsextremismus im Westen: Ideologische Ausdifferenzierung durch neoliberale Globalisierung” *Osteuropa*, 52 (7): 914-20.
- ^{ix} Gino Germani (1978), *Authoritarianism, Fascism, and National Populism*. New Brunswick: Transaction Books
- ^x Torcuato Di Tella (1990), op. cit.
- ^{xi} Takis S. Pappas (2012), “Populist Democracies” Paper presented at the European University Institute in Florence, May 23.; See also: Margaret Canovan (1999), “Trust the People! Populism and the Two faces of Democracy” *Political Studies* Vol. 47. No. 1. 2-16.; Yves Meny & Yves Surel eds. (2002), *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*. Basingstoke: Palgrave; Alfio Mastropaolo (2008), “Politics against Democracy: Party Withdrawal and Populist Breakthrough” in Albertazzi & McDonnell eds. op. cit. 30-48.;
- ^{xii} Edward Shils (1956), *The Torment of Secrecy*. London: W. Heinemann. See especially pages 97-99.
- ^{xiii} Ferenc Erdei (1943), “A magyar társadalom a két háború között” (Hungarian society in the interwar period), Paper presented at the conference in Balatonszárszó. It was republished in *Szárszó, 1943*. Budapest: Magvető: 1984.
- ^{xiv} András Bozóki and Miklós Sükösd (1987), “Agrárszocializmus és ideális anarchizmus” (Agrarian socialism and ideal anarchism), *Medvetánc* Vol. 7. No. 2. 293-319; For more details see András Bozóki and Miklós Sükösd, eds. (1998), *Magyar anarchizmus*. (Hungarian Anarchism) Budapest: Balassi.
- ^{xv} Dezső Szabó (1914), “Az individualizmus csődje” (The failure of individualism), *Huszadik Század*.
- ^{xvi} Ferenc Erdei (1943), op. cit.
- ^{xvii} Dezső Szabó (1923), *Új magyar ideológia felé* (Toward a new Hungarian ideology), Budapest: Aurora
- ^{xviii} The most influential “népi” writers were Dezső Szabó, László Németh, and Gyula Illyés.
- ^{xix} Dénes Németh (1985), *A népi szociográfia* (Populist sociography). Budapest: Magvető.
- ^{xx} Pál Ignóty (1936a), “Népesség és új humanizmus” (Populism and new humanism), *A Toll* No.1.; Gáspár Miklós Tamás (1992), “Ahogyan az ember forgószélben viselkedik” (As one behaves in a tornado),” interviewed by Ágnes Széchenyi, *Valóság* Vol. 30. No. 10. 78-92.
- ^{xxi} Gyula Borbándi (1983), *A magyar népi mozgalom*. (The Hungarian populist movement). New York: Püski; Gyula Gomgos (1989), “A harmadik út és a népi mozgalom” (The third way and the populist movement),” *Hitel*, February 1, 17-19; Ferenc Gyurácz (1992), “A populizmus értelmezéseiről” (About the interpretations of populism), *Hitel* Vol. 4. No. 9. 32-43.
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- ^{xxiii} Pál Ignóty (1936b), “A demokrácia feladata” (The task of democracy), *Cobden*, November.
- ^{xxiv} András Bozóki (1988), “Egy ‘ingerlékeny’ urbánus: Ignóty Pál és kora” (An ‘irritable’ urbanist: Pál Ignóty and his age), *Századvég* Nos. 6-7., 244-264.
- ^{xxv} László Percz (1992), “A nép és az ő barátai: változatok a jobboldali populizmusra” (The people and their friends: variations for Rightist populism), *Kritika*, January, 13-16.
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- xxxviii István Bibó (1986), “Levél Borbándi Gyulához” (Letter to Gyula Borbándi), in Tibor Huszár and István Vida, eds., *Bibó István: Válogatott tanulmányok* (István Bibó: Selected essays). Budapest: Magvető, 307.
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- xxx Cf. “Népiek és urbánusok – egy mítosz vége” (Populists and Urbanists – end of a myth)? (1989) *Századvég* (2)
- xxxí Sándor Agócs and Endre Medvigy, eds. (1991), *A magyarság esélyei. Lakitelek, 1987. A tanácskozás hiteles jegyzőkönyve* (The chances of Hungarians. Lakitelek, 1987. The official record). Budapest–Lakitelek: Antológia–Püski.
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- xxxvi István Csurka (1992), “Keserű háterszág” (Bitter hinterland), *Magyar Fórum*, December 31, 8-9.
- xxxvii István Csurka (1993), “Jogunk van arra, hogy törvényt tegyünk” (We have the right to make justice), *Magyar Fórum*, February 18.
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- xl It will be most obvious in the rhetoric of MIÉP.
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- xlii On this literature see: Fernando H. Cardoso & Enzo Faletto (1979), *Dependency and Development in Latin America*. Berkeley-Los Angeles-London: University of California Press; Ernesto Laclau (1987), „Peronism in Historical and Comparative Perspective” in E. Archetti, P. Cammack & B. Roberts eds. *Sociology of the ‘Developing Countries’: Latin America*. New York – London: Monthly Review Press, 137-47.; Laurence Whitehead (1993), “The Alternatives to ‘Liberal Democracy’: A Latin American Perspective” in David Held ed. *Prospects for Democracy: North, South, East, West*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 312-29.; Andreas Boeckh (1993), „Populism in Latin America: Economic Crises and the Rise of New Development Coalitions” CEU Working Paper.
- xliii Cf. Miklós Tarján, ed. (1991), *Torgyán*. Budapest: Danube Budapest Rt.
- xliv Ágnes Maczó (1991), *A nép kalodája* (The stocks of the people).” Budapest: Püski.
- xlv Between 1998 and 2001 József Torgyán was the Minister for Agriculture and Countryside Development in the Orbán-Government. However, the once powerful FKGP did not receive even one percent of the votes at the 2002 general elections, thus the political career of Torgyán came to an end.
- xlvi János Kis (1992), “Gondolatok a közeljövőről” (Thoughts on the near future), *Magyar Hírlap*, December 24.
- xlvii Cf. Béla Greskovits (1997), *Political Economy of Protest and Patience*. Budapest: Central European University Press.
- xlviii One of the best demonstrations of this statement can be found in Jerzy Szacki (1995), *Liberalism After Communism*. Budapest: Central European University. For Szacki the legacy of liberal dissent contributed to the disbelief in the state after the transition.
- xlix However, this situation lasted until 2000-1 only. Due to the success of the austerity measures of the so-called Bokros-package of 1995 (named after the finance minister Lajos Bokros) and the success of political consolidation and economic development, Hungarian society started to push for more welfare measures. Those were installed by the first Orbán government in 2001-2, and later reached their peak during Péter Medgyessy’s social democratic government which spent heavily to keep his election promised on “welfare regime change”. Due to these policy changes, by the late 2000s Hungary has become the largest welfare spender (relative to GDP) among the new East European EU member states. Hungary found itself unprepared and defenseless for the outbreak of the global financial crisis in 2008 and had to turn immediately to IMF for new loans. This undermined the belief in liberal democracy and market economy and made people to willing to accept state interventionism in the name of economic nationalism by 2010. Cf. András Bozóki (2012), *Virtuális köztársaság* (Virtual republic) Budapest: Gondolat.; For regional comparisons see: Dorothee Bohle & Béla Greskovits (2012), *Capitalist Diversity on Europe’s Periphery*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press

- ⁱ The legacy of anti-communist individualism, the deep skepticism toward institutions and the survival of “ghetto political cultures” undermined the successful formation of consent on public interest. Cf. Ken Jowitt (1992), “The Leninist Legacy” in Ivo Banac ed. *Eastern Europe in Revolution*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 207-24.; József Böröcz (2000), “Informality Rules” *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 14. No. 2. 348-80.; Gerd Meyer ed. (2006), *Formal Institutions and Informal Politics in Central and Eastern Europe: Hungary, Poland, Russia and Ukraine*. Opladen & Farmington Hills: Barbara Budrich Publishers
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- ⁱⁱⁱ Ferenc Fehér and Ágnes Heller (1992), “Jobboldali permanens forradalom?” (Right-wing Permanent revolution?) in Ferenc Fehér & Ágnes Heller (1992), *Kelet-Európa “dicsőséges forradalmi”* (The ‘Glorious Revolutions’ of Eastern Europe). Budapest: T-Twins, 197-202.
- ⁱⁱⁱⁱ The followers of György Krassó were members of the Hungarian October Party between 1989 and 1991.
- ^{lv} Zoltán Bíró (1993), *Elhervadt forradalom* (Faded revolution). Budapest: Püski; Imre Pozsgay (1993), *1989. Politikuspálya a pártállamban és a rendszerváltásban* (Political career in the Party State and the regime change). Budapest: Püski.
- ^{lv} For details see the articles of the *Szárszó Fórum* (1993) Vol. 1. No.1. August
- ^{lvi} József Bauer (1993), “Lakitelektől Kenderesig – és vissza?” (From Lakitelek to Kenderes – and back?) *Népszabadság*, September 4.
- ^{lvii} András Bozóki (2003), *Politikai pluralizmus Magyarországon*. (Political pluralism in Hungary) Budapest: Századvég
- ^{lviii} András Körösenyi (2001), “Parlamentáris vagy ‘elnöki’ kormányzás? Az Orbán-kormány összehasonlító politológiai perspektívából (Parliamentary or ‘presidential’ governance? The Orbán government from a comparative political perspective),” *Századvég* No. 5. 3-38.
- ^{lix} György Petőcz (2002), “Forza Hungaria! Olasz-Magyar párhuzamok (Forza Hungaria! Italian and Hungarian parallels),” in Miklós Sükösd & Mária Vásárhelyi, eds., *Hol a határ? Kampánystratégiák és kampányetika*. (Where is the limit? Campaign strategy and campaign ethics) Budapest: Élet és Irodalom, 232-240.
- ^{lx} For more details, see the speech of Viktor Orbán delivered at the University of Physical Education on April 9, 2002, see the April 10, 2002 issues of *Népszabadság* and *Magyar Nemzet*.
- ^{lxi} On the personalization of power see for instance: Gerd Meyer ed. *Formal Institutions, Informal Practices*. Framington: Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2006.; Jan Pakulski & András Körösenyi (2012), *Toward Leader Democracy*. London: Anthem Press
- ^{lxii} This is not to suggest that all demagogic or emotional communications belong to populism. On this literature see: Jan Jagers & Stefan Walgrave (2007), „Populism as Political Communication Style” *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 46. No. 3. 319-345.
- ^{lxiii} Cf. András Körösenyi (2002), “Vezérdemokrácia és az antik orátorok (Leader democracy and ancient orators),” Máté Szabó, ed., *Demokrácia és politikatudomány a 21. században* (Democracy and political science in the 21st century). Budapest: Rejtjel, 54-76.; Jan Pakulski & András Körösenyi (2012), *Toward Leader Democracy*. London: Anthem Press.
- ^{lxiv} Cf. Zsolt Enyedi & Ferenc Erős eds. (1999), *Authoritarianism and Prejudice: Central European Perspectives*. Budapest: Osiris.; Bojan Todosijevic & Zsolt Enyedi (2008), “Authoritarianism without Dominant Ideology: Political Manifestations of Authoritarian Attitudes in Hungary” *Political Psychology*, Vol. 29. No. 5. 267-87.
- ^{lxv} A convincing argument on this was delivered by Zsolt Enyedi (2005), “The Role of Agency in Cleavage Formation” *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 44. Issue 5. August, 697-720.
- ^{lxvi} See for example József Debreczeni’s interview with Viktor Orbán after the elections in József Debreczeni (2002), *Orbán Viktor* (Viktor Orbán). Budapest: Osiris.
- ^{lxvii} Such groups were formed or reactivated like the Conscience ’88, Hungarian Irredenta Movement, and the civic groups like Alliance for the Nation, Go Hungary! Movement, Movement of the Youth of April and so on. Cf. László Tamás Papp (2002), “Action Hongrie,” *Élet és Irodalom*, August 2; About the ambivalent relationship of the civic circles and Fidesz, see István Elek (2002), “Amatőrség és anarchia a polgári körökben” (Amateurism and anarchy in the civic circles) interview by Lajos Pogonyi, *Népszabadság*, October 1.
- ^{lxviii} For the classic Left approach: Boris Frankel (1997), „Confronting Neo-liberal Regimes: The Post-Marxist Embrace of Populism and Realpolitik” *New Left Review*, 226. November-December, 57-92.
- ^{lxix} In the first electoral cycle after the transition two center-right governments ruled Hungary: The first was led by József Antall (1990-93) and the second by Péter Boross (1993-94). In the 1994 elections, the Socialist Party won absolute majority and Gyula Horn formed a socialist-liberal coalition government which lasted until 1998. On the transformation of the Central European communist successor parties see András Bozóki & Hohn T. Ishiyama eds. (2002), *The Communist Successor Parties of Central and Eastern Europe*. Armonk, N. Y. – London: M. E. Sharpe
- ^{lxx} On the increasing role of media and their relation to populism, see: Gianpietro Mazzoleni (2008), “Populism and the Media” in Albertazzi & McDonnell eds. op. cit. 49-64.
- ^{lxxi} Cf. Umut Korkut (2007), “The 2006 Hungarian Election: Economic Competitiveness versus Social Solidarity” *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 60. No. 4. August, 1-16.; András Bozóki & Eszter Simon (2010), “Hungary since 1989” in Sabrina P. Ramet ed. *Central and Southeast European Politics since 1989*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 204-232.

^{lxxii} Cf. Umut Korkut (2012), *Liberalization Challenges in Hungary: Elitism, Progressivism, and Populism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

^{lxxiii} The Declaration of National Cooperation can be found in Hungarian, German, and English languages here: http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/hu/bal/Kulugyminiszterium/nemzeti_egyuttmukodes_nyilatkozata/

^{lxxiv} Ibid.

^{lxxv} Cf. Vladimir Tismaneanu (2000), “Hypotheses on Populism: The Politics of Charismatic Protest” *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 14. No. 2. 10-17.

^{lxxvi} See in more detail: András Bozóki (2012), “A magyar demokrácia válsága” (The Crisis of Hungarian Democracy) *Élet és Irodalom*, January 14.; Norwegian Helsinki Committee (2013), *Democracy and Human Rights at Stake in Hungary: The Viktor Orbán’s Government Drive for Centralisation of Power*. Report 1.

^{lxxvii} For a more detailed description of the post-2010 regime in Hungary see: András Bozóki (2012), *Virtuális köztársaság* (Virtual Republic) Budapest: Gondolat; András Bozóki (2012): “Occupy the State! The Orbán regime in Hungary” *Debatte*, July, 16-21.

^{lxxviii} Hubert Giliomee (1996), *Liberal and Populist Democracy in South Africa*. Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations; Fareed Zakaria (2003), *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy Home and Abroad*. New York: Norton.

