

Pole and Hungarian Cousins Be? A Comparison of State Media Capture, Ideological Narratives and Political Truth Monopolization in Hungary and Poland

ARON KERPEL

School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London

INTRODUCTION

“A system of power must have three sources, it needs to be fed with three things: money, ideology and votes. Now one big governing party will rise; one central political force that will be capable of representing national interests – but without permanent debate.”¹

“Pole and Hungarian cousins be” – starts the historic proverb in both languages. They fight together, and they build illiberal democracy together – could one rephrase the original version, as the two countries seem to have elected governments with very similar political agendas. Both Viktor Orbán’s Fidesz and Kaczyński’s PiS can be classified as a right-wing populist government with economically left-populist social policies, utilising all available methods in order to strengthen their positions and to stay in power.

Acknowledging the conceptual difficulties in defining populism, this paper uses that of Mudde, which describes the concept as “a thin-centred ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated onto two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' and 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté general* (general will) of the people”.²

PiS and Fidesz do not explicitly state who belongs to the circle of “the pure people” - they create this fictitious group through their political narratives. Through this division they manufacture a fake political legitimacy which they can constantly refer back to – posing as the sole representatives and defenders of people's general will. In order to create this fictitious group, both governments are

¹Quote from Viktor Orbán's speech in 2010, translated and quoted by Péter-Bajomi Lázár in Bajomi-Lazar, P.(2014). *Party Colonisation of the Media in Central and Eastern Europe: Modern Business Decision Making in Central and Eastern Europe*. Budapest: Central European University Press.

²Mudde, 2004, p. 543 as quoted in Wodak, R. (2013). *Right-wing populism in Europe: politics and discourse*. A&C Black.

using right-wing ideological narratives on three different community levels; levels of the sacral/religious community, national community and family as a community.

An ideology's effectiveness relies on two key conditions: the conditions of credibility, and the condition of effective mystification³. The more thoroughly a single ceremonial system monopolizes the public domain, the better it realizes its mystifying function; in other words the suppression of the ideology's practical purposes for its producers.

Public discourse is shaped through various factors; this paper focuses explicitly on the two governments' treatment of the media landscape, as it is the biggest and most effective platform for this purpose. The paper argues that both Fidesz and PiS are attempting to capture the state and private media, using these to propagate their political ideology. Thus by monopolising media discourse and portraying themselves as the representatives of the people on all three symbolic levels, the two governments attempt to discredit any civil or parliamentary opposition group, and emerge as the sole central political force domestically. The aim of this paper is to compare the extent to which the Fidesz and PiS government managed to succeed in this attempt to the present day.

First the paper presents a brief systemic description of Fidesz's and PiS' general modus operandi, comparing their parliamentary and legislative powers and ideologies. These are necessary in order to correctly understand similarities and differences in the two governments' treatment of the media.

Second, it analyses the cases of Hungarian and Polish media state capture under the Fidesz and PiS governments and the extent to which the parties were able to shape their countries' domestic media landscape.

Third, the paper compares in detail the three ideological levels of public discourse in the two governments' narrative and provides examples on how they are propagated by Fidesz and PiS in the public domain.

Fourth, it presents the ways through which the state capture of the media influences public discourse - methods allowed by the two governments' increased media influence, which they are using to propagate their three-levelled narrative.

Finally, the paper concludes by observing opinion polls, voting preferences and value surveys in order to evaluate and compare the two governments' success to become a central political force domestically, by shaping public opinion through their increased their influence over the public

3 Jan, K. (1994). *The Power of Symbols Against the Symbols of Power. The Rise of*. (p. 249)

discourse.

I. SYSTEMIC SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HUNGARY AND POLAND – MAFIA STATE VERSUS CONSERVATIVE SEMI-AUTOCRACY

As previously stated, both PiS and Fidesz can be classed as right-wing populist governments, applying similar ideological panels in their political narratives – both rejecting the standard values of left liberalism, building on an autocratic top-down relationship between state and nation rather than on individual values. Whereas PiS had been committed to these values since the party's foundation, Orbán's Fidesz can be classified as an ideology-using regime. Rather than the ideology being the driver of its actions, it chooses its temporary ideological stance based on its current political goals.

Using Janos Kornai's system typology⁴ in order to classify the Hungarian and Polish regimes, one can conclude that Hungary's regime is an autocracy, whereas Poland is a democratic regime currently in transition towards an autocratic one. All primary characteristics of a democratic regime are available in Poland⁵, however there were steps taken by the PiS government against a number of the secondary characteristics; namely against the freedom of press, against the independence of institutions acting as checks and balances, and against limited state appointments to public positions.

Fidesz also surpasses PiS in terms of decision-making power, which provided the party with greater room for political manoeuvring. In 2010 Fidesz won a supermajority in the Hungarian elections, giving the party constitutional powers, mainly used to eradicate the system of checks and balances. Whilst PiS won a parliamentary majority in 2015, its opportunities for changing the balance of Polish legislative, executive and judicative powers were far more limited than Fidesz's. As a result, in Hungary political decision-making is actually happening outside parliamentary means, into the hands of the informal circle of "political family". As a contrast, in Poland political decision-making still largely happens within the traditional institutional norms of parliamentary democracy.

⁴Kornai J.(2016) The system paradigm revisited: Clarifications and additions in the light of experiences in the post-socialist region." *Acta Oeconomica*,vol. 66 (4), pp. 547–596.

⁵ Primary characteristics: 1)The government can be removed through a peaceful and civilized procedure 2)Institutions which jointly guarantee the conditions of removing the government are strong 3) Legal parliamentary opposition exists; multiple parties run for elections 4) No terror (large-scale detention in forced-labour camps and executions)

Under Fidesz, state-level corruption largely increased, which led to the emergence of a handful of beneficiary cronies. In the case of PiS, no similar systemic tendencies are observed up to this date, the party's anti-corruption commitment is strong since its foundation. There are no apparent attempts at to change the business elite of the country or to create a group of powerful oligarchs loyal to the government.

In summary, PiS is currently attempting to build an ideologically driven Conservative Semi-Autocracy. Fidesz, in contrast, have created the ideology-utilising Hungarian Mafia State, a system of top-down state level corruption headed by the governing party. These systemic dissimilarities result in different methods to achieve media colonisation and differences in the extent to which the two governments managed to take over the media landscape.

II. STATE CAPTURE OF THE MEDIA IN HUNGARY AND IN POLAND

One of the key agenda points of both parties is to use mass media outlets in order to promote their political ideology in public discourse. By taking over the public media sphere directly and extorting pressure on the private media outlets indirectly, the governing parties in both Poland and Hungary can manipulate discourse in the public domain and to a large extent monopolise political truth in their respective countries.

Looking at Freedom House's and Reporters without Borders' (RSF) media freedom ratings for 2016, it might appear that the two countries' media landscapes are fundamentally different, Poland being in the "Free"⁶ category in both rankings, whilst Hungary falling in the category of countries with "Partly Free"⁷ press. Taking a closer look at recent tendencies in scores and rankings tell a slightly different and more worrying story. Poland fell a total of 29 places in the global media freedom ranking of RSF in 2016⁸, and is only 3 points away from receiving a "Partly Free" ranking from Freedom House – the sudden drop in Poland's results came as a reaction from the institutions to the changes introduced by the PiS government after winning the parliamentary elections in 2015.

Both parties have a history of governance marked by confrontation with critical public media. Viktor Orbán's first coalition government (1998-2012) argued that communist networks still

⁶<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2016/poland> (last accessed 14th of December 2016)

⁷<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2016/hungary> (last accessed 14th of December 2016)

⁸<https://rsf.org/en/poland> (last accessed 17th of December 2016)

persisted in public media, which made the ‘rebalancing’ of the system inevitable. The coalition, however, did not have the necessary two-thirds of the votes to change media regulation, therefore it was limited ‘only’ to political purges in the media, redistributing of state funding and reallocation of board positions of state media councils to loyal party servants.⁹

PiS first formed a minority government (2005), then became part of a majority coalition (2006-2007), as a partner of SRP (Defence of Republic of Poland) and LPR (League of Polish Families), headed by Jaroslaw Kaczyński. Under a similar slogan to Fidesz's, referencing the alleged existence of communist networks in the media, PiS changed the media law shortly after its election. The coalition succeeded to change the nomination process to the National Broadcasting Council (and through that also to other management boards of national Television and Radio, since they were appointed by the council). The new members elected to the National Broadcasting Council all had ties to the governing parties. As a result of changed supervisory and board structures, the news coverage of Polish media became heavily influenced by political pressure, which showed in a 2 point increase in the country's Freedom House score, and also a downgrade by Reporters without borders – much like in 2016.¹⁰

In 2010, Fidesz gained a constitutional supermajority in alliance with the Christian Democrats in the Hungarian elections, whilst PiS was elected in 2015 with an outright majority (the first time for any Polish party since 1989) – and as expected, as a result of extensive political power, there were a number of similar steps taken by both governments to maximise their influence over the media. This section analyses the two regime's treatment of the media, which show similarities to a great extent, however as a result of systemic differences between Hungary and Poland, they also diverge to a certain extent.

SIMILARITIES

Media Law(s): Both Fidesz and PiS started their second reign in power with forcing through a new media law as early as possible – in both cases this happened without consultation with either the opposition, or with independent professional organisations, and resulted in a substantial increase in government media domination.

⁹Bajomi-Lazar, P.(2014) p.52-54

¹⁰Bajomi-Lazar, P.(2014) p 124-133

Fidesz gained regulatory control over all media platforms through a new Multimedia Act and Media constitution¹¹, and also appointed a new supervisory body (National Media and Telecommunications Authority), with all four of its board members appointed by the government. The body was in charge of content monitoring and frequency distribution, whilst the newly created Media Fund was responsible for the funding of public service broadcasters. As both the National Media and Telecommunications Authority and the Media Council was both chaired by Annamária Szalai (appointed by Viktor Orbán himself), and the Media Fund's director was appointed by the chair of the Media Council, Fidesz virtually managed to achieve a monopolistic control over media legislation, content monitoring, frequency distribution and distribution of state media funding.

PiS' Small Media Act¹² (Mała Ustawa Medialna), which came into effect in January 2016, changed the existing administrative status quo, terminating the mandates of all the current CEOs and executive boards of public media companies, also shifting operation and oversight of the public broadcasting system, from the National Broadcasting Council (KRRiT) directly to the Polish government - namely to the Treasury Minister, Dawid Jackiewicz. This includes the right to hire and fire journalists and editors, and appoint Members of Board of Management. Many long serving public media officials resigned as a protest against the government crackdown on media independence.

The Small Media Act was passed as part of a larger public media reform plan, and was meant to be followed by a "Large Media Act" on the 1st of July 2016; however the plan was postponed, since "the far reaching changes require notification of the European Union, which takes time".¹³ A bridge law was also put in place in the intermediate period on the 22nd of June¹⁴, according to which public broadcasters will be transformed from commercial companies into national media institutions and public media boards will be selected by a six-member National Media Council elected by the Sejm, Senate and president for a six-year term.

¹¹Bajomi-Lazar, P.(2014) p.55-62

¹²BBC, Polish media laws: Government takes control of state media, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35257105>, last accessed on the 15th of December 2016

¹³Polish Press Agency: Introduction of key media law postponed - Minister Czapanski <http://www.pap.pl/en/news-/news,538255,introduction-of-key-media-law-postponed---minister-czapanski.html> last accessed on 14th of December 2016

¹⁴National Broadcasting Council, Act on the National Media Council enters into force <http://www.krrit.gov.pl/en/for-journalists/press-releases/news,2355,act-on-the-national-media-council-enters-into-force.html> last accessed on the 17th of December 2016

In summary, it can be observed that both governments used the available maximum of its legislative power to restructure public media oversight system and to put its own people in key decision-making board positions.

State funding of the media: Another method of increasing state influence on media outlets is changing the dynamics of state-related media funding, both coming directly from the government and through state-owned enterprises. This bears the risk that media empires that are politically connected become stronger financially as commercial revenues are re-directed towards openly politicized media outlets. Although both Hungarian and Polish media relies heavily on state-related funding, it has to be noted that in Poland, as a result of a bigger media market and larger foreign share of outlets, the impact of shifts in allocation of state spending is relatively smaller.

In Hungary, since 2010 the public sector's advertising spending has mirrored changes in the political climate and had been decided based on the current stance of state-oligarch relationship. A public conflict between Viktor Orbán and Lajos Simicska (a media tycoon and oligarch) in 2014 is a prime example of this process. Since the fallout, a considerable reshape of the Hungarian media landscape occurred. Since the start of the fallout, state advertising revenues of Simicska's companies dropped significantly¹⁵, as the distribution of state advertisement was now aimed at promoting the interests of emerging oligarchs with freshly acquired or established outlets.

As well as reshaping the media landscape based on political decisions, there is an overall tendency that the state media is receiving a continuously growing share of state media advertising, which has a further market distorting effect. According to Mérték Média's report, in 2015 the total state aid for public media was 47% higher than the total estimated revenue of private media outlets.¹⁶

In Poland, a similar state shift in state advertisement distribution can be observed. *Gazeta Wyborcza*, the biggest opposition daily saw its advertising revenue drop 14.9% from March 2015 to March 2016¹⁷, almost three times the industry average. Its decreased revenues come partly as the result of its circulation reducing by around 10,000 copies a day as a result of its ban from judicial buildings and many ministries. In the same time period, government-friendly daily *Rzeczpospolita*

¹⁵Mérték Média: The methods are old, the cronies are new: Soft censorship in the Hungarian media in 2015 - <http://mertek.eu/en/reports/soft-censorship-hungary-2015> p. 28-29

¹⁶Mérték Média: The methods are old, the cronies are new: Soft censorship in the Hungarian media in 2015 - <http://mertek.eu/en/reports/soft-censorship-hungary-2015> p. 36

¹⁷Wirtualne Media: Reklamy w dziennikach: „Rzeczpospolita” z największym wzrostem, „Fakt” i „Super Express” mocno w dół <http://www.wirtualnemedial.pl/artykul/reklamy-w-dziennikach-rzeczpospolita-z-najwiekszym-wzrostem-fakt-i-super-express-mocno-w-dol> last accessed on 9th of December 2016

saw its advertising revenues increase by as much as 49.8% during the same time period. Table 1 observes the changes in state-owned company spending from Q1 2015 to Q2 2016 – government critical Gazeta Wyborcza was one of the biggest losers of the shift – receiving 1.5 million złotys less than in the previous year.

	Q1 2016		Q1 2015
FAKT	1 658 730 zł	GAZETA WYBORCZA	2 613 589 zł
GAZETA WYBORCZA	1 160 233 zł	FAKT	2 019 960 zł
SUPER EXPRESS	646 680 zł	POLSKA	1 320 735 zł
DZIENNIK GAZETA PRAWNA	501 110 zł	SUPER EXPRESS	852 570 zł
PRZEGLAD SPORTOWY	400 170 zł	PRYEGLAD SPORTOWY	562 440 zł

1. Table State-owned enterprise Top 5 advertisement spending changes in Poland between Q1 2015-2016 – Kantar Media Data

Right-wing magazine Gazeta Polska received almost 3 million złotys more in 2016, than in the previous year – a 287% year-on year increase¹⁸, whilst declining in weekly readership. Publishers and journalists both suffer from the advertisement shift, since the government is clearly supporting papers with smaller circulation, which back its political agenda.

Ministries and state-owned companies also significantly redistributed their TV advertisement spending since 2015. Two of the biggest losers of the shift in spending were TVN and TVN24¹⁹, both government critical channels whose state revenues dropped 40-50% according to Kantar media data.

In short, based on available data in the two countries, both the PiS and Fidesz governments are utilising state advertisement funds to promote their political agenda by extorting indirect political pressure, without the slightest sign of aiming to achieve opinion plurality.

¹⁸Wirtualne Media, „Gazeta Polska” i „W Sieci” dużo więcej z reklam, najbardziej w dół „Polityka” i „Tygodnik Powszechny” <http://www.wirtualnemedial.pl/artykul/gazeta-polska-i-w-sieci-duzo-wiecej-z-reklam-najbardziej-w-dol-polityka-i-tygodnik-powszechny> last accessed on the 10th of December 2016

¹⁹Wirtualne Media, TVP2 wyprzedziła TVP1 pod względem wpływów reklamowych. Liderem Polsat, <http://www.wirtualnemedial.pl/artykul/tvp2-wyprzedzila-tvp1-pod-wzgle-dem-wplywow-reklamowych-liderem-polsat> last accessed on the 8th of December 2016

DIFFERENCES

As described above, there were a number of similar steps taken by the two governments, and the general directions followed by PiS and Fidesz are almost identical. There are, however, important differences to be noted.

First of all, the Polish media market is much larger and more polarized with a greater share of the outlets owned privately, mainly by foreign investors. This makes the overall media landscape less sensitive to domestic political shifts than it is in Hungary. Nonetheless, according to latest data 34% of viewership belongs to state media, which is a more than significant market share.

Secondly, Fidesz's supermajority enabled it to remove checks and balances more effectively and gather more significant legislative power than PiS, which is also reflected in the extent of legislative state capture. Fidesz has tools like introducing special taxes²⁰ (as they did with TV channels, imposing disproportionately heavy taxes on foreign-owned RTL Klub TV) or the distribution of radio frequencies. These tools allow Fidesz a more effective total war against partisan outlets, especially in the private sector.

Lastly, as a result of both systemic and ideological differences summarized in the previous section, PiS (unlike Fidesz) to present day does not have a circle of loyal oligarchs, who would have the power to take over private outlets. In contrast Hungary's private media landscape is being shaped by Fidesz's recently emerged oligarchs, with Lőrinc Mészáros, Andy Vajna, and Árpád Habony all building their respective government-backing media empires. Following the speedy acquisition of numerous newspapers and TV stations²¹, a telling joke started to circulate on the internet, which best describes the pace of oligarch takeover.

- Wife: Lőrinc darling, where have you been?

- Lőrinc Mészáros: Sorry honey just popped out to get the papers.

As the PiS government lacks a developed network of cronies for private media takeover, in order to change the media landscape it openly promotes the “re-Polonisation” of private media.

²⁰BBC, Has Hungary made peace with RTL Klub TV?, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/monitoring/has-hungary-made-peace-with-rtl-klub-tv>, last accessed on the 13th of December 2016

²¹A timeline of oligarch media capture is available in Hungarian at http://index.hu/aktak/mediahaboru_jobboldali_media_simicska_lajos_tv2_andy_vajna_habony_arpad/, last accessed on 5th of December 2016

Under this slogan the government is admittedly to buy out foreign owners of private media outlets using state money, thus further increasing media influence in the future.

Overall, although the Fidesz government has six years advantage and superior political power, the PiS government is trying to use all available methods in order to catch up in the race of monopolizing the media as fast as possible – not the best prospect for the future.

The following section analyses the two governments' three levels of symbolic ideological narrative, which they propagate in the public domain, mainly through their increased media influence.

III. THE IDEA OF THE CENTRAL POLITICAL FORCE AND ITS SUPPORTING NARRATIVES

Fidesz's and PiS' ideological similarities are not a coincidence, but a result of the same end goal by the two governments: to become the single central political force domestically.

Orbán has been propagating the idea since 2010, stating that the existence of dual (or multiple) political forces will necessarily result in permanent debate and thus it slows down development. There is a need therefore of a single central political force, capable of representing national interest – but without being in permanent debate with other parties over ideological values and political goals²².

Bálint Magyar argues that one of the main reasons of the opposition's failure in Hungary was that parties failed to provide credible ideological alternatives, challenging Fidesz's narrative on three different community levels: the spiritual/religious community level, the nation as a community level and the level of the family as community.²³ As well as agreeing with Magyar's claim, this paper also argues that by taking over public discourse, and in particular capturing the media, both Fidesz and PiS are

- Actively seeking to promote their ideology through propagating their ideological position on the three community-creating levels

²²Viktor, O 2010, Kotcse speech, transcript in Hungarian available on <http://www.hirextra.hu/2010/02/18/megorizni-a-letezes-magyar-minoseget-orban-kotcsei-beszede-szorol-szora/>, last accessed on the 30th of November 2016

²³Magyar, B. (2016). Post-Communist Mafia State. Central European University Press.(p 27-31)

- Creating moral dualities across these three levels – portraying anyone who does not agree with the government narrative as morally wrong
- Actively seeking to prevent opposing forces to provide and present their alternative narrative about these ideological levels

Through creating these three levels of moral dualities and increasingly monopolizing discussion over them in the media, both Fidesz and PiS seek to delegitimize and discredit their political opposition, thereby emerging as the only morally acceptable party representing the will of “the people” - an unchallenged central political force. The following section describes the three levels of symbolic narratives and ways in which are propagated in the public discourse.

THE RELIGIOUS LEVEL

Both governments are using religion to further legitimize their regime – portraying themselves as not only having the approval of the Nation (the people), but also the approval of God.

In strongly religious Poland, PiS historically received direct or indirect endorsements from the Roman Catholic Church and it was no other way in 2015. “The priest does not tell people which political party to support,”...“but he advises us to vote for a politician who is a good Catholic, from a party that represents the ideals of the church. Everyone knows.”²⁴ - said Józef Grochowski, mayor of a small farming community, prior to the 2015 elections, a statement summarizing recent trends in Polish politics. The implicit endorsement of the church was particularly helpful in the conservative-religious rural areas, where PiS' strong performance²⁵ (46.8% of the votes) helped the party to achieve a outright majority in parliament.

Since the elections the tight church-state alliance continued. PiS Lawmakers for example sent to committee an Abortion bill proposed by the church, which would mean a near-total ban on abortions. A PiS-proposed bill intended to limit in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) was also sent to committee. The bill was symbolic in particular, as legislation allowing IVF was passed in Sejm early

²⁴ As quoted in Duval Smith, A. Guardian: In deepest rural Poland, politics is shaped by love of church ... and hatred of Brussels, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/25/law-and-justice-poland-drift-to-right>, last accessed on 5th of December 2016

²⁵ Wojtasik, W. , Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Parliamentary elections 2015 in Poland: trends and tactics, <https://www.boell.de/en/2016/02/16/parliamentary-elections-2015-poland-trends-and-tactics>, last accessed on 14th of December 2016

2015, during the PO government, therefore proposing a bill reversing this legislation can be seen as attempt for the ideological discreditation of PO.

As a result of the powerful Czarny protests, parliament did not actually accept the proposals, however government rhetoric still points to the same general direction of the state championing the church's agenda and monopolizing religious discourse. Kaczyński, despite the defeat in parliament said that PiS “will strive to ensure that even in pregnancies when a child is sure to die, strongly deformed, women end up giving birth so that the child can be baptised, buried, and have a name”.²⁶

An event from November 2016 best summarizes the (often absurd) ways of further building the symbolic relationship between state and church; Jesus Christ was proclaimed to be King of Poland by President Andrzej Duda and by Catholic Bishops.²⁷ In comparison, Hungarian society is fairly secularized, nevertheless being identified with the Christian religion plays an important part in providing sacral legitimacy for Fidesz's regime. Fidesz also makes “religious references to signal their traditional social values and identification with the societal mainstream”²⁸. The country's Fundamental Law states that Hungary is a country based on Christian values, and in 2011, the adoption of the new Fidesz constitution in Easter Monday had been bizarrely compared to the resurrection of Jesus. In order to highlight its friendly approach towards the Christian church even more, Fidesz also established a strategic alliance with KDNP (Christian Democratic People's Party) – giving their politicians influential government positions in return for their “marketing image contribution”.

As Bozóki points out, Orbán uses Christian-religious and pagan-nationalist symbols simultaneously and interchangeably, thereby attempting to “Christianize” pre-Christian ancient Hungarian symbols, whilst “paganizing” Christianity. The main aim of this phenomenon is to win over voters from far-right Jobbik's camp, who are mainly atheists, and whose mythical symbol system relies much more on traditional pre-Christian Hungarian motives like the Turul bird. Mixing traditional pagan and Christian values allows voters on a much wider spectrum to identify with Fidesz's spiritual narrative.

²⁶Walker, P., The Independent, Poland abortion laws: Ruling party to revive ban despite mass strike by women and defeat in parliament <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/abortion-ban-poland-warsaw-parliament-vote-party-jaroslav-Kaczyński-pis-a7358036.html> , last accessed on the 14th of December 2016

²⁷Gazeta.Pl: Oficjalnie: Jezus Chrystus "Królem Polski". Prezydent, posłowie i 6 tys. ludzi wzięło udział w uroczystości <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/7,114883,21000510,tlumy-na-intronizacji-jezusa-na-krola-polski-uroczystosc-trwa.html>

²⁸Bozóki, A., and Zoltán Á. "State and Faith: Right-wing Populism and Nationalized Religion in Hungary." *Intersections. East European Journal of Society and Politics* 2.1 (2016).

Their strong religious narrative enables Fidesz and PiS to create a transcendental moral duality where they are the ones representing the will of the collective of “the people” as a sacred entity. Whoever speaks up against actions or policies is not only attacking them within the political sphere – but is also acting against the will of God.

THE NATIONAL LEVEL

The second level of the narrative is the nation as a community. Here the creation of moral duality and a similar monopolization of truth can be observed as on the spiritual/religious level in both countries. This level provides legitimacy for Fidesz and PiS governments, that whatever political goals they are pursuing, they are doing it for the greater interest of the country, legitimized to do so by its citizens.

Those who disagree with them are referred to as “traitors”, “servers of foreign interests”, “the worst sort of Poles”, “Soros-agents”²⁹ and a number of other similarly creative labels. The direction of monopolizing representation of the national interest can be best summed up in a sentence which Orbán used in one of his speeches in as early as 2002, after Fidesz lost the general elections: “We will not be in opposition, as the mother country (haza) cannot be in opposition”.³⁰

This ideological narrative is particularly strong in Hungary's public discourse, where the government set up the “System of National Cooperation”, established National Tobacco shops, renamed the (now) National Tax and Customs Administration and countless other state institutions. As Klára Sándor points out³¹, by simultaneously using the phrases “Fidesz” and “Nation”, the government is trying to overlap the two concepts, suggesting that any voices criticising the government cannot be coming from within the “real” nation - excluding opposition forces from this second collective entity level as well.

²⁹Reference to George Soros; a Hungarian-born multimillionaire, financial investor and philanthropist. According to right-wing narratives, uses his wealth to destabilize Europe. The irony in these claims coming from Orbán is that he himself received a grant to study abroad as a university student

³⁰Viktor Orbán, public speech, full transcript available on: <http://members.xoom.it/hunok2/h0013.html> , last accessed on 28th of November 2016

³¹ Sándor, K., *Miért nemzeti a trafik?* http://galamus.hu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=219953:miert-nemzeti-a-trafik-218926&catid=68&Itemid=133 , last accessed on 13th of December 2016

In order to canonise its nationalist narrative, the PiS government places the main focus on reinterpreting historical events and historical figures. Allegations relating to Lech Walesa's past portraying him as a communist puppet, giving a blasphemous portrayal of Adam Michnik in state media on his 70th birthday, re-interpreting Poland's role in Holocaust and in the Second World War³², exhuming the body of Lech Kaczyński's body who died in the Smolensk plane crash, interfering with the war museum in Gdansk³³ - all steps in the creation of a new historical approach, celebrating PiS-style nationalism.

Nonetheless, both countries claim to have received legitimacy from the “real” nation – a collective entity which they lead and protect by all their policies. In order to maintain this image of *Dux et Protector* of the nation it is necessary to have internal and external “enemies”, from which the nation can be protected by its strong leaders.

Opposition parties and civil organisations critical towards the government are portrayed as the internal enemies – constantly working to undermine the work and great results of the government. External enemies are to a large extent common in the case of both countries: Brussels and migrants. Both Kaczyński and Orbán like to appear as the leader fighting off the Brussel bureaucrats on the western front, while at the same time defending the country's eastern border from the inflow of migrants and fighting corrupt opposition politicians domestically.

By this constant enemy-creation Fidesz and PiS have successfully positioned themselves as the only morally appropriate and legitimate party serving national interests, anyone who opposes them therefore, must be acting against the will of the nation per se.

THE FAMILY LEVEL

The third and symbolic community forming level of narrative is the level of the family. Using the two higher levels of religious-spiritual and national communities, both governments are promoting the image of their desired family model: heterosexual and married with (ideally multiple) kids. This family image is the combination of traditional Christian values and the ideology of saving the nation from extinction as a result of falling birth rate.

³²Financial Times: Jaroslaw Kaczynski's party is rewriting the history of Poland, <https://www.ft.com/content/67532c78-c62d-11e5-a09b-1f8b0d268c39>, last accessed on the 15th of December 2016

³³Financial Times, The use and misuse of history in Poland, <https://www.ft.com/content/b59698fa-0e02-11e6-b41f-0beb7e589515>, last accessed on the 15th of December 2016

Two example interviews show what typical views on a “proper family” are in the two governments' narrative. When asked about single mothers, who do not benefit from the Family 500 + programme (described below), PiS spokeswoman, Beata Mazurek said that she would encourage them “to stabilize their family situation and have more children”.³⁴ László Kövér, a Fidesz politician named the highest level of female self-fulfilment as giving birth to children.³⁵

Both governments distribute generous social benefits to married couples with 2 or more children; PiS campaigned with Family 500+ (Rodzina 500 plus), a monthly allowance of 500 złotys per month to families after their second and every subsequent child until the age of 18. In Hungary, a similar campaign started at the end of 2015 named CSOK (Családi Otthonteremtési Kedvezmény – Family Home-Creating Discount), thanks to which young married couples can get up to 20 million forints from the government as an aid towards their home purchase.

Another key electorate group targeted with generous policies within the family level of narrative are pensioners. One of PiS' key election pledges was for example to re-lower the retirement age to its previous levels after it had been increased by the PO-PSL government in 2012. Orbán, acting like Hungary's very own Santa Claus, announced that in 2016 all pensioners will receive a 10,000 Forint (approximately £30) voucher from the government for Christmas. Simultaneously, Fidesz announced a 1.6% increase in state pensions in 2017.

These steps are heavily boosting both governments' popularity in the circle of pensioners - one of the largest unified blocks of voters. They can also be fit nicely into the traditional family narrative. Hungary's mini-campaign slogan in the words of Viktor Orbán: “This is a gesture, showing our *respect* to the pensioners.”³⁶

In summary, both governments build on a traditional Christian family model, underpinned with the nationalist aim of preserving ethno-national purity of the state by giving birth. Fidesz and PiS support this family image by associating populist social policies with these values. This leads to a moral justification of their stance on this symbolic community level, as the two governments appear as the sole protector and representative of family values, of the elderly and of the children. Naturally,

³⁴TVN24 - "Mieć więcej dzieci". Rzecznik klubu PiS radzi samotnym matkom bez 500 plus , <http://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/poslanka-pis-radzi-samotnym-matkom-bez-500-plus,616053.html> , last accessed on the 12th of December 2016

³⁵Magyar Nemzet Online, Vihart kavartak Kövér László szavai, <http://mno.hu/politika/vihart-kavartak-kover-laszlo-szavai-1319148> , last accessed on the 19th of December 2016

³⁶MTV – Híradó, <http://www.hirado.hu/2016/11/29/Orban-16-szazalekos-emeles-10-ezer-forintos-erzsebet-utalvany-a-nyugdijasoknak/> , last accessed on the 19th of December 2016

anti-government voices are portrayed as morally wrong, being directed against traditional family values and against the interest of the families.

IV. GOVERNMENT INFLUENCE ON PUBLIC DISCOURSE THROUGH THE MEDIA

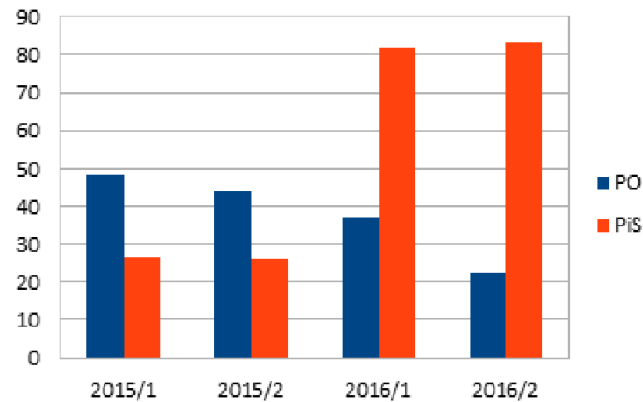
In both countries, governments are using their increased media influence over public (and to some extent private) outlets to propagate their political ideology in public discourse, interpreting events in light of the religious, nationalist and family narrative levels. To present the methods of “truth-monopolization” in public discourse, this section will first discuss the extent to which political parties and their opinions are represented in the media, then it will analyse the enforcement of the three-levelled government narrative in state-captured media outlets.

PARTY REPRESENTATION IN THE MEDIA

Based on a quantitative analysis carried out by the Polish National Broadcasting Council (KRiIT)³⁷, there had been a significant shift in TVP's representation of opinions of different parties, since PiS came into power. Table 1 shows the growing disparities, comparing the media coverage of the government and the main opposition party in the first two quarters of 2015 and that of 2016.

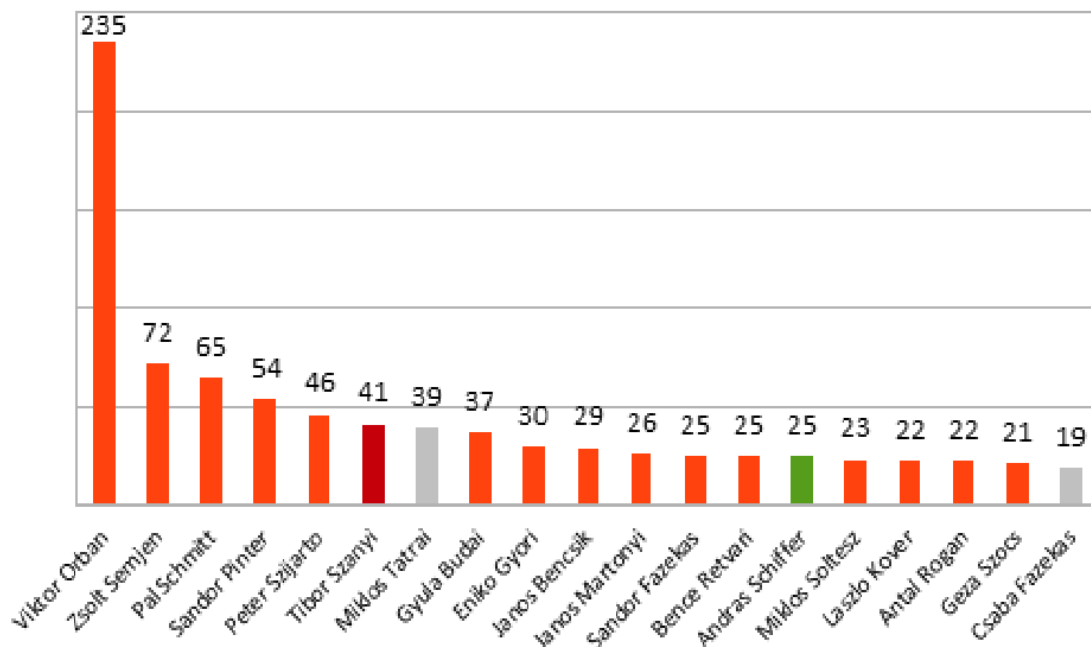
As the Table shows, there had been a bias towards PO during 2015, and historically Polish state television had been biased towards the government, as they received a larger share of coverage time. Since PiS obtained the outright majority and passed its media bill, differences became much more pronounced than before. Whereas in the second quarter of 2015, right before the elections, the main opposition party's position was represented only 40% less than the government party's (PO 43h57m and PiS 26h17m), in the second quarter of 2016 the same measure is 73% (PiS 83h23m and PO 22h30m); the government's opinion was presented 3.7 times as much as the main opposition parties'.

³⁷National Broadcasting Council, <http://www.krrit.gov.pl/krrit/aktualnosci/news,2383,niepokojace-dysproporcje-w-prezentowaniu-partii-politycznych-w-tvp.html>, last accessed on the 14th of December 2016



2. Table Time for presentation for PO's and PiS' opinion in TVP, during Q1 and Q2 of 2015 and 2016 (Hours) - Although there were imbalances in state media during the PO government, under PiS the discrepancies became much more pronounced

In Hungary, a similar shift occurred in state media coverage after Fidesz's election win. A telling statistics can be observed in Table 2. Content analysis of the state-owned M1's evening news bulletin showed that only 2 opposition and 2 independent politicians were amongst the 20 most covered politicians in the bulletin, the rest 16 were tied to the Fidesz-KDNP alliance. In 2008, on the same list 10 politicians were from the socialist MSZP government, the other 10 on the list were opposition MPs or independent politicians.



3. Table Coverage time (seconds) of the top 20 most covered politicians during a two-week period in M1's evening news bulletin (Republikon Institute data) – Colour coded based on party-affiliation. Orange – Fidesz, Red – MSZP, Green – LMP, Grey – Independent.

According to the same study the Fidesz-KDNP alliance took up 83% of news time during the evening news bulletin, receiving 10 times as much airtime than MSZP, one of the main opposition parties.

The fact that opposition parties receive little or no airtime on a significant on state-owned media platforms makes their chance to counter the government's propaganda and its symbolic narratives extremely narrow. Politicians from the opposition receive little opportunity to influence public discourse through explaining events in light of their own narratives, challenging the governing party's "monopoly of truth".

SUPPORTING THE THREE LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT IDEOLOGY

Both governments openly aimed to reshape media narratives according to their own ideologies. In an interview³⁸, Polish Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski stressed the importance of promoting values such as "patriotism, faith in God, in a normal family life between husband and wife", fitting into the three level populist narrative of the two governments. Students of College of Social and Media Culture under agreed with the minister, expecting changes under "new management and under a law that will force public media channels to "respect Christian values", and "act in favour of strengthening of families"³⁹

Since their elections, both governments increased their support towards religious outlets in the media through funding or legislation. In Hungary, the National Media Council – headed by Fidesz – is responsible for allocating radio frequencies. According to Mérték Média's reports, the distribution of frequencies heavily favoured religious outlets – in 2010-2011, more than a third of allocated frequencies was received by a station with substantial religious agenda, whereas in 2012-2013, the same number was 48%.

In Poland, there is no opportunity for such direct government support; however the most substantial religious platforms do receive financial aid from government circles. Lux Veritas

³⁸News Observer Online, Polish Govt. to Crush Marxists in State Media, <http://newobserveronline.com/polish-govt-to-crush-marxists-in-state-media/>, last accessed on the 19th of December 2016

³⁹Financial Times, Poland: An inconvenient truth, <https://www.ft.com/content/4344ca44-0b94-11e6-9cd4-2be898308be3>, Last accessed on the 14th of December 2016

Foundation, chaired by Father Tadeusz Rydzyk, received 26 million złotych in March 2016⁴⁰. Rydzyk is also heading the ultra-conservative Radio Maryja radio and Telewizja Trwam TV stations, both frequent hosts of PiS politicians, supporters of the government, often spreading homophobic and Islamophobic propaganda as part of their catholic Christian agenda.

With the growing market share and budget of media outlets with strong Christian agendas and close ties with the government, the sacralisation of the nation and association of its political agenda with Christian values and symbols are to a large extent being monopolized by Fidesz and PiS.

Channel	M1	Tv2	RTL Klub	ATV	HírTv
Percentage of time that supports or promotes the government's position	95%	89%	39%	46%	53%
Percentage of time that supports or promotes a position that is different to the government's	5%	11%	61%	54%	47%

4. Table Percentage of time that supports or promotes a position that is different to the government's (8th – 22nd September 2016)

The migrant crisis was a perfect fit for both the religious and nationalist levels of narrative. The government portrayed refugees as a threat to Hungary from a national perspective, and a threat to Christian Hungary from a religious point of view. A study by Democracy Reporting International⁴¹ revealed the striking extent to which some Hungarian media outlets represented the government's opinion in their news bulletins during the campaign period before Hungary's October Referendum on EU migrant quotas'. Table 4 shows the percentage of time that channels supported or promoted the government's position during the campaign build-up. M1, a main state-owned channel produced

⁴⁰TV24 - Jest ugoda. 26 milionów złotych odszkodowania dla fundacji o. Rydzyka, <http://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/fundacja-o-rydzyka-odzyskala-miliony-zlotych-za-odwiert,621375.html> , last accessed on the 19th of December 2016

⁴¹Democracy Reporting International, Hungary's state-owned TV shows bias in EU-refugee referendum, <http://democracy-reporting.org/?p=2450> , last accessed on the 5th of December 2016

a staggering 91%, whilst the supposedly private, but oligarch-owned TV2 a similarly one-sided 86% support rate – not exactly the epitome opinion pluralism.

A similar tendency can be observed in Poland, where the PiS government launched a heavy anti-EU, anti-migrant campaign through state owned media. As summarized in a KRiIT analysis based on 8 episodes of TVP's main news bulletin:

“The news show the world as monocentric, strongly narrowed down to the political sphere, with tensions between the ruling camp and the political opposition. The program emphasizes the positive effects of government action. (...) There is a strong tendency to build a sense of threat from external forces (immigrants, Russia) and internal (the opposition, "the previous government"), which in total gives an image of the world as a doubly besieged fortress”⁴²

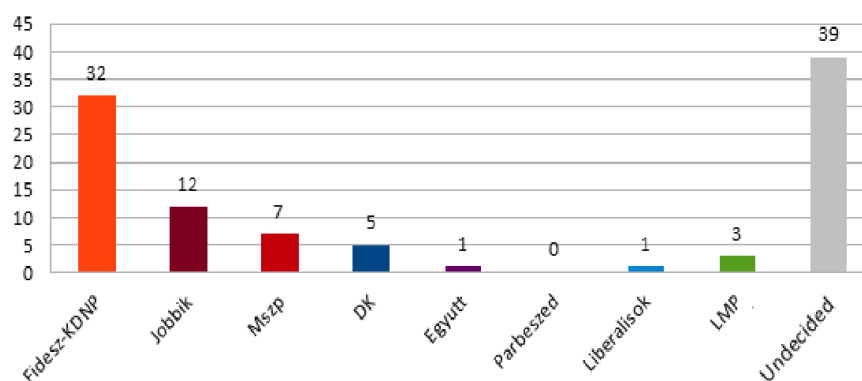
The family level narrative is tied in with the distributive policies of the two governments, families and the elderly being pictured in the media as the main beneficiaries of the supposedly great economic performance, increasing the regime's ideological credibility.

The model for all franchised projects is the same: the children are asked the usual set of questions about their country, families, religion, love, education and hopes for the future as they grow up. However, the project's impact turns out to be deeper than one might expect from such trivial beginnings. It develops into a commanding perspective

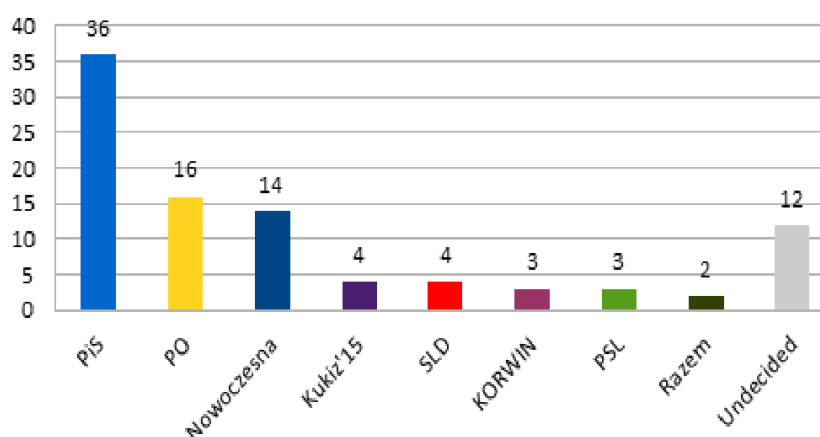
V. HOW WELL DOES THE THREE-LEVELLED IDEOLOGY WORK? THE EMERGENCE OF THE CENTRAL POLITICAL FORCE

Looking at recent opinion polls in both countries, the Fidesz and PiS governments managed to secure a massive lead, with no serious challenge by a fragmented opposition. According to the most recent surveys, both parties measure between 29-35%, a large lead compared to opposition parties – for representation, the paper uses survey results from CBOS and Nézőpont, as their scores were the closest of other surveys' mean results.

⁴²Kowalski, W. Na:Temat, Analiza KRRiT nie pozostawia złudzeń, że "Wiadomości" mają problem z bezstronnością. TVP odpowiada: To polityczny atak, <http://natemat.pl/177063,analiza-krrit-nie-pozostawia-zludzen-wiadomosci-maja-problem-z-bezstronnoscia-tyvp-odpowiada-to-polityczny-atak>, last accessed on the 28th of November 2016



5. Table Voter's preferences in Hungary (percent), 12.2016 - Nézőpont data



6. Table Voter's preferences in Poland (percent), 12.2016 - CBOS data

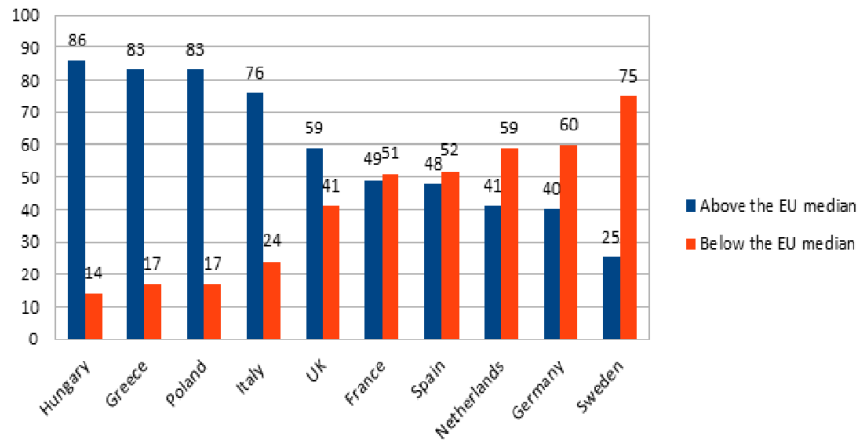
A large part of the poll lead which the governments are maintaining was built up during the refugee crisis, with both parties benefitting enormously from their Eurosceptic and anti-refugee stance on the matter. Policy reports' analysis showed how the support for Fidesz and PiS grew significantly from March 2015 to January 2016, as both put increased emphasis on the right wing elements of political narrative. PiS support increased by 12%, and the share of voters supporting Fidesz went up by 11% during this period.⁴³

As a result of the shift in political narratives and one-sided coverage, nationalist and anti-migrant sentiments grew significantly in both countries⁴⁴. Tables 6 and 7 show that Hungarian and

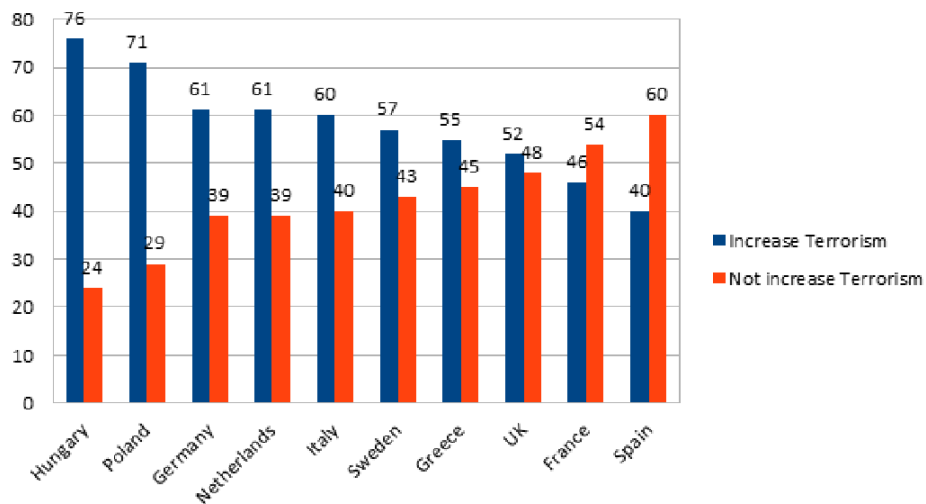
⁴³Policy Solution, Political Communication of the refugee crisis in Central Eastern Europe (2016)

⁴⁴ Pew Research Center, Wike R., Stokes B., Simmons K., Europeans Fear Wave of Refugees Will Mean More Terrorism, Fewer Jobs, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2016/07/11/europeans-fear-wave-of-refugees-will-mean-more->

Polish societies now have some of the strongest nationalist and anti-migrant sentiments in Europe, with the highest percentage of respondents thinking that increased immigration will lead to an increase in terrorism.



7. Table Views on National Identity vary across Europe – Pew Research Data from the Spring 2016 Value Survey



8. Table Refugees in our country will increase the likelihood of terrorism - Pew Research Data from the Spring 2016 Value Survey

The other opinion-shaping and support-increasing tool is the populist distributive approach of the Fidesz and PiS governments. As a result of one-sided and oversimplified media presentation, these policies enjoy an overwhelming support from the countries' electorate, regardless of their questionable economic sustainability.

terrorism-fewer-jobs/ , last accessed on the 10th of December 2016

In a CBOS survey conducted in February 2016, 80% of respondents supported ‘500 plus’, including 62% of ‘Modern’ voters and 65% of PO supporters, while only 15% of the respondents were against it⁴⁵.

VI. CONCLUSION

The strong religious and nationalist narratives, coupled with the family narrative being tied to populist redistributive policies resulted in a large and relatively stable support for the two governments and a fragmentation of the opposition parties in both countries, regardless of numerous signs of autocratic tendencies, recent constitutional crises and corruption scandals.

The differing parliamentary power of Fidesz and PiS meant in a different extent to which the two parties were able to capture media (both public and private outlets) and thus in the extent to which they were able to monopolize public discourse. As a result of this there is a somewhat less fragmented opposition and more active civil society in Poland.

In Hungary, Simicska's media empire is constantly being attacked by the Fidesz government and it has been largely reduced, whilst the system of checks and balances had been built down completely – the central political force took over the political landscape.

Although the Polish political outlook is not as gloomy as Hungary's; as long as PiS is able to keep up its widely popular social pledges economically, it is expected to retain the support of the electoral majority, especially in the religious-conservative rural areas. In the meantime, the PiS government is working on the systemic removal of democratic checks and balances and the Large Media Plan - albeit delayed - is still in plan. The EU intervention was successful in temporarily delaying the Large Media Act in Poland, however the Union does not appear to be ready to trigger any particular sanctions against Poland, therefore the problem needs to be solved domestically.

The clock is ticking. The opposition forces of the two countries will have to come up with credible counter-narratives on all three ideological levels, and will have to find platforms on which they can effectively spread these counter-narratives. If they fail to do so, the emergence of the unchallenged central political force will be inevitable and irreversible in both countries – until their money lasts.

⁴⁵CBOS, Program „Rodzina 500 plus” jako element systemu wspierania rodzin i dzieciności (February 2016)

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