



**European Politics and Society:
Václav Havel Joint Master Programme**

Charles University

Master's Thesis

2021

Mackenzie Baldinger



**European Politics and Society:
Václav Havel Joint Master Programme**

Charles University

*Neo-feudalism and Neo-traditionalism:
the Intersection of Cultural Discourse and Economic
Policies in Fidesz's Hungary*

Master's Thesis

Author: Mackenzie Baldinger

Supervisor: PhDr. Martin Mejstřík

Year of the defence: 2021

Declaration

- I. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
- II. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
- III. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

Tbilisi, 4th January 2021

Signed: Mackenzie Baldinger

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mackenzie Baldinger". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Bibliographic Reference Style: Chicago Manual Style (note)

Length of the thesis:

Characters (with spaces): 139, 570

Words: 21,106

Abstract

This thesis examines the intersection of cultural discourse and economic policies of the Hungarian populist radical right party, Fidesz. It classifies the cultural discourse of the governing party as neo-traditionalist by examining how the party's leader, Viktor Orbán, rhetorically shapes his vision of the nation, espouses traditional values, and uses missionary politics to create a personalized moral code under the guise of cultural Christianity. It examines the government's economic policies of nationalization and re-privatization, crony capitalism, and national work program within a neo-feudalist classification. This research finds that the neo-feudalist economic policies of Fidesz serve as a reinforcement mechanism that legitimizes the cultural discourse espoused by Orbán. Furthermore, the neo-feudal economy is reshaping the social system into a highly centralized and hierarchical structure and having lasting macroeconomic effects, including demographic issues and increasing levels of wealth inequality. This emerging illiberal model of governance is not only reshaping Hungary's political, economic, and social systems, but also contributing to a larger movement away from the tenets of liberal democracy within CEE.

Keywords

Neo-traditionalism, Neo-feudalism, Delayed transformational fatigue, Hungary, Fidesz, Illiberalism, Right-wing populism, Central and Eastern Europe

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION	7
I.1 Research Question and Structure	8
I.2 Contributions to the Existing Literature	9
I.3 Methodology	11
CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	14
1.1 Populism Defined: A Discursive Approach	14
1.1.1 Variants of Populism	17
1.2 Delayed Transformational Fatigue	18
1.2.1 Cultural Aspects of Delayed Transformational Fatigue: Neo-traditionalism	20
1.2.2 Economic Aspects of Delayed Transformational Fatigue: Neo-feudalism	21
1.3 Crisis Construction and Fear	23
1.4 Chapter Summary	25
CHAPTER 2: NEO-TRADITIONALIST CULTURAL NARRATIVES	26
2.1 Setting the Stage: Hungary in the 2000s	26
2.2 Defining the Nation	28
2.2.1 Constructing the Elites and the Outsiders	29
2.2.2 Constructing the People	32
2.3 Traditional Roles and Values	35
2.4 Missionary Politics	40
2.5 Creating a Neo-traditionalist Discourse	44
CHAPTER 3: NEO-FEUDALIST ECONOMIC POLICIES	46
3.1 Economic Policies When Entering Office	46
3.2 Renationalization of the Banks and Pension System	46
3.3 Crony Capitalism	50
3.4 National Work Program	53
3.5 Creating a Neo-Feudalist Economy	55
CHAPTER 4: THE INTERSECTION OF NEO-TRADITIONALISM AND NEO-FEUDALISM	58
4.1 A System of Reinforcement and its Social Consequences	58
4.1.1 Reinforcing Prescribed Cultural Norms	58
4.1.2 Funding	61
4.1.3 Neo-feudalism's Effect on Social Structures	63
4.2 Macroeconomic Consequences	65
4.3 Main Findings Summarized	71
CONCLUSION	74
LIST OF REFERENCES	78
LIST OF APPENDICES	84

INTRODUCTION

The year 2020 has been deemed the “year of the converging crises.”¹ The global COVID-19 pandemic, unprecedented climate disasters, and economic turmoil have inundated much of the world and disrupted the ways of life for billions of people. In reality, for Europe, 2020 experienced these successive “crises” in a longer line that seems to have plagued the continent for more than ten years. Starting with the effects of the American financial crisis that reverberated across Europe in 2008 and the resulting Eurozone crisis, followed in short by a declared migration crisis in 2015, the region seems to have spent the last decade operating in a constant state of “crisis.” As governments have grappled with the new reality of unprecedented economic intervention to mitigate and contain these crises, a growing debate has emerged that questions whether the governing model of liberal democracy can adequately respond to the extraordinary circumstances that Europe faces. A so-called third wave of right-wing populist sentiments has emerged in the face of this debate; in particular, the wave has had a profound impact on the Central and Eastern European (CEE) region. The term *delayed transformational fatigue* has emerged conceptually to understand the resulting “stalled” democratization processes of former communist nations and the resurgence of “neo-traditionalist” cultures that have developed in the wake of the Great Recession.²

One such country which has seen popular political success by questioning the effectiveness of liberal democracy is Hungary. Hungary, which was lauded for its successful transition to a market economy in the 1990s, has steadily moved to a new hybrid governing model by the ruling Fidesz

¹ Heglar, “2020: The Year of the Converging Crises.”

² Kubik, “FATIGUE and POPREBEL: What Are They All About? A Programmatic Statement.”

party, self-deemed “illiberal democracy,” since it took power in 2010. In the words of the party leader and prime minister, Viktor Orbán, illiberal democracy seeks to overcome the inefficiencies of liberal democracy that fail to “protect families... and the country from public indebtedness.” By adopting an exclusionary nationalist discourse that calls for the return to traditional values and embarking on an unorthodox set of economic policies, Fidesz has declared its intention to move Hungary away from a liberal democratic governing structure of its Western counterparts and create a new type of system. Ten years after the party took power and embarked on a rhetorical and policy-oriented transformation of the country, it is clear that its electoral success is not just a symptom of recession-oriented economic grievances. It is necessary to understand the nuanced cultural and economic implications of this emerging form of governance within Hungary to illuminate its effect on the country and its potential implications for the region.

I.1 RESEARCH QUESTION AND STRUCTURE

Deviating from previous research, this thesis aims to understand both the economic and cultural discursive aspects of a populist nationalist party, Fidesz. The research question asks *How do the economic policies and the cultural discourse of Fidesz intersect to create a successful party program?* From this query emerges two secondary research questions. The first asks: *What are the societal consequences of the neo-traditional cultural rhetoric that Viktor Orbán espouses?* The second question, which emerges from the developing economic program of Fidesz, asks: *What are the lasting macroeconomic consequences of the neo-feudalist economic policies that Fidesz has enacted?*

After a theoretical discussion of populism, delayed transformational fatigue, neo-traditionalism, and neo-feudalism in Chapter 1, the subsequent chapter will discuss the cultural

discourse of Fidesz, eventually classifying Orbán's rhetoric as neo-traditionalist. Chapter 3 will analyze the economic program of Fidesz in its tenure, highlighting the neo-feudalist system that has emerged. Chapter 4 presents the main finding that the intersection of the economic policies and cultural rhetoric from Hungary's ruling party manifests in a system of reinforcement where the economic program both funds and legitimizes Fidesz's cultural vision for Hungary. The chapter then delves into the lasting consequences of this new cultural and economic system, looking at macroeconomic indicators and the shifting social system.

I.2 CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE EXISTING LITERATURE

As the theoretical chapter will underline, the existing body of literature on populism is vast and includes left-wing and right-wing variants, but this thesis limits its scope to right-wing nationalist populist politics in Central Europe. There has been ample academic debate over the reason for the rise of nationalist populism in the wake of the Great Recession, with a current division in the field over whether the root is cultural or economic. Researchers like Baker have argued that the success of pundits like Donald Trump and the rise of right-wing populism can be attributed to the real economic woes and insecurities that the middle class has faced due to globalization.³ Other scholars like Bale have largely credited the success of populist discourses in Europe to a strong resurgence of identity politics as parts of the population react to the social shifts and the rise of multiculturalism in the last few decades.⁴ In 2016, formative research done by Inglehart and Norris found that the economic insecurity argument that highlights the rise of globalization as a cause for increased demand for populism cannot be discounted, yet there is

³ Baker, "Is Globalization to Blame?"

⁴ Bale, "Truth to Tell."

strong evidence that supports the thesis that populism's popularity is associated with a cultural backlash against progressive societal change.⁵ While studies like that of Norris and Inglehart contribute to a growing demand in the field of populism studies for moving beyond the binary causal classification of *culture or economy*, there is not a wide breadth of literature devoted to the intersection of the two. In 2017, Noam Gidron and Peter Hall endeavored to understand the intersection of the cultural and economic demand for right-wing populism through a cross-national survey of 20 countries, finding that social status is linked to support for these movements. They concluded that both the economic and cultural developments of individuals impacted their social status and may have contributed to their willingness to subscribe to right-wing national sentiments.⁶

Specifically, in the region of Central and Eastern Europe, Ost has contended that right-wing populism offered a compelling narrative against the economic woes of the working class but was also the result of the indifference of 'callous politicians' who seemed uninterested and unable to prioritize their economic wellbeing.⁷ Stanley, however, points to empirical evidence that the right-wing variant of populism in CEE is largely a "cultural backlash" against the "politics of transition" and the multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism that many feel was forced upon them in the wake of their democratic transitions.⁸ In his discussion of delayed transformational fatigue, Kubik argues that the delayed onset of right-wing populist success in CEE two decades after successful transitions to market economies demonstrates that populism is not solely connected to economic prospects. Thus, to approach the concept of populism or Fidesz's success through a singular economic lens would omit an important part of the equation: the cultural discourse. Therefore,

⁵ Inglehart and Norris, "Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-Nots and Cultural Backlash," 3.

⁶ Gidron and Hall, "The Politics of Social Status."

⁷ Ost, *The Defeat of Solidarity*.

⁸ Stanley, "Populism in Central and Eastern Europe."

building on the work of researchers like Norris and Inglehart, as well as Kubik, this thesis hopes to contribute to the growing demand for literature on the intersection of cultural and economic aspects of right-wing populism.

It will contribute in a novel way by evaluating the *supply* of economic programs and their intersection with the cultural discourse of one of the most electorally successful right-wing populist political parties, Fidesz. The benefits of this analysis go beyond identifying what economic and cultural circumstances facilitate the rise in popularity of such a party but allow for a detailed understanding of how a party like Fidesz uses economic and cultural discursive tools to successfully retain power and shape their own vision of society.

I.3 METHODOLOGY

This thesis will employ a singular case study of Fidesz's discourse and economic policies from the period of 2009 to 2020. While a comparative study could potentially identify trends in the economic policies and cultural rhetoric of various nationalist populist parties throughout CEE, this singular analysis is justified in the pursuit of a nuanced understanding of how this particular party has achieved electoral success.⁹ The premise of this research focuses on the party program constructed by Fidesz in the wake of the global financial crisis of 2008; scholars like Kriesi and Pappas have demonstrated that vastly different economic impacts and populist political reactions were seen in the wake of the Great Recession, thus warranting particular attention to Fidesz.¹⁰ Furthermore, this thesis aims to understand the cultural discourse of a right-wing populist party, which authors like Ruth Wodak have argued are highly contextual and case specific to each national environment. She has advocated that only by recognizing that each populist movement

⁹ That is not to say that this analysis is not beneficial to the wider study of arguably similar parties that enact comparable party programs, like PiS in Poland.

¹⁰ Kriesi and Pappas, *European Populism in the Shadow of the Great Recession*.

“combines and integrates form and content, targets specific audiences and adapts to special contexts” can scholars “deconstruct, understand, and explain their messages...and their electoral success.”¹¹ Thus, given the aim to understand the intersection of highly contextual cultural narratives and economic policies, as well as their lasting consequences on a particular society, this thesis chooses to singularly focus on the case of Fidesz in Hungary.

The research will employ a mixed methodological approach, given that it aims to analyze the intersection of cultural discourse and economic policy. To analyze the construction of Fidesz’s crisis rhetoric and the resulting cultural narrative, this research will employ a critical discursive approach. Specifically, this thesis will adopt the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA), which “investigates language use beyond the sentence level” to understand the role “discourse plays in the reproduction of non-inclusive and non-egalitarian structures and challenges in the social condition.”¹² The DHA emphasizes that language becomes powerful when it is employed by powerful actors, with a powerful actor being defined as one who is able to establish “one’s will within a social relationship and against the will of others.”¹³ Thus, this thesis will focus on the language of one powerful actor in Hungary: the leader of the Fidesz party and current Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán. It will follow the approach of other scholars in analyzing the speeches of Viktor Orbán as representative of the position of the entire party of Fidesz.¹⁴ While the discourse of specific actors may vary at the individual level, Orbán has maintained a strong position as the leader of the party since 1993; he held office as Prime Minister from 1998 until 2002 and has maintained that position continuously since 2010. In the general conceptual discussion of populism, scholars often speak of a charismatic leader that becomes the face of the movement; for

¹¹ Wodak, *The Politics of Fear*, 24.

¹² Wodak, *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, 1.

¹³ Wodak, *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, 4.

¹⁴ Batory, “Populists in Government?” 288.

Fidesz, that leader is Orbán. This thesis will use both the official statements of Orbán that have been released by the Office of the Prime Minister and interviews from media sources.

In addition to its discourse analysis, this thesis will look at the economic policies implemented by the party and their intersection with the cultural narratives constructed. This thesis will use government data, public access information from the European Commission, economic publications like the Financial Times, and the work of other researchers to create a comprehensive understanding of the government's economic policies.

Chapter 1: Theoretical framework

1.1 Populism Defined: A Discursive Approach

An extensive body of scholarly work has devoted itself to defining the term *populism* for analytical purposes in wake of what is has been deemed a third wave of populist politics since the Great Recession.¹⁵ The definition of populism has been widely debated, given its “chameleonic, culture-bound, and context specific” nature that allows it to be molded rhetorically and strategically in different environments.¹⁶ Because of populism’s malleable nature, one of the prevailing definitional approaches to populism in recent years has been as a “thin-centered” ideology that represents a Manichean outlook of the world.¹⁷

The ideological approach to populism emphasizes an antagonism between two homogenous groups: the ‘virtuous’ will of the people and the ‘corrupt’ intentions of the “governing elite.”¹⁸ The ideational approach to populism argues that politics should represent the “general will of the people.”¹⁹ This definition of populism is useful for research because of its “thin-centered” nature that allows for context specific analysis. With this classification, the commonly observed hierarchical sentiment of “the people” being against “the elites,” which has been combined with both right- and left-wing sentiments, can be studied under the single conceptual term of populism. As will be discussed in the next section of the chapter, this definition of populism allows it to be combined with other ideologies like nationalism, socialism or fascism.

¹⁵ Noam Gidron and Bart Bonikowski, “Varieties of Populism: Literature Review and Research Agenda,” 4.

¹⁶ Arter, “The Breakthrough of Another West European Populist Radical Right Party?” 2010.

¹⁷ Mudde, “The Populist Zeitgeist.”

¹⁸ Mudde.

¹⁹ Gidron and Bonikowski, “Varieties of Populism,” 6.

In addition to the ideational approach, some scholars pursue the study of populism as a discursive style. Benjamin De Cleen defines the discursive approach to populism as:

*a discourse centred around the nodal points of 'the people' and 'the elite,' in which the meaning of 'the people' and 'the elite' is constructed through a down/up antagonism between 'the people' as a large powerless group and 'the elite' as a small and illegitimately powerful group.*²⁰

Much like the ideational approach, populism approached discursively features a dichotomy of the “virtuous good” and the “corrupt elite.” However, some scholars approach discourse as a combination of ideology and rhetoric; scholars like Kirk Hawkins believe that discourse “is manifested in distinct linguistic forms and content that have real political consequences.”²¹ For Hawkins, populism is “a worldview and is expressed as a discourse...yet, unlike ideology, populism is a latent set of ideas that lacks specific exposition and contrast with other discourses and is usually low on policy specifics.”²² The ideational and discursive approaches are similar in that they both approach populism with an emphasis on the Manichean outlook and dichotomous antagonism between the people and the elites; however, they vary in their methodological approaches.²³ When populism is approached as an ideology, it is viewed as “a bundle of ideas” and thus, the study of political actors through party statements and programs can lead to a dichotomous classification of populist or not populist.²⁴ However, populism as a discourse allows for rhetoric to be re-shaped and adapted to specific cases more fluidly than shifting an entire ideology.²⁵ As Laclau highlights, the discourse of populism consists of “empty signifiers” that can

²⁰ Cleen, “Populism and Nationalism,” 5.

²¹ Hawkins, “Is Chávez Populist?” 1045.

²² Hawkins. 1045.

²³ Gidron and Bonikowski, “Varieties of Populism,” 8.

²⁴ Gidron and Bonikowski, “Varieties of Populism,” 7.

²⁵ Gidron and Bonikowski, “Varieties of Populism,” 9.

be shaped rhetorically to construct the “us” and “them” in a way that is beneficial to the actors constructing the narrative.²⁶ Thus, methodological approaches to populism as a discourse allow for more contextual analysis of populist manifestations in certain situations.²⁷ Given that this thesis aims to identify the intersection of cultural discourse and economic policies within the same populist party over the course of time, moving beyond the dichotomous classification of populist or not populist is beneficial. Thus, this thesis will theoretically approach populism as a discourse, which will allow for nuanced reflections on the party’s cultural narratives over time.

It is important to note a third theoretical approach to studying populism, which is populism as a political strategy. While this thesis intends to look at the political strategy of a party that is classified as populist, it does not approach populism as a political strategy. The political strategy approach frames populism through the study of policy choices, often focusing predominantly on economic policy choices and methods of mass mobilization.²⁸ However, many scholars critique the political strategy approach because there is a lack of consistent policy advocated for by populist parties. Weyland, for example, has pointed to the historical discrepancies in Latin American populism during the 20th century, contrasting the vast difference between the protectionist nature of populist economic policies in the middle part of the century and the populist neoliberal attitudes towards the end.²⁹ Even in modern analysis, using a policy-specific approach to define populism would seriously limit the scope of studies on this phenomenon. Therefore, it is important to make a distinction in the theoretical basis of this paper and its goals. While this thesis seeks to understand the economic policy choices of a populist government, it is using the discourse of the party, not its policy choices, to define Fidesz as populist.

²⁶ Laclau, *On Populist Reason*.

²⁷ Gidron and Bonikowski, “Varieties of Populism,” 9.

²⁸ Gidron and Bonikowski, “Varieties of Populism,” 11.

²⁹ Weyland, ““Neopopulism and Neoliberalism in Latin America: Unexpected Affinities.””

1.1.1 Variants of Populism

The study of populism can be divided into its program supplies and demand from the populace, and it can be further delineated into its inclusionary left-wing manifestations and exclusionary right-wing variants. Through utilization of a thin-centered definition, vastly different political programs of Latin America and Europe can be represented under the concept of populism. Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser have outlined the distinct differences between a more inclusive form of Latin American populism and the increasingly exclusionary nature of European populism.³⁰ They have shown that many Latin American populist movements have called politically for a more radical and direct form of democracy and materially for the distribution of resources to be directed more equally to historically marginalized parts of the community.³¹ This left-wing variant of populism, which tends to use a binary horizontal antagonism between the people and the elites,³² differs greatly from a more exclusionary definition of “the people” seen in Europe. While in Latin America, the focus of populists is on establishing material welfare systems, European populists often propose programs to “protect” the established welfare systems through a type of “welfare chauvinism” that seeks to deprive benefits from immigrants or minorities.³³ Politically, this right-wing variant of populism argues that elites have disengaged with the “silent majority” and are no longer working on behalf of the average citizen.³⁴

Mudde has devised the term *populist radical right* in an attempt to capture a variant of right-wing populism emerging in parts of Europe and arguably, the United States.³⁵ Mudde’s term focuses on *authoritarianism* and nativism, or the idea:

³⁰ Mudde and Kaltwasser, “Exclusionary vs. Inclusionary Populism.”

³¹ Mudde and Kaltwasser, “Exclusionary vs. Inclusionary Populism,” 158-163.

³² Brubaker, “Between Nationalism and Civilizationism.”

³³ Mudde and Kaltwasser, “Exclusionary vs. Inclusionary Populism,” 160.

³⁴ Mudde and Kaltwasser, “Exclusionary vs. Inclusionary Populism,” 163.

³⁵ Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*.

*that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group (“the nation”) and that nonnative elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-state.*³⁶

The thin nature of populism, in these populist parties, is thickened with nationalist, right-wing sentiments. In the case of parties like Fidesz, which many scholars would agree has ideologically continued to move right,³⁷ the term *populist radical right* and its associated nativism and authoritarian tendencies, accurately depicts the party’s political program.

1.2 Delayed Transformational Fatigue

After exploring the conceptualization of populism, it is important to put this thesis in the context of a specific subset of populism associated with the term *delayed transformational fatigue*. *Delayed transformational fatigue* is a term coined by Jan Kubik that seeks to encompass the rise of “illiberal and populist politics in Central and Eastern Europe,” an area where many countries attempted to transition into democratic governing systems in the 1990s.³⁸ It largely focuses on a growing trend of emerging right-wing nationalist populist parties.³⁹ The term can be broken into two key aspects of the recent success of populist parties in Central and Eastern Europe: *delayed* and *fatigue*. The *fatigue* aspect of this conceptual term attempts to capture the economic, social, cultural, and political conditions that led to a demand for right-wing populist politics. *Fatigue* refers to the “cultural syndrome” or “condition of society” that has led, in part to the rise of

³⁶ Mudde, *The Populist Radical Right*, 19.

³⁷ Mudde, “To Save Hungary’s Liberal Democracy, Centrists Must Work with the Far Right | Cas Mudde.”

³⁸ Kubik, “FATIGUE and POPREBEL: What Are They All About? A Programmatic Statement,” 3.

³⁹ Fidesz, which arguably falls under Mudde’s *populist radical right* classification, holds many of the tenets that delayed transformational fatigue seeks to explore. However, this does not imply that all of the parties and movements investigated under this wider term are classified as *populist radical right*.

populism in this area of the world.⁴⁰ The other significant aspect of this conceptual term is the word *delayed*. For Kubik, the term *delayed* refers to the fact that despite economic downturns in the region during the 1990s, there was no immediate significant rise in the popularity of populist programs. In much of the region, it was years later, after the economy had started to recover from the devastation of transitioning into market economies, that right-wing nationalist populist parties began to see electoral success. This delayed aspect of populist politics has indicated to scholars that the success of populist politics may be indirectly affected by economic conditions, and more directly affected by the narratives that are constructed and how they are offered to the people.⁴¹

The *fatigue* and *delayed* aspects of *delayed transformational fatigue* point to two clear sides of the success of populist politics. *Fatigue* attempts to encompass the demand for populist politics by the electorate and *delayed* encompasses the supply of the populist programs by political actors. Dividing the study of populism into the supply side and demand side is an important distinction that scholars have made in recent years. This research will predominantly focus on the supply side of populism, focusing on the narratives and policies supplied by the Fidesz party and its leader, Viktor Orbán.

Delayed transformational fatigue focuses on the study of Central and Eastern European populism, which falls into the exclusionary variant that Mudde and Kaltwasser previously discussed. The exclusionary form of populism instrumentalized in CEE is classified as right-wing, often considered far right, and combined with nationalist sentiments. De Cleen has highlighted the distinction between populism and nationalism, arguing that the nodal points of populist discourse feature a hierarchical dimension, with the elites being elevated to a position of power over “the people.” Nationalism, De Cleen argues, has an in-out dimension, in which the nation is defined as

⁴⁰ Kubik, “FATIGUE and POPREBEL: What Are They All About? A Programmatic Statement,” 3.

⁴¹ Kubik, “FATIGUE and POPREBEL: What Are They All About? A Programmatic Statement,” 3.

certain set of people that excludes all others as being outsiders.⁴² The right-wing variant of populism in CEE contains both a nationalist and populist element, and it often defines a triad of antagonism in society, with the people opposed vertically to the foreign outsiders and horizontally opposed to the corrupt elites that work in conjunction with the foreign threat.⁴³ One of the most common manifestations of this “elitist other” in many CEE countries is George Soros, who is personified as a foreigner that holds a great deal of wealth and influence. As a Jewish man who made the bulk of his wealth through currency speculation, he is typified as an elitist outsider who wishes to interfere in matters of national importance and work against the “will of the people.”⁴⁴

1.2.1 Cultural Aspects of Delayed Transformational Fatigue: Neo-traditionalism

In his discussion of the contributing factors to the demand for populist political programs, Kubik has highlighted four dimensions: the political, economic, social, and cultural.⁴⁵ This thesis, while not focusing on the demand side of populism, will direct its attention to the cultural and economic aspects of Fidesz’s political strategy. The cultural aspect of delayed transformational fatigue, as defined by Norris and Inglehart, involves a backlash against the rapid progressive cultural change in which large portions of the populace see an “eroding (of) the basic values and customs of Western societies.”⁴⁶ Kubik discusses this growing demand to reject progressive cultural values as *neo-traditionalist* sentiments, which relate to “cultural illiberalism, authoritarianism, and conservatism.”⁴⁷ Neo-traditionalist attitudes include a call “for ‘traditional’ social roles, particularly when it comes to gender and sexual orientation; and they are always

⁴² De Cleen, “Populism and Nationalism.”

⁴³ Brubaker, “Between Nationalism and Civilizationism.”

⁴⁴ Baldinger, “Fidesz’s National in the International: Global Implications of a Domestic Populist Government.”

⁴⁵ Kubik, “FATIGUE and POPREBEL: What Are They All About? A Programmatic Statement.”

⁴⁶ Inglehart and Norris, “Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-Nots and Cultural Backlash,” 30.

⁴⁷ Kubik, “FATIGUE and POPREBEL: What Are They All About? A Programmatic Statement,” 12.

vigilant to protect the purity of the (national) community against the perceived threats of cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism.”⁴⁸

Szelenyi and Csillag differentiate this new form of the ideology in CEE by highlighting its combination of the traditionalist sentiments focused on “‘family, patria, and God’ with some form of statism.”⁴⁹ Neo-traditionalism in its emerging form combines traditional family values and conservative principles with patriotism and a return to “Christian values.” In the case of countries, like Hungary, that are now largely secular, the vacuum for some kind of religious moral compass has been replaced by what Zúquete calls “missionary politics.”⁵⁰ Instead of relying on a religious head to provide guiding traditional values, the political leader’s discourse enters the realm of a type of “political religion” led by a charismatic leader who creates a “moral community invested with a collective mission of combating conspiratorial enemies and redeeming the nation from its putative crisis.”⁵¹

While some researchers, like Norris and Inglehart, focus on the growing demand for such narratives in the electorate, this thesis will focus on the supply of neo-traditionalist narratives by Fidesz, looking at how Orbán has constructed the nation, promoted traditional values, and filled the religious vacuum with his own definition of Christian values.

1.2.2 Economic Aspects of Delayed Transformational Fatigue: Neo-feudalism

The second dimension of Kubik’s four contributing aspects to the rise of populism in CEE that this thesis will address is the economic factor. Previous research has identified that social, political, and cultural factors have played a significant role in the rise of populism, but economic

⁴⁸ Kubik, “FATIGUE and POPREBEL: What Are They All About? A Programmatic Statement,” 12.

⁴⁹ Szelenyi and Csillag, “Drifting from Liberal Democracy.”

⁵⁰ Zúquete, “Missionary Politics – A Contribution to the Study of Populism,” 264.

⁵¹ Zúquete, 264.

grievances and general disappointment with globalism and its associated increase in inequality cannot be discounted.⁵² Divergent to the research that focuses on economic-based demand, this thesis will focus on the supply of economic policies from Fidesz in Hungary.

When seeking to analyze the ideologies of what is seen culturally as right-wing populist parties in the region, their economic policies do not easily fit on the traditional left-right axis.

Szelenyi and Csillag have pointed out that “in the political mess post-communist Eastern Europe finds itself, it is hard to tell who is ‘left’ and who is ‘right.’”⁵³ In countries like Hungary and Poland, a phenomenon emerged after the Great Recession began, in which the governments undertook massive nationalization campaigns, signaling a left-leaning protectionist economic approach. However, policies like the reduction of social benefits for certain sectors of the population and subsequent selective re-privatization efforts also indicated a more right-leaning economic approach.

In an attempt to qualify the emerging program of economic policies, scholars have theorized a new type of classification of economic policies used by right-wing populists in CEE as *neo-feudalist*. Once in power, these actors “pursue wide-scale privatization and re-nationalization programmes” aimed at redistributing wealth to a specific subset of the population.⁵⁴ Kubik’s reference to neo-feudalist capitalism focuses on the fact that these regimes provide economic security and advantages for a subsection of the populace; in many cases, those who prove loyal to the regime, benefit greatly from a wealth of public funds. Istvan Kollai has even argued that while neo-feudalism applies to economic policies, it has real cultural implications,

⁵² Rodrik, “Populism and the Economics of Globalization,” 8-10.

⁵³ Szelenyi and Csillag, “Drifting from Liberal Democracy,” 26.

⁵⁴ Kubik, “FATIGUE and POPREBEL: What Are They All About? A Programmatic Statement,” 23.

leading to a hierarchical social system that is dependent on personalized coordination of society.⁵⁵ His work supports the idea that an economic policy has real implications for cultural discourse. Thus, this thesis will analyze the economic policies of Fidesz under the economic classification of neo-feudalism to better understand how the government's policies intersect with its cultural definition of 'the people' and 'the elites' in its populist narratives.

1.3 Crisis Construction and Fear

An entire body of literature has been devoted to how political parties construct crisis narratives to frame so-called 'national interests.' The term *crisis*, defined by Oxford English Dictionary as "a time of intense difficulty or danger,"⁵⁶ is in itself a subjective discursive construction. Crises can be measured by their social, economic, or political impact, but ultimately it is through the repetition and circulation of narratives that a collective group establishes what represents a crisis. Authors like Weldes have shown that political actors often frame 'national interests' through articulation, or "the process through which meaning...is created and temporarily fixed by establishing chains of connotations among different linguistic elements."⁵⁷ After successful repeated articulations, political actors can use the process of interpellation to create identities and subject positions that define social relationships.⁵⁸ Through creation of a dominant narrative, actors can reinforce connections between linguistic ideas and reinforce the positions they deem acceptable for certain parts of society. Populists, as political actors, can also construct their vision

⁵⁵ Kollai, "The Many Meanings of Neo-Feudalism: Analysis of Academic and Public Discourse Alluding Premodern Social Structures."

⁵⁶ "Crisis | Definition of Crisis by Oxford Dictionary on Lexico.Com Also Meaning of Crisis."

⁵⁷ Weldes, "Constructing National Interests," 98.

⁵⁸ Weldes, "Constructing National Interests," 102.

of “the virtuous people” and the “corrupt elites” through articulation and interpellation. Often, these narratives are created opportunistically under the perception of crisis.

It has been previously noted that “populism gets its impetus from the perception of crisis, breakdown, or threat” when there is “a breakdown between citizens and their representatives.”⁵⁹ Wodak contends that right-wing populist discourse often constructs a narrative that seizes on the fears of the electorate and is context specific; it can be job security concerns, fear of foreigners, fear of loss of autonomy, or fear of the degradation of traditions and values.⁶⁰ Altheide has observed that in recent years, “fear has become a dominant public perspective...with enough repetition and expanded use, it becomes a way of looking at life. Fear has emerged as a framework for developing identities and engaging in social life.”⁶¹ By constructing crisis narratives, right-wing populists have the ability to seize on the fears of the electorate and offer a dichotomous moral code that clearly labels “the people” as moral and “the elitist Others” as immoral and the embodiment of everything they fear. The simplified nature of the Manichean populist narrative that paints the world in black and white moral distinctions offers appealing answers in the complicated times of economic or political ‘crisis.’

As noted in the introduction, Fidesz entered into its majority position in parliament in the midst of the Great Recession and Euro-crisis. Europe has arguably been inundated with ‘crises’ for most of the party’s tenure. Thus, the rhetorical framing of these crises at the national level and the discursive articulation and interpellation of enemies has served to legitimize fears. This has played a major role in Fidesz’s construction of the “other” and the “self,” and allowed Orbán to rhetorically shape his vision of Hungarian society and the nation. Evaluating the crisis rhetoric of

⁵⁹ Moffitt and Tormey, “Rethinking Populism,” 391.

⁶⁰ Wodak, *The Politics of Fear*, 24.

⁶¹ Altheide, *Creating Fear*, 3.

the party will further contribute to the larger analysis of the neo-traditionalist cultural values the party has espoused throughout its tenure in office.

1.4 Chapter Summary

This theoretical chapter has dealt with the term populism, justifying the choice to approach the concept discursively. It attempted to take a chameleonic term that is widely used and specify its purpose in this research to focus on the rise of right-wing nationalist populist parties in CEE. Through a discussion of delayed transformational fatigue, it further delineated the purpose of this research to investigating the supply of neo-traditionalist cultural discourse and neo-feudalist economic policies within the party program of Hungary's ruling party, Fidesz. By examining the process of crisis construction, this section looked at how populist discourse can articulate and legitimate fears to rhetorically shape their vision for a more advantageous version society. The next section will focus on the construction of cultural narratives, ultimately classifying them as neo-traditionalist.

Chapter 2: Neo-traditionalist Cultural Narratives

2.1 Setting the Stage: Hungary in the 2000s

As previously presented in Chapter 1, one general observation of the nature of the relationship between populists and crises is that “populism gets its impetus from the perception of crisis, breakdown, or threat” when there is “a breakdown between citizens and their representatives.”⁶² In the case of Fidesz, the rhetorical opportunity to establish itself amidst crisis arose in a perfect storm of a political scandal in 2006, followed by the global economic crash of 2008. Fidesz established itself as the main opposition against the governing party, the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP), from 2002 until the elections of 2010, and the early 2000s marked a time of increasing political polarization between the two parties. MSZP’s tenure in office from 2002 until 2006 was characterized by generous welfare programs and excessive government spending. The party introduced popular initiatives like a 13-month pension plan, which pleased voters but also resulted in sovereign debt increasing to over 60 per cent of GDP and an imbalanced budget with a government deficit over nine per cent.⁶³ The 2006 election featured campaigns by both Fidesz and the MSZP that promised continued generous welfare programs, despite the precarious state of Hungary’s national budget.⁶⁴

Only a few months after Fidesz’s unsuccessful 2006 bid to gain control of parliament, the party was given its first opportunity to seize on a crisis, this time a political one. Despite the fact that the governing MSZP party had campaigned on increased welfare benefits, a leaked tape of a party meeting showed that the Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany had no intention of keeping the

⁶² Moffitt and Tormey, “Rethinking Populism,” 391.

⁶³ Kriesi and Pappas, *European Populism in the Shadow of the Great Recession*.

⁶⁴ Batory, “Election Briefing No 51 Europe and the Hungarian Parliamentary Elections of April 2010.”

economic promises he had made. The tape featured Gyurscany saying “we lied in the morning, we lied in the evening,” and that “only divine providence, an abundance of cash in the world economy, and hundreds of tricks” had kept Hungary’s economy from collapsing during the party’s first term.⁶⁵ The revelations from this tape and the subsequent mass riots in Budapest presented Fidesz with its first opportunity to assert itself as the necessary bridge to bring the government back to the people.

The second major event to rock Hungary in a short period of time was the global economic crash of 2008. Despite austerity measures that were enacted by MSZP, the high levels of foreign debt and a precarious domestic situation made Hungary especially susceptible to worldwide economic downturn. From July to October of 2008, the Hungarian currency, the forint, lost over 20 per cent of its value, and many mortgages and business loans, held in foreign currencies, faced the prospect of defaulting.⁶⁶ By November, the MSZP government had accepted a joint bailout loan of \$25 billion from the International Monetary Fund, the European Union, and the World Bank. However, this bailout, while successful in stabilizing the country’s freefalling economy, came with wildly unpopular austerity conditions like lower pensions, increased retirement age, wage freezes for government employees, and budget cuts for state subsidy programs.⁶⁷

These two consecutive events, a political crisis followed by an economic one, exposed a deep resentment and distrust among the Hungarian population towards the socialist government, and Fidesz seized upon the opportunity to shape the crisis narrative in their favor. This section will examine the cultural narrative that Fidesz espoused in the 2010 election and their subsequent tenure in office, looking at how its leader discursively shapes the nation and defines the “us” and

⁶⁵ Daniel McLaughlin, “150 Injured as Hungarians Riot over PM’s Lies.”

⁶⁶ Jolly, “IMF Bailout Lifts Hungarian Markets.”

⁶⁷ Fairclough, “IMF Pulls Out of Hungary Loan Talks.”

“them.” It will then explore the finding that Fidesz espouses traditional family roles and values based on a vague definition of “European Christian values.” Finally, it will identify how the ruling party has attempted to discursively create a moral community within an arguably secular nation through Zuquete’s concept of *missionary politics*.⁶⁸ It will conclude by analyzing these cultural discourses to classify Fidesz within the scope of a neo-traditionalist cultural program.

2.2 Defining the Nation

As discussed in the theoretical section, the terms populism and nationalism hold some similar discursive qualities, including the delineation of the “us” versus “them” that serves to create a dichotomy of those that should be feared and those that can be trusted. One major discursive difference between these concepts is that populism constructs a hierarchical antagonism between the “will of the people” and the “elites,” while nationalism creates a vertical opposition between those within the defined nation and those outside of it.⁶⁹ Fidesz, as a populist radical right party, discursively combines a populist and nationalist vision of the Hungarian nation and its enemies in what can be described as a triad.⁷⁰ As Brubaker notes, right-wing populist rhetoric often denotes the ‘good and virtuous’ people as one angle of the triad, with the national outsiders “juxtaposed horizontally.”⁷¹ These outsiders threaten the people, and within the nation, the vertically antagonizing elites are seen to be either cooperating or ‘exacerbating the danger posed by the aliens.’⁷²

⁶⁸ Zúquete, “Missionary Politics – A Contribution to the Study of Populism.”

⁶⁹ De Cleen, *Populism and Nationalism*.

⁷⁰ Kubik, “FATIGUE and POPREBEL: What Are They All About? A Programmatic Statement,” 7.

⁷¹ Brubaker, “Populism and Nationalism.”

⁷² Kubik, “FATIGUE and POPREBEL: What Are They All About? A Programmatic Statement,” 7.

2.2.1 Constructing the Elites and the Outsiders

In the case of Hungary, given the events of the first decade of the 2000s, Fidesz's rhetorical framing of the elites initially focused heavily on the MSZP government. In the 2010 election, Fidesz ran on a vague policy platform, shying away from specific proposals of how the party would deliver the country from its economic woes.⁷³ Instead, Fidesz promised to deliver a "revolution" from the abuses of the corrupt socialist government; in the aftermath of the April 2010 election, Orbán declared "Hungarians have overthrown the system and created a new one. The old system of leaders misusing their power was replaced by one of national unity."⁷⁴ Although Fidesz did make frequent analogies and connections of the MSZP party and the corrupt former communist governments,⁷⁵ it is noteworthy that MSZP did not remain the focus of Fidesz's rhetorical framing of the nation's enemies for long. Previous discourse analyses from 2010-2018 show that Orbán's enemies were increasingly framed externally from the nation as the party moved beyond the 2010 election.⁷⁶

One plausible explanation for the lack of focus on MSZP as an active "threat to the Hungarian nation" is the party's poor electoral performance in 2010. As Becker has noted, MSZP enjoyed 42 per cent and 43.2 per cent of the vote in 2002 and 2006, respectively. In 2010, the party's support dropped 22.3 percentage points to 20.9 per cent of the vote.⁷⁷ With a major electoral victory and a two-thirds majority secured in the 2010 election, it is plausible that Orbán felt the strength of his internal mandate and became less concerned with the political threat posed by MSZP. As a result, the internal "corrupt elites" were largely framed as the "left" and "the previous

⁷³ Batory, "Election Briefing No 51 Europe and the Hungarian Parliamentary Elections of April 2010."

⁷⁴ "Center-Right Fidesz Party Sweeps to Victory in Hungary - CNN.Com."

⁷⁵ Batory, "Populists in Government?"

⁷⁶ Agnes Batory has conducted a discourse analysis of 2010-2014 (cited above) and I have analyzed Orbán's speeches from 2015-2018. See Fidesz's National in the International: Global Implications of a Domestic Populist Government.

⁷⁷ Becker, "The Rise of Right-Wing Populism in Hungary," 34.

socialist government,” with these enemies becoming a peripheral component of a larger global conspiracy against the Hungarian nation.

Previous analysis of Orbán’s rhetoric from 2014 to 2018 reveals the development and radicalization of a larger discursive external enemy that formed in the cultural narrative over its second term.⁷⁸ While it manifests in different iterations, including the IMF, the European Union, and George Soros; Orbán’s speeches have become increasingly antagonistic towards the “Global Left.” Integrated into his economic anti-globalization rhetoric, Orbán spoke in 2017 of an “empire” that “seeks to eliminate nations and seeks to create a Europe with a mixed population.”⁷⁹ He cautions that

*We stand in the way of a financial and political empire which seeks to implement this plan – at whatever cost. In recent years Soros’s NGOs have penetrated all the influential forums of European decision-making. They are also present in the backyards of some Hungarian parties.*⁸⁰

In a singular statement, Orbán implicates the European Union, George Soros, international NGOs based in Hungary, and Hungarian political parties like MSZP as working in coordination to dismantle the Hungarian nation. This catch-all global conspiracy of enemies that has increasingly frequented Orbán’s speeches since 2017 serves an important rhetorical purpose. It allows for a deep interconnection to be made between the external enemies of the nation and internal elitist enemies of the populace, who work in conjunction against the “virtuous people of the Hungarian nation” in the triad of people-elite-enemy.⁸¹ With opposition parties holding little legislative or

⁷⁸ Baldinger, “Fidesz’s National in the International: Global Implications of a Domestic Populist Government.”

⁷⁹ “About Hungary - Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s Speech at the 27th Congress of Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Union.”

⁸⁰ “About Hungary - Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s Speech at the 27th Congress of Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Union.”

⁸¹ Kubik, “FATIGUE and POPREBEL: What Are They All About? A Programmatic Statement,” 7.

political authority in Hungary, Orbán is able to externalize the threat against the nation to institutions like the European Union, which arguably still holds a level of financial and judicial control over the party. By combining the European Union, often through the epithet of “Brussels,” with the long-time right-wing scapegoat George Soros, and the national opposition, Orbán is able to blur the lines between these actors and package them into one catch-all enemy of the Hungarian nation. These outsiders are portrayed as colluding with the national enemies, including the former socialist government and NGOs that are not preferential to the regime.

Another noteworthy development in Orbán’s portrayal of Hungary’s enemies is that his criticism became more targeted and radicalized from the beginning of his second term in 2014. My previous research has highlighted that before 2014, the European Union was a periphery point of criticism for Orbán;⁸² however, after winning office again in 2014 and the subsequent migration crisis, “Brussels” became a prime target of Orbán’s rhetorical criticism. His speeches frequently criticize the goals of “Brussels bureaucrats” to create a “European empire” of a “multicultural, mixed population.”⁸³ His discourse from 2016 starts to adopt a war-like tone,⁸⁴ calling for the people to “repel the arrows”⁸⁵ and “advance to battle”⁸⁶ against European leaders that wish to impose their viewpoints on the Hungarian nation. The repeated articulation of “Brussels” as the enemy and the increasingly aggressive tone that Orbán takes in describing the European Union helps to rhetorically reinforce that it is a formidable and threatening enemy against the Hungarian nation.

⁸² Baldinger, “Fidesz’s National in the International: Global Implications of a Domestic Populist Government.”

⁸³ “Orbán Warns of Dangers of European ‘empire’ – POLITICO.”

⁸⁴ Baldinger, “Fidesz’s National in the International: Global Implications of a Domestic Populist Government.”

⁸⁵ Orbán, “Doorstep Statement before the Meeting of the European Council,” December 15, 2016.

⁸⁶ Orbán, “Ceremonial Speech on the 170th Anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution,” March 15, 2018.

2.2.2 Constructing the People

As De Cleen has clarified, populism and nationalism both focus on the discursive nodal points of “the people” and the “enemy,” whether it be those aliens outside of the nation or the elites within the nation that do not defend the best interest of the people.⁸⁷ In Orbán’s populist lens of the people, he often frames the “virtuous people” as those who lost out on globalism and were hurt by the actions of the previous socialist government. During the 2010 election, Fidesz iterated a vague election manifesto that made general promises like allowing “an ability for every man to look after his family” and “honest jobs and honest wages.”⁸⁸ Orbán frames the “people” as those who did not benefit from the mass privatization of land in the 1990s and who have largely suffered from the predatory practices of international capitalists, like foreign banks.⁸⁹ This rhetoric points to the “hardworking Hungarians” who did not gain from the massive international corporations and global networks that entered Hungary’s liberal market in the 1990s as the “virtuous people” who were hurt by the previous government’s unwillingness to put their best interest first. As the next chapter will highlight, this, of course, is contradicted by the economic system that developed in Hungary after Fidesz took power, which is based on preferential treatment and crony capitalism.

Orbán’s nationalist discourse interacts with his populist vision to create the “in-out” dichotomy of who falls into the categories of “us” and “them.” He has adopted a vision of the nation that is ethnically homogenous, European, and adheres to “Christian values.” As discussed in the “enemies” section of constructing the nation, Orbán has become increasingly combative against the European Union and “Brussels” for imposing an ideology of multiculturalism in the region. Orbán rejects this, instead calling for what he argues has long been an ethnically

⁸⁷ de Cleen, *Populism and Nationalism*.

⁸⁸ Batory, “Election Briefing No 51 Europe and the Hungarian Parliamentary Elections of April 2010.”

⁸⁹ “Hungarian Lawmakers Approve ‘Brutal’ Bank Tax Defying IMF, EU.”

homogenous society: “We consider it a value that Hungary is a homogenous country.”⁹⁰ While historically questionable, Orbán often enacts a common populist rhetorical tool of reminiscing on a mythical past that was better to the people. Like Trump’s intonation of “Make America Great Again,” Orbán calls for the return of a fabled time when the state was ‘ethnically pure,’ saying “Hungary has never been multicultural.”⁹¹ Part of this definition clearly calls for the rejection of migrants coming from outside of Europe, but this also targets the long present Roma community in Hungary as outside of the defined nation.

For Orbán, it is important to note that the European identity is incorporated into his definition of the Hungarian nation. In 2016, in the wake of the Brexit debate and internal British discussions on the Europeanness of the people, Orbán declared “if you are a Hungarian, you are European... that is not a question.”⁹² This form European identity, however, rejects the idea of current “European mainstream” of multiculturalism and liberalism.⁹³ Instead, Orbán reshapes what it means to be European, tying the identity to Hungary’s “Christian roots.”⁹⁴ The Prime Minister has adopted frequent usage of the term “European Christian values,” arguing that he is creating a “Christian democracy” in Hungary.⁹⁵ While these terms frequent Orbán’s speeches, they are less involved with any actual church or scripture; with only 15 per cent of Hungarians admitting to regularly attending church but 80 per cent identifying as Christian,⁹⁶ it is clear that serves as a cultural identifier more than a religious one. Many interpret this call for European Christian values

⁹⁰ “Hungary’s Future.”

⁹¹ “Hungary’s Future.”

⁹² “About Hungary - Prime Minister Orbán at the 27th Bálványos Summer Open University and Summer Camp [Full Text in English].”

⁹³ “About Hungary - Prime Minister Orbán at the 27th Bálványos Summer Open University and Summer Camp [Full Text in English].”

⁹⁴ “About Hungary - Prime Minister Orbán at the 27th Bálványos Summer Open University and Summer Camp [Full Text in English].”

⁹⁵ Walker, “Orbán Deploys Christianity with a Twist to Tighten Grip in Hungary.”

⁹⁶ Walker.

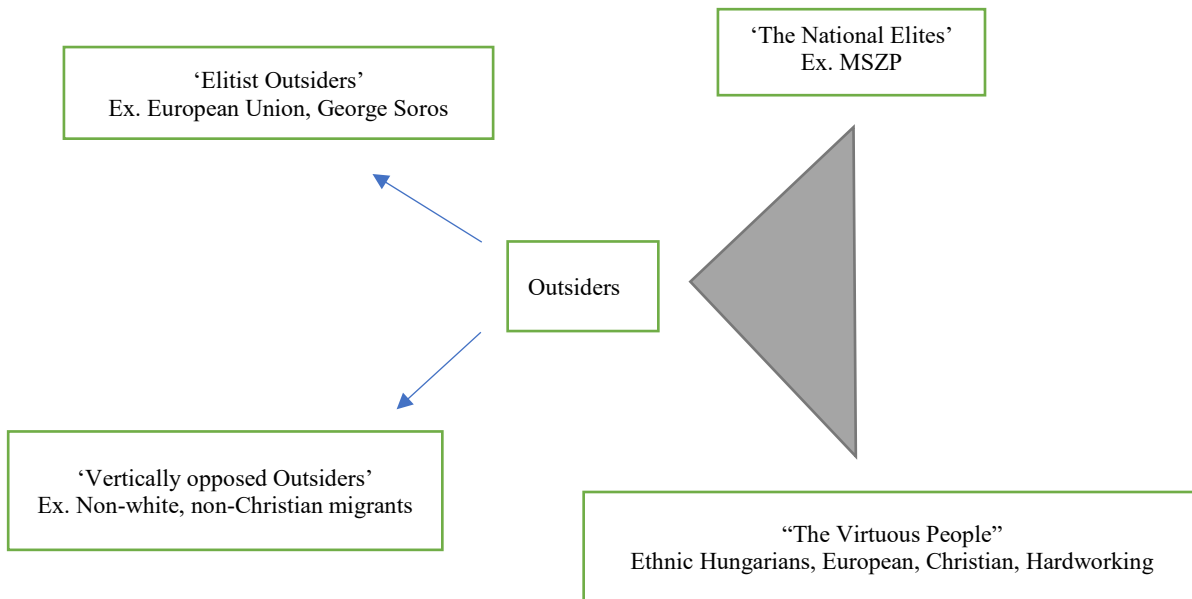
as an exclusionary force, mostly pushing out non-white migrants or, in the case of the Roma population, citizens.⁹⁷ Orbán rejects multiculturalism as the “coexistence of Islam, Asian religions, and Christianity;”⁹⁸ so, it is clear that a Christian European Hungarian nation, in the eyes of Orbán, involves white, ethnically Hungarian, ‘culturally Christian’ adherents. While the next section will explore the implications of “cultural Christianity” on Fidesz’s espoused values and societal vision, it is important to note the emphasis on European Christian values in Orbán’s definition of who belongs within the nation.

Based on the discourse analysis employed in this section, it is clear that Fidesz, and Orbán as its leader, espouses a view of the nation that incorporates both populist and nationalist discursive elements. The people, at one corner of the triad, represent the ‘honest, hardworking Hungarian nationals that were damaged by the effects of globalism.’ They are ethnically Hungarian, white, European, and adhere to a cultural Christian identity. At the national elite side of the triad is the MSZP government and those that ‘unfairly’ benefited from market liberalization in the 1990s. Although, with time, it becomes evident that Fidesz’s definition of the national elites has expanded to cover any opposition movement (or NGO) that objects to its policies. While they exist within the in-out dimension of the nation, they are portrayed as in collusion with elitist outsiders like the European Union and George Soros. Less influential, but equally excluded from this definition of the nation is any person that is non-white or non-Christian. Table 1 depicts this triad.

⁹⁷ Walker.

⁹⁸ Staff, “Multiculturalism Doesn’t Work in Hungary, Says Orban.”

Table 1: Fidesz’s Discursive Triad



2.3 Traditional Roles and Values

As briefly discussed in the previous section that evaluated Orbán’s rhetorical construction of the nation, the concept of cultural Christianity frequents his vision of the virtuous people. Orbán defines cultural Christianity as a “culture that has developed out of Christianity” and a “faith-based knowledge and sensibility.”⁹⁹ Unlike some of its Central and East European counterparts, like Poland, Hungary does not have a high degree of religiosity. Only 15 per cent of Hungarians attend church regularly,¹⁰⁰ yet 43 per cent believe that being Christian is very or somewhat important to the Hungarian national identity.¹⁰¹ These statistics indicate what Kubik describes as “dormant yet

⁹⁹ Orbán, “Speech at Christian Democrat International’s Conference on Interfaith Dialogue.”

¹⁰⁰ Walker, “Orbán Deploys Christianity with a Twist to Tighten Grip in Hungary.”

¹⁰¹ NW, Washington, and Inquiries, “Eastern and Western Europeans Differ on Importance of Religion, Views of Minorities, and Key Social Issues.”

easy-to-mobilize (neo) traditional sub-cultures,”¹⁰² where a large part of the population does not practice Christianity but responds positively to a “cultural Christian” narrative.

One tenet of traditional Christian values that Orbán regularly advocates is the return to the heterosexual concept of the “traditional family of one man and one woman.”¹⁰³ Fidesz’s commitment to a singular definition of the family was outlined from the onset of its first term; the new constitution, or Fundamental Law, that was ratified in 2012, clearly delineated the family as “the union of a man and a woman established by voluntary decision.”¹⁰⁴ In addition to this conservative heterosexual definition, the Fundamental Law places a great deal of importance on the family: “We hold that the family and the nation constitute the principal framework of our coexistence.”¹⁰⁵ With a strong emphasis on family and a particular definition of what constitutes a family, Orbán and Fidesz create a very exclusive definition of what are considered acceptable family values. With this limited definition of the family comes an exclusionary rhetoric against non-traditional views of sexuality and gender roles.

It is important to note that Orbán utilizes the culturally Christian definition of a family to justify his position, but he also adopts pragmatic logic as well. The 2012 constitution defined the family as “the basis of survival of the nation.”¹⁰⁶ Hungary, much like the majority of European countries, faces demographic concerns and a shrinking population. Since 2010, when Fidesz took power, Hungary’s population has decreased from a little over 10 million people to 9.7 million in 2018.¹⁰⁷ Orbán argues that the “liberal democracy says we should not differentiate” between the

¹⁰² Kubik, “FATIGUE and POPREBEL: What Are They All About? A Programmatic Statement,” 11.

¹⁰³ Staff, “Hungary Will Defend Traditional Families, Stop Demographic Decline, Orban Says.”

¹⁰⁴ Pivarnyik, “Family and Gender in Orbán’s Hungary | Heinrich Böll Stiftung.”

¹⁰⁵ Pivarnyik.

¹⁰⁶ Pivarnyik.

¹⁰⁷ Staff, “Hungary Will Defend Traditional Families, Stop Demographic Decline, Orban Says.”

conservative definition of the family and non-traditional iterations, but “this is one of the reasons why we are experiencing a demographic decline now.”¹⁰⁸

As a result of this insistence on the traditional definition of a family unit and an emphasis on demographics, it is unsurprising that Orbán’s rhetoric on gender issues and the role of the woman in society is largely misogynistic. As the Prime Minister has highlighted when promulgating his family policy, “demographic stands or falls on women.”¹⁰⁹ This view of women, specifically in heterosexual relationships, as a primary vehicle for reproduction and raising up the next generation of Hungarians, is largely limiting of their potential contributions to society outside of the home. Orbán has, on numerous occasions, emphasized his view that women are not suited for certain sectors of employment; for instance, in 2015, when asked why there were no women in his cabinet, Orbán responded “women cannot stand the stress of politics.”¹¹⁰ This rhetorical view of the place of women in society has been largely supported by policies, including a slew of new incentives to encourage increased reproduction; in 2012, the government announced a family tax allowance that allowed for a tax deduction of one parent’s income, based on the number of children they had.¹¹¹ The stipulation that the deduction could only be used for one source of family income, even if both parents were working, served to decrease the benefits of participating in a two-income household. Furthermore, the tax benefit increased drastically with more children in the house; when having two children, the benefit’s value increased 3.5 times higher than a household with one child. When three or more children were in a single family, the benefit’s value increased ten-fold, considerably increasing the incentive to have a larger family.

¹⁰⁸ Staff, “Hungary Will Defend Traditional Families, Stop Demographic Decline, Orban Says.”

¹⁰⁹ Pivarnyik, “Family and Gender in Orbán’s Hungary | Heinrich Böll Stiftung.”

¹¹⁰ Pivarnyik.

¹¹¹ Pivarnyik.

In 2018, the government proclaimed it was the “Year of the Family” and introduced a policy to pay off one million forints towards a mortgage held by any family with three or more children and offered to pay off the student debt of any mother who would have more than two children.¹¹² While such policies may seem to fall under promotion of increased demographics and traditional family formations, it also serves to promote the role of women as having a primary duty to have large families and repopulate the nation. In a country that ranked the second lowest in Europe on the 2020 Gender Equality Index,¹¹³ its leader continues to promote a vision of society where women play a largely supportive function for men and are confined to a more traditional gender role.

In addition to advocacy for the limitation of women to traditional roles, Fidesz’s stance on any non-traditional sexual preference or gender identification is strongly condemnatory. In addition to blaming homosexual relationships as a contributing factor in demographic decline, Fidesz has taken the official state position that “people are born either male or female.”¹¹⁴ With this refusal to acknowledge any gender identification other than cis gender, Fidesz has again narrowed the definition of what identity and roles are seen as conforming to his view of the Hungarian nation. Moreover, the government has taken decisive acts to reinforce this narrative. In addition to banning the recognition of same-sex marriage with the 2012 constitutional definition of a union of a man and a woman as marriage, the Hungarian government has also outlawed the changing of a transgender person’s gender on legal documents.¹¹⁵ These actions, which reinforce the narrative that cisgender heterosexuality is the only culturally accepted identity, have been accompanied by laws that limit the ability for competing narratives to gain traction. In 2018, the Hungarian

¹¹² “About Hungary - Hungary Names 2018 the Year of the Family.”

¹¹³ “Gender Equality Index | 2020.”

¹¹⁴ CNN, “Hungary’s PM Bans Gender Study at Colleges Saying, ‘People Are Born Either Male or Female.’”

¹¹⁵ “Hungary Outlaws Changing Birth Gender on Documents.”

government banned gender studies degrees in universities, stating “we do not consider it acceptable for us to talk about socially constructed genders rather than biological sexes.”¹¹⁶ By creating a dominant narrative that labels the mere discussion of gender issues or non-traditional gender identification as something inappropriate and offensive, Orbán’s government stifles the arena of opposing viewpoints.

While Fidesz’s views on gender roles and a traditional family structure can be largely justified rhetorically as in the name of promoting demographic growth, recent proposed constitutional amendments regarding the definition of the family, present more ideological considerations for the party’s narrative. In November of 2020, the Fidesz-led parliament proposed a new amendment to the Fundamental Law that defines “the mother is a woman, the father is man,” and a couple must be married to adopt children.¹¹⁷ This specific definition would limit future same-sex marriage adoption, which had previously been legal if one of the partners applied alone. This amendment, on the sole basis of demographic growth, would seem counterintuitive in promoting an increase in the number of families. However, the proposed change highlights its logic as traditional value-based, arguing that this legislation would ensure that children are raised with a “‘Christian’ interpretation of gender roles.”¹¹⁸ The new bill states that it “ensures education in accordance with the values based on Hungary’s constitutional identity and Christian culture.”¹¹⁹

This recent legislative development represents the infusion of “cultural Christian” values that are promoted in the discourse of Fidesz and Orbán. While Orbán represents demographic issues as an imperative concern, he frames the promotion of traditional family values and roles as his central objective. For Orbán, the nation is intertwined with the concept of family, but family is

¹¹⁶ CNN, “Hungary’s PM Bans Gender Study at Colleges Saying, ‘People Are Born Either Male or Female.’”

¹¹⁷ “Hungary Government Proposes Same-Sex Adoption Ban.”

¹¹⁸ “Hungary Government Proposes Same-Sex Adoption Ban.”

¹¹⁹ “Hungary Government Proposes Same-Sex Adoption Ban.”

restrictively defined as the union of a cisgender man and woman, preferably with a significant number of children. His policies and rhetoric discourage and even criminalize non-traditional family formations in the name of religiously vague cultural Christian values.

2.4 Missionary Politics

As the previous two sections have highlighted, the concept of cultural Christianity frequents Orbán's rhetoric, calling for a return to the vaguely defined European Christian values that focus less on institutionalized religion. They emphasized the lack of institutional adherence to a specific Christian faith in Hungary, with a high number of Hungarians identifying as Christian and seeing that identity as integral to their national identity, while rarely partaking in formal religious practices. This void of a strong religious institution, like the Roman Catholic church in Poland, can be traced to the country's communist period, when there was a strong socialization process to discourage religious practice.

In Hungary, the dominance of Roman Catholicism and a significant minority presence of Calvinism in the early 20th century was severed by the incoming communist government of 1949; church land and schools were nationalized, and the clergy were forced to sign agreements that limited their activities.¹²⁰ Despite the fact that these limitations were in place for less than four decades and autonomy was restored to the various religious groups by 1988, their effect on the role of religion in Hungary were long lasting. Currently, Hungary is ranked 20th in Pew's ranking of European countries' religious commitment, with only 14 per cent of Hungarians saying institutionalized "religion is very important in their lives."¹²¹ While the communist legacy had a

¹²⁰ Froese, "Hungary for Religion," 255.

¹²¹ NW, Suite 800 Washington, and Inquiries, "How Do European Countries Differ in Religious Commitment?"

profound impact on the relationship of the population with the institutionalized church, remnants of the country's previous strong association of church and state seem to have left a lasting mark on their national identity. During the time of the Austro-Hungarian empire, a religious political system was incorporated; despite an official declaration of "freedom to exercise religion" in 1848, a tiered system evolved in which only adherents of "recognized" sects of religions like Catholicism and Lutheranism were allowed in parliament. During this period, church and state became highly intertwined, and Christianity dominated both the political and religious spheres of Hungary. Perhaps, as a result of this historical legacy and modern political invocations of the country's Christian past, Christianity has become an integral part of the Hungarian national identity. Accordingly, the lack of institutionalized observance or emphasis on religion, combined with high levels of self-identification of Christian and intertwining of Christianity with national identity, has allowed for the governing party to supply a discourse of values and morals that are based, in name mostly, on the concept of Christianity.

Without a formal religious leader or institution to base the Christian values that Orbán regularly draws on in his speeches, a type of missionary politics has developed in the county. Zuquete's concept of missionary politics is used to describe a 21st century phenomena of "political religion," which centers on a "charismatic leader" and his "narrative of salvation, outsiderhood and ritualization, and the creation of a moral community invested with a collective mission of combating conspiratorial enemies and redeeming the nation from its putative crisis."¹²² Zuquete defines the concept of "missionary politics" as a study of the 'nonmaterial dynamics in contemporary radical populist movements' that illuminate the "extraordinary member commitment."¹²³

¹²² Zúquete, "Missionary Politics – A Contribution to the Study of Populism, 264"

¹²³ Zúquete.

Zuquete's concept of missionary politics points to the presence of a charismatic leader who defines the moral standards for the community or nation and offers "salvation" and protection for the nation under attack. Weber defines "charismatic" in a biblical sense as defying prevailing worldviews¹²⁴ and creating "discourses of justification against the established order" to provide a "radical founding of a novel structure of legitimacy."¹²⁵ Zuquete highlights the religious connotation of the term, despite its modern interpretation of "likeability or attraction," and argues that often such a leader takes on a religious-like leadership. Orbán, in the place of any notable religious leadership in Hungary, plays the role of the charismatic leader. He announced in an infamous 2014 speech, the advent of a new type of governance, deemed "illiberal democracy," that prioritizes the needs "of the community and the nation" over individuals, denies liberalism as the "central element of state organization," and is based on "Christianity and family values."¹²⁶ Orbán's proclaimed source of legitimacy is directly from the people; he frequently touts the electoral performance of the party and the system of national consultations disseminated to the population as his mandate to make changes. He uses this authority to reject liberal ideas of individualism, multiculturalism, and equality that he says have created a "nightmare" in Europe and the United States.¹²⁷

Orbán, as the charismatic leader who advocates for a novel type of governing structure, has taken on the role of defining the country's moral values and principles. As the previous section highlighted, Orbán has defined moral correctness within the realm of "traditional values," citing marriage as a traditional heterosexual relationship and the family structure as the core of the nation's existence. He emphasizes the nation as historically founded on the tenets of Christianity,

¹²⁴ Pappas, "Are Populist Leaders 'Charismatic'?" 2.

¹²⁵ Kalyvas, *Democracy and the Politics of the Extraordinary*, 22.

¹²⁶ "Full Text of Viktor Orbán's Speech at Băile Tușnad (Tusnádfürdő) of 26 July 2014."

¹²⁷ Welle (www.dw.com), "Viktor Orban."

which in this case is used in exclusionary terms to mean largely non-Islamic and non-Jewish.¹²⁸ Scholars have highlighted that Orbán's Christian values differ from traditional Christian values and represent more "white conservative values"¹²⁹ in their rejection of immigrants, call for criminalization of homelessness, and emphasis on promoting a 'workfarist' society that cares only for those that actively participate in the nation's development and economic growth. This version of Christian values bypasses the tenet of helping those in need and is based on rejecting those that do not fit the specific mold of what is deemed morally acceptable.

In addition to acting as a charismatic leader and defining the hegemonic values and morals of the nation, Orbán portrays himself as a savior of the "besieged Hungarian nation." The first part of this chapter dealt with the construction of enemies in the rhetoric, including the European Union, George Soros, and opposition parties. Previous analysis¹³⁰ has found an increasingly conspiratorial tone to Orbán's portrayal of his enemies, and a call to go to battle against them. In the 2018, following the migration crisis, Orbán declared that "Europe is under invasion...Africa wants to kick down our door, and Brussels is not defending us."¹³¹ According to Orbán, non-Christian immigrants are a direct threat to his new form of governance and prescribed values, thus the people must be protected by them. Amidst the enemies besieging Hungary is 'Brussels' itself, which seeks to impose multiculturalism and "open borders;" as a result, Orbán promises to "repel the arrows," "point bayonets," and "advance to battle" against the European Union elites.¹³² He calls international NGOs and members of the Soros-founded Central European University "Soros'

¹²⁸ While Orbán has publicly declared that his regime serves to keep anti-Semitism at bay, public campaigns against George Soros with strong anti-Semitic tones, as well as a rise in the number of hate crimes, serve to discredit this claim.

¹²⁹ Walker, "Orbán Deploys Christianity with a Twist to Tighten Grip in Hungary."

¹³⁰ Baldinger, "Fidesz's National in the International: Global Implications of a Domestic Populist Government."

¹³¹ "Hungarian Leader Says Europe Is Now 'under Invasion' by Migrants."

¹³² Orbán, "Doorstep Statement before the Meeting of the European Council."

mercenaries” that aim to “weaken, to destroy, and break national governance.”¹³³ As the leader of Fidesz and the people, Orbán presents himself as the savior of a traditional way of life that he wishes to return Hungary to. With a personalized interpretation of Christianity, Orbán combines the religious and political through charismatic leadership, defining the accepted moral values for the nation and acting as the leader of a new form of governance that rejects liberal democratic standards.

2.5 Creating Neo-traditionalist cultural discourse

In evaluating the rhetoric of Fidesz and its leader, Orbán, it is important to note the conservative and traditional discursive elements, while also recognizing distinctive features in the narratives. Jan Kubik justifies the term *neo-traditionalist* to emphasize the call for a return to “traditional values” and the “protection of a national collective rather than an individual.”¹³⁴ As the chapter has demonstrated, Orbán’s rhetoric calls for a return to traditional values, with a particular focus on the family unit and gender roles. For Fidesz, the family unit consists of a man and a woman, joined in marriage, leaving no room for homosexuality. Through its rhetorical reiterations and subsequent restrictive regulation, Fidesz has created a hegemonic narrative that a person must identify, for all legal and social purposes, under the gender they were assigned at birth. Furthermore, Orbán calls for an illiberal form of governance, in which the community is prioritized over the individual, and an emphasis on multiculturalism and liberalism are replaced with a devotion to Christian values. Through these iterations, Orbán establishes a traditionalist view of society.

¹³³ Orbán, “Speech at the 28th Bálványos Summer Open University and Student Camp.”

¹³⁴ Kubik, “FATIGUE and POPREBEL: What Are They All About? A Programmatic Statement,” 12.

In his theoretical discussion of neo-traditionalism, Kubik justifies the usage of the prefix “neo” in the term to denote a space for discussion of the degree to which narratives are “manufactured by cultural entrepreneurs and endowed with new features.”¹³⁵ Furthermore, Szelenyi and Csillag differentiate this new concept with its addition of a degree of statism to the adherence of “family, patria and God.”¹³⁶ Orbán’s discourse, while emphasizing the importance of family and God, also incorporates a distinctive identity that is personalized to his charismatic leadership. He instrumentalizes a vague set of “cultural Christian” Hungarian values in a way that can be shaped against any threat or “enemy.” For Orbán, it is necessary to protect the “besieged” Christian nation of Hungary, which justifies excluding non-white migrants, the Roma population, and any kind of sexuality or gender identification that falls outside of the mainstream. For Orbán, liberalism is a scourge on Christian values, and thus he is justified in rhetorically attacking “global leftists” like the European Union elites, George Soros, and the opposition parties.

In doing so, he also continues to centralize the moral authority, as well as state authority, around his persona. Through his missionary style pledge to be a savior of traditional values, Orbán paints himself as the charismatic leader that Hungary needs, and thus solidifies his discourse as culturally hegemonic. With this neo-traditionalist cultural narrative dictating the political sphere and encroaching into the religious arena, Orbán asserts a great power in shaping the dominant views on how Hungarian society should look. As the next section will demonstrate, a degree of statism and control over the economic sector has largely coincided with this dominance over the cultural sphere.

¹³⁵ Kubik, 12.

¹³⁶ Szelenyi and Csillag, “Drifting from Liberal Democracy.”

Chapter 3: Economic Policies of Fidesz

3.1 Economic Policies When Entering Office

As the previous chapter highlighted, Fidesz has gone to great lengths to propagate a neo-traditionalist cultural narrative since taking office. This espoused view of the nation has created a traditional metric for who is deemed to be an acceptable part of that nation and what actions fall within the nation's cultural Christian values. Following overwhelming electoral success in the 2010 parliamentary elections, Fidesz also used its two-thirds majority mandate to enact economic policies that complemented the cultural rhetoric it had created. After an election campaign that was anti-globalist and argued for the adaption from a welfarist state to a "workfarist" state that "provides work but also demands work from everyone,"¹³⁷ the party set out to create a system that emphasized that each member of the Hungarian nation, as defined by Fidesz, was entitled to having their needs met as long as they contributed and worked to better the nation. This resulted in a national work program that sought to employ as much of society as possible, as well as mass nationalization and re-privatization of certain industries and a system of cronyism.

3.2 Renationalization of the Banks and Pension System

Following the country's transformation from a centralized economy to a market economy in the 1990s, Hungary underwent some of the highest levels of privatization in Europe. Up until 2010, Hungary led Central and Eastern Europe in its privatization revenues as a percentage of GDP, resulting in it being seen as one of the most "globalized and liberalized economies" in the

¹³⁷ Kriesi and Pappas, *European Populism in the Shadow of the Great Recession*.

OECD.¹³⁸ In 2010, when Fidesz took power, the government immediately went to work reversing course on the mass privatization that had occurred in the previous two decades. As the party used its parliamentary majority to overhaul the constitution, they removed the language that referred to a right to “private property” and soon enacted corresponding legislation.

One area where the government began a campaign of renationalization was the banking sector. In the aftermath of the financial crisis, Orbán was openly critical of foreign banks that he argued had placed “unfair conditions” on loans to Hungarians.¹³⁹ He announced that they would need to be “held to account,” and he promised by 2014 that “50 percent of the banking system should be possessed by the Hungarians.”¹⁴⁰ In order for the Hungarian government to regain control of the banking sector, Fidesz implemented a series of tax initiatives and legislation against the banks to increase their willingness to sell equity. For instance, in 2010, Fidesz passed a series of financial taxes and levies that were three times higher than any other financial tax in Europe.¹⁴¹ Not only did the legislation aim to improve the country’s budget deficit by raising an additional \$837 million, but it also fit into Orbán’s narrative of protecting the average Hungarian from the corruption of foreign financial institutions: “It is unacceptable, with common sense, to respect banks as sacred cows at a time when a global crisis that started from the banks happens to be sweeping over the world...the bank tax is fair.. and serves the interests of the people.”¹⁴²

One of the effects of the financial tax, in addition to propping up the budget, was that it cut into bank’s profits and enticed them to unload their equity onto the Hungarian government. At the end of 2010, the Hungarian Banking Association announced that nearly every financial institution

¹³⁸ Mihalyi, “Renationalization and Recentralization in Hungary, 2010-2016,” 3.

¹³⁹ “Orbán Vows to Squeeze Hungary’s Banks on Foreign Exchange Loans.”

¹⁴⁰ Tóth, “Full Text of Viktor Orbán’s Speech at Băile Tuşnad (Tusnádfürdő) of 26 July 2014.”

¹⁴¹ “Hungarian Lawmakers Approve ‘Brutal’ Bank Tax Defying IMF, EU.”

¹⁴² “Hungarian Lawmakers Approve ‘Brutal’ Bank Tax Defying IMF, EU.”

would be finishing the year with losses and no profit.¹⁴³ In addition to new taxes, the government enacted policies that forced banks to use exchange rates that favored the consumer and ultimately resulted in regulatory coercion of the enterprises. As a result, the government successfully bought GE Capital's Budapest Bank and Bayerische Landesbank's MKB in 2014, thus increasing its control of the banking sector to over 50 per cent.¹⁴⁴ Through additional indirect coercion, the government acquired 15 per cent of Austrian Erste Bank in 2016 in exchange for agreeing to decrease the steep banking tax it had enacted in the years prior.¹⁴⁵ Despite the widespread nationalization efforts in multiple sectors, including energy, telecommunications, and real estate, the government allocated over 20 per cent of the total amount paid to acquire resources from 2010 to 2016 on the financial sector. By 2018, the Fidesz government had increased its share of the banking sector from 30 per cent at the beginning of its tenure to 50.5 per cent, thus fulfilling its promise to hold over 50 per cent of the market domestically.

In addition to re-nationalizing a large portion of the banking sector, the Fidesz government began the process of overhauling and centralizing the pension system. In November 2010, only weeks after national elections had taken place, the Fidesz government made the announcement that it would be nationalizing private pensions into a public pension fund. Before 2010, the pension system in Hungary had been a hybrid model, including a mandatory public pillar and a mandatory private pillar that workers contributed to. In October of 2010, the government announced that it would be withholding 30 billion forints from the private pension funds over a 14-month period, in an effort to ensure the national budget made its deficit goal of 3.8 per cent of GDP.¹⁴⁶ Only a month later, the government decided to eliminate the entire private pillar of the pension system by

¹⁴³ Staff, "UPDATE 1-Hungary Bank Tax to Wipe out 2010 Profits -Bank Group."

¹⁴⁴ "Hungary Deepens Control of Banking Sector."

¹⁴⁵ Byrne, "Hungary to Finalise Deal for 15% Stake in Erste Bank Arm."

¹⁴⁶ "Nationalization of Private Pension Funds."

announcing that contributors who did not express interest in keeping their pension in a private fund would automatically have their private contributions transferred to the Hungarian Debt Management Center Fund. This fund would be used to help pay down Hungary's sovereign debt.¹⁴⁷ Similar to Fidesz's renationalization scheme for the banking sector, this move was justified by vilifying the managers of private pension funds. Some fund managers were accused of criminal negligence as Orbán declared that they were bad managers who had "lost the money on the stock exchange."¹⁴⁸ By asserting that private fund managers were benefitting off of the labor of hardworking Hungarians, the government was able to justify itself as the arbiter of the people's best interests; it was necessary for the state to take control to protect its people's money. In a move that also resembles its regulatory taking of the financial sector, the Fidesz government presented the move from private pension funds to public funds as a choice. However, those that opted out of moving their funds to the public pillar faced harsh consequences; non-compliance meant that all future employer contributions to the public pillar would not be credited to the contributor but be seen as a social tax that the government could use at its discretion. Those who opted out would be ineligible to receive any state pension, despite having to continue to contribute to it.¹⁴⁹

With only a month to decide, 98.6 per cent of contributors were effectively coerced into agreeing to the public pension fund; this amounted to a contribution of 2.95 trillion forints, or approximately 10 per cent of Hungary's GDP, being injected into the national budget. As a result, by June of 2011, Orbán announced that 1.35 trillion forints of the private pension savings that were relinquished to the government had been used to pay down the national debt.¹⁵⁰ Through the nationalization of the pension program and regulatory taking of the banking sector, the Fidesz

¹⁴⁷ "Nationalization of Private Pension Funds."

¹⁴⁸ Mihalyi, "Renationalization and Recentralization in Hungary, 2010-2016", 11.

¹⁴⁹ "Nationalization of Private Pension Funds."

¹⁵⁰ "Nationalization of Private Pension Funds."

government spent its first term levying massive amounts of money to pay down national debt and fund its own operations. During its capture of numerous sectors like banking and pensions, but also telecommunications, energy, and real estate, the government paid over 83 per cent of its nationalization deals to foreign companies, thus fulfilling its rhetorical goal of taking back Hungarian industries into Hungarian hands. In the process, however, it also re-centralized the economy and made it highly intertwined and dependent on the state.

3.3 Crony Capitalism

As Viktor Orbán took power in 2010 and declared that he would take the nation's businesses out of the hands of "globalist forces,"¹⁵¹ he pledged to bring the economy back into Hungarian hands. However, Fidesz was less transparent about which Hungarian hands he wished to allocate the nation's resources to. One of the more veiled economic programs that has characterized Fidesz's tenure is the rise of crony capitalism and degradation of a competitive market.

Janos Kornai has described what has been seen as a U-turn in Hungary as the liberal market economy that developed robustly in the 1990s has slowly been reversed into a highly centralized system that depends on the state. One such development is the growth of "Fidesz-közeli cég," or "a near-to-Fidesz company," which Kornai highlights as a company that "does not belong to the party, but the sole or principal owner of the company is a crony of the political center."¹⁵² Fidesz began the process of intertwining its political machine with the major sectors of the economy

¹⁵¹ "Notable Quotes."

¹⁵² Kornai, "Hungary's U-Turn," 8.

through a series of regulatory measures that sought to make operating in Hungary especially difficult for certain actors.

In the previous section, I discussed the regulatory measures used to push out foreign financial institutions through exorbitant taxes; in addition to this, the Fidesz government enacted legislation that excluded the ownership of certain sectors from foreign businesses and favored those close to the party. For instance, after announcing a legal tender of public agricultural land in 2012, many Orbán associates, including the mayor of the Prime Minister's home village, Lőrinc Mészáros, gained access to large plots of land. The New Land Act of 2013, which aimed to limit the opportunity for foreign entities to own Hungarian agricultural land, set up partisan Land Committees that would deem which entities were allowed to own land.¹⁵³ In addition to these limits, after winning re-election in 2015, the government announced that it planned to privatize 400,000 hectares of land, amounting to more than half of all state-owned land. The land was auctioned off at a premium, with the condition that it cannot be resold or passed down through inheritance, essentially returning the property to the state in the next 30 to 50 years.¹⁵⁴ The result of such policies demonstrates a contradiction in the rhetorical promises of Fidesz. The party that ran on returning the Hungarian economy to the Hungarian people did in fact limit the ability of foreign entities to invest and acquire assets in Hungary; however, at the same time it developed of a type of feudal system in which the land and resources were reserved for those that are loyal to the Fidesz government.

The limitation of control over sectors of the economy for those loyal to Fidesz is not limited to the agricultural sector. After spending its first term in office acquiring a majority stake in the banking sector, the Fidesz government announced in 2016 that it would be re-privatizing the bank

¹⁵³ Boros, "Hungarian Land as Political Instrument," 6.

¹⁵⁴ Boros, 7.

MKB for the price of \$134 million.¹⁵⁵ Lőrinc Mészáros, close ally to Orbán and the beneficiary of the privatization of agricultural land, was announced to be gaining a 46.8 per cent stake in the bank.¹⁵⁶ The government used similar regulatory maneuvers to limit the sale of tobacco sales. In 2013, under the pretext that the government was cracking down on sales of tobacco to ensure that underage youth could not access it, Fidesz announced that only certified National Tobacco Shops would be permitted to sell tobacco products. The result was the reduction of the number of tobacco sellers from 42,000 shops nationwide to under 6,000.¹⁵⁷ In order to register as a National Tobacco Shop, each operator had to apply for a tobacco license through a highly subjective points-based process that resulted in those with ties to Fidesz winning the tenders.¹⁵⁸

The major acquisition of stakes in various sectors by the Fidesz government and subsequent sale and tender of licenses to those with ties to Orbán resulted in the erosion of market competition and has created a system of selective monopolies. Because the Fidesz government had also used its two-thirds majority to centralize many of the supervisory agencies in charge of regulating the monopolies and put party loyalists in charge of them,¹⁵⁹ the developments went largely unchecked. A Financial Times article in 2017 announced the emergence of “Orbán’s oligarchs: a new elite,” indicating that it was not a traditional case of state capture in which oligarchs had used their influence for political gain, but instead the ruling elite had handpicked who would prosper under the new economic system.

One way in which this ‘crony capitalism’ seems to be funded is through public procurement and government projects. A study from 2010 to 2016 showed that by value, 5 per cent of all

¹⁵⁵ Staff, “Hungary to Sell MKB Bank for \$134 Million - Central Bank.”

¹⁵⁶ “Hungary’s Banks Thrive in Era of Nationalization.”

¹⁵⁷ Mihalyi, “Renationalization and Recentralization in Hungary, 2010-2016,” 14.

¹⁵⁸ Mihalyi, 14.

¹⁵⁹ Kornai, “Hungary’s U-Turn.”

government contracts awarded were given to four associates of Viktor Orbán: longtime friend Lajos Simicska, hometown mayor Lőrinc Mészáros, son-in-law Istvan Tiborcz, and friend Istvan Garancsi. These contracts alone amounted to 1.88 billion euros and were, on average, thirteen times the size of other contracts.¹⁶⁰ In fact, a study of public procurements from 2009 to 2015 showed that there was only a single bidder in over 30 per cent of all tenders.¹⁶¹

Many of the projects procured by professed Fidesz loyalists, like the construction of football stadium and restoration of a tourist train in Orbán's hometown, are backed by EU designated funds. For instance, from 2014 to 2015, Istvan Tiborcz, son-in-law to Viktor Orbán, won a procurement of 65 million euros in EU funds to install LED lights in villages of the country where Fidesz has strong support.¹⁶² Furthermore, a study by Transparency International in 2015 showed that Hungarian contracts were, on average, overpriced by 25 per cent compared to market prices.¹⁶³ Through government and EU-funded ventures and stacking regulatory oversight organizations loyalists, Fidesz has successfully created an economic system that is centralized around the party, thus tying economic success to the notions of its leader.

3.4 National Work Program

In addition to promising to take back the economy into Hungarian hands and less boisterously handing much of it to party loyalists, the prime minister made a pledge in the 2010 elections to transform the country from a “welfarist” state to a “workfarist” state, that “provides work but also demands work from everyone.”¹⁶⁴ Part of this pledge involved decreasing welfare

¹⁶⁰ “Viktor Orban’s Oligarchs: A New Elite Emerges in Hungary | Financial Times.”

¹⁶¹ Mihalyi, “Renationalization and Recentralization in Hungary, 2010-2016,” 14.

¹⁶² “Viktor Orban’s Oligarchs: A New Elite Emerges in Hungary | Financial Times.”

¹⁶³ “Viktor Orban’s Oligarchs: A New Elite Emerges in Hungary | Financial Times.”

¹⁶⁴ Kriesi and Pappas, *European Populism in the Shadow of the Great Recession*.

benefits and shortening certain social benefits, including decreasing unemployment payments to only 30 days.¹⁶⁵ With the shortening of unemployment benefits began a massive expansion of the public works scheme that had been implemented during the 1990s transition. The Fidesz government touted the program as a way to help the unemployed gain temporary work as they transition back into the “primary labor force.”¹⁶⁶ However, the program was highly criticized for the lack of targeted efforts to train or reintegrate workers, with only 13.8 per cent of program participants rejoining the labor market in 2014.¹⁶⁷

Instead, the program continued to grow in size under Fidesz. From 2010 to 2015, funding for the program quadrupled; in 2015, the program cost \$964 million and employed 260,000 Hungarians.¹⁶⁸ In 2016, the program represented 41.6 per cent of job seekers, with most being paid under the national minimum wage.¹⁶⁹ The result for Fidesz was an “official” positive outlook for economic indicators. With the public works employees considered “employed,” the country’s unemployment rates improved rapidly compared to its Central European counterparts. In the fall of 2016, Hungary boasted an unemployment rate of 4.7 per cent compared to 8.2 per cent in Poland and 9 per cent in Slovakia.¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, the government again found a way to tie economic success to party loyalty. Reports emerged that employers used arbitrary reasons to fire and rehire workers through the discounted scheme, and some Fidesz associated mayors were reported to leverage employment in the scheme in exchange for party loyalty.¹⁷¹

Despite criticism from the European Commission and opposition members, the scheme fulfilled one of Fidesz’s promises: to transform Hungary to a “workfarist” state. Along with this

¹⁶⁵ Byrne, “Hungary under Fire over Growing Use of Public Works Labourers.”

¹⁶⁶ Fruzsina, “Reforms to the Hungarian Public Works Scheme.”

¹⁶⁷ Byrne, “Hungary under Fire over Growing Use of Public Works Labourers.”

¹⁶⁸ Byrne.

¹⁶⁹ Fruzsina, “Reforms to the Hungarian Public Works Scheme.”

¹⁷⁰ “Hungarian Public Works Schemes Just Hide Problems.”

¹⁷¹ Byrne, “Hungary under Fire over Growing Use of Public Works Labourers.”

rhetorical success, the party continued to centralize the country's resources into a system that intertwined political loyalty with economic success, creating not only a class of loyal oligarchs, but also an impoverished sector of the population that relied on the party for its entire sustenance.

3.5 Creating a Neo-feudalist Economy

When evaluating the rhetoric and policies of Fidesz in light of the 2008 financial crisis, it is important to note that the party does not espouse political ideas or policies along the traditional economic left-right axis. In the years following the fall of communism in Hungary, the economy became increasingly liberalized into a market economy. However, in a shift that Kornai equates to a “half-turn,”¹⁷² the Fidesz government has increasingly intertwined economic activity with political processes.

On the one hand, Orbán has decried himself the first leader to pull the country out of the reminiscent influences of its communist past and condemned the strong “welfare” policies of the socialist MSZP government that preceded his administration. Fidesz has enacted a flat income tax and decreased unemployment benefits, signaling that the promotion of wealth redistribution is not a priority. While this would indicate an inclination to allow market forces to prevail, the government has increasingly stepped in to regulate sectors of the economy. Through massive campaigns of renationalization discussed above, the Hungarian government has increased its control of the financial, energy, telecommunications sectors, as well as the pension system. However, even this regulatory taking is ideologically contradictory. What seems like a move towards centralization of state resources has often resulted in the re-sale of assets like public agricultural land and banks. With assets subsequently being offloaded, often to loyalists of the

¹⁷² Kornai, “Hungary’s U-Turn,” 8.

ruling party, those around Orbán seem to benefit greatly from capitalist forces. This emerging hybrid model of economic functioning that declares itself to put the Hungarian people first but also profits directly from regulatory taking and intervention can be best described by the term neo-feudalism.

Neo-feudalism, discussed in the theoretical chapter, is a term used to capture the emerging economic system of Hungary, and some other CEE countries, that draws similarities to the old feudalist systems in Europe. Since taking power, the Fidesz government has used its two-thirds majority in parliament to centralize the economic apparatus around itself. Much like in medieval Europe, this centralized power allows Fidesz, and Orbán, to tie economic security to loyalty. In a similar fashion to a Frankish king, Orbán and his administration have essentially declared economic resources as the property of the state. By taking control of regulatory bodies, nationalizing the pension to fund their national budget, and levying exorbitant financial taxes to indirectly coerce foreign business to sell their stakes, the administration has showed that it can use the current government apparatus to take control of any resource.

Once this dominance was established, the Fidesz government exercised its control to decide who will benefit from the system and who will perpetually be pushed to the bottom of the economic ladder. Public land and banks that were regulatorily seized by the government have been selectively auctioned off to friends of the party in the crony capitalist system. The decrease in general welfare benefits and a public works system that perpetuates low-skilled and low-wage labor can create a poverty trap that makes upward mobility almost impossible, while flat taxes and utility price caps disproportionately benefit the wealthy. This system of economic success being arbitrarily based on favor from the party in office draws similar comparisons to the hierarchical structure the medieval feudalism. Political scientist Gábor Török, has gone as far as to say, “there

are more similarities than obvious dissimilarities between Viktor Orbán, King Matthias, and an Assyrian ruler.”¹⁷³

It is important to note that this form of neo-feudalism, seen in Hungary, and arguably, other CEE countries, differs from neo-feudalist capitalist charges in other parts of the world. As Kollai notes, other iterations of neo-feudalist capitalism denotes a critique of globalism and the development of “global behemoths” and economic structures that have dominated the world’s wealth in a nontransparent way.¹⁷⁴ While this iteration is focused on how unregulated market forces have created a hierarchical structure with increasing economic inequality and decreased economic mobility, the brand of neo-feudalist capitalism seen in Hungary has been developed by the state using the available mechanisms to make all wealth and economic success dependent on the central party, Fidesz. While both have resulted in a stagnated lower economic class and increased inequality, the neo-feudalist iterations of Western globalism center around the “capitalists” who use their wealth to influence the political sphere; in Hungary, the neo-feudalist system centers around the political leader, Orbán, who ultimately decides how and to whom wealth is distributed. In the next chapter of this paper, I will look at how this economic dependence on the ruling party and hierarchical structure ultimately acts as a support mechanism that reinforces the neo-traditionalist cultural narratives espoused by the Fidesz government.

¹⁷³ Kollai, “The Many Meanings of Neo-Feudalism: Analysis of Academic and Public Discourse Alluding Premodern Social Structures,” 126.

¹⁷⁴ Kollai, 124.

Chapter 4: The Intersection of Neo-Traditionalism and Neo-Feudalism

Thus far, this thesis has independently discussed the cultural discourse and economic policies of Fidesz in power. Chapter 2 outlined the specific cultural narratives that Orbán has espoused and the image that he portrays as an ideal version of the Hungarian nation, ultimately classifying it as neo-traditionalist. Chapter 3 examined the economic policies of Fidesz, highlighting the cronyism and systems of mass nationalization and re-privatization, eventually classifying the economic system as neo-feudalist. After thoroughly evaluating the nuance of this party's cultural discourse and economic program, Chapter 4 will discuss the intersection of these policies, finding that *the neo-feudalist economic policies of Fidesz serves as a reinforcement mechanism that legitimizes the cultural discourse espoused by Orbán*. This reinforcement manifests in financial rewards for adherence and fiscal punishment for those that reject the cultural norms. It finds that the reinforcement of neo-traditional discourses has social consequences, including *reshaping the social system into a highly centralized and hierarchical structure*. Furthermore, this chapter finds that the neo-feudalist policies are having lasting macroeconomic effects, *including demographic issues and increasing levels of wealth inequality*.

4.1 A System of Reinforcement and its Social Consequences

4.1.1 Reinforcing Prescribed Cultural Norms

The theoretical section of this thesis focused on the concept of crisis construction and how political actors shape the “national interests” through processes of articulation and interpellation. In the case of Fidesz, Orbán has rhetorically shaped a dominant view of the nation by articulating repeatedly what it means to be firmly within the moral rectitude of the Hungarian nation: ethnically

Hungarian with traditional family values and a cultural Christian affinity. He has interpellated who poses the threat outside of the nation by framing Brussels, George Soros, the opposition, or any other figure that threatens this neo-traditionalist culture, as enemies of the state. As Weldes points out, this system of repeated articulation and interpellation reinforces the meaning behind these linguistic elements and gives them meaning.¹⁷⁵ However, this thesis finds evidence that in addition to linguistically reinforcing these sentiments, the economic policies of Fidesz serve as a primary mechanism of reinforcement.

One way in which Fidesz utilizes its policies to reinforce its rhetoric is through financially incentivizing certain behaviors. As Chapter 2 highlighted, Fidesz seeks to promote values based on traditional gender roles, family formations, and sexual orientation. In addition to repeated articulation of these values being beneficial to the Hungarian nation, the party has also passed tax benefits and financial regulations that encourage adherence to these ideals. For instance, 2018's "Year of the Family" policy paid off student debt for mothers that were willing to have three or more children, and policies announced in 2012 gave a family tax allowance for one parent's income based on the number of children in the household. These policies, combined with a narrowing legal definition of what constitutes a marriage (heterosexual) and who can legally have children (heterosexual married couples), has served as a reinforcement mechanism to encourage the population to prescribe to Fidesz's definition of the culturally acceptable. And in fact, it has seen success in some regards. Fidesz announced in 2018 that from 2010 to 2016, applications for marriage licenses increased 46 per cent.¹⁷⁶ Furthermore, the party's narrative that gender identification should be limited to what is assigned at birth, and that men and women have traditional roles to fulfill, was further reinforced with the 2018 ban on gender studies, in which the

¹⁷⁵ Weldes, "Constructing National Interests."

¹⁷⁶ "About Hungary - Hungary Names 2018 the Year of the Family."

government withdrew accreditation and funding for such programs. Through economic programs that benefit a specific subset of the population that falls into their espoused view of morally acceptable, the administration economically disadvantages the members of society that fall outside of the prescribed norm.

In addition to financially rewarding those within the prescribed vision of moral decency, the administration has begun to fiscally punish those that do not subscribe to their ideal of what how a Hungarian should act. With the introduction of a massive national work program came what seemed more access to employment opportunities. In reality, the national work program offers incredibly low wages that are far below the minimum wage, and little space for advancement back into the mainstream workforce. However, those who find themselves unemployed and choose not to join the national work program, fail to fit into Orbán's ideals of 'workkarist' society in which everyone contributes. As a result, shortly after taking office in 2011, Fidesz shortened their unemployment benefits to 30 days, the shortest allowance within the European Union.¹⁷⁷ New laws have criminalized homelessness, giving the lowest classes of society the option of mandatory enrollment in work programs or prison if they are found on sleeping on the streets.¹⁷⁸

Furthermore, the Roma population of Hungary, which fails to fit Orbán's definition of 'an ethnically homogenous Christian nation,' also has long held a stereotype for being lazy, or "loathing to work," and seen as a drain on government resources.¹⁷⁹ Under Fidesz's government, the Roma population has been increasingly segregated from the rest of the population. Roma children have been, as the Minister of Human Resources designated, segregated in a "tender loving attainment process" to separate schools away from non-Roma students.¹⁸⁰ As a result, indicators

¹⁷⁷ Byrne, "Hungary under Fire over Growing Use of Public Works Labourers."

¹⁷⁸ "Hungary's Homeless Fear They Are Viktor Orbán's next Target."

¹⁷⁹ "Viktor Orbán's Work-Based Society - Work-Based Society in Hungary."

¹⁸⁰ "10 things he really said."

show that since 2010, the gap in the education levels of Roma and non-Roma students has continued to widen.¹⁸¹ When civil rights groups took the government to court over segregation in the town of Gyöngyöspata and won subsequent compensation for the children affected by illegal segregation, the government refused to pay. Orbán's response was:

*I'm not from Gyöngyöspata, but if I lived there, I would after all ask, how is it possible that members of an ethnic group who live with me in the same community, same village for some reason will receive a significant amount [of money] without doing any work.*¹⁸²

The prime minister's rhetoric again makes veiled references to the stereotypes of Roma laziness and unwillingness to work, insinuating that the people being compensated for a policy that disadvantaged them is a drain on government resources that should be reserved for hardworking Hungarians. By using government resources to punish subsets of the population that do not fit the prescribed cultural norms of a workfarist society, whether homeless, jobless, or an ethnic minority, the administration reinforces the idea that there is no place for those who do not want to contribute in a way that it sees fit.

4.1.2 Funding

While efforts to reward those within the prescribed "in group" and punish those that deviate serve to reinforce certain behaviors and support certain subsets of the population, the economic policies enacted by Fidesz also serve to fund these massive social programs and create a highly centralized government that aims to ensure loyalty to its central figure. Orbán's populist rhetoric focuses on the 'wrongs' done to the hardworking Hungarian people by the elitists of international corporations and globalist enterprises. Thus, part of its economic program is to not directly burden

¹⁸¹ Bernát, "INTEGRATION OF THE ROMA IN HUNGARY IN THE 2010S."

¹⁸² "Orbán under Fire over School Segregation Comments."

the “virtuous people” to pay for putting the nation on course. The introduction of a 16 per cent flat tax rate in 2012, combined with capped prices on utilities and the introduction of the aforementioned family promotion tax programs, all came at a hefty price when the country was struggling in an economic recession. The government instead chose to fund its debt and programs through corporate regulations and taxes, as well as the renationalization of the pension system that was detailed in Chapter 3, and with EU structural funds.

When Fidesz entered power in 2010, GDP had contracted by 6.6 per cent the previous year, the government debt to GDP ratio stood at an unprecedented 78 per cent, the deficit stood at 4.6 per cent of GDP, and the previous socialist government had accepted an IMF and EU bailout of 20 billion euros. In his campaign to push foreigners out of the affairs of Hungarians, Orbán embarked on a mission to repay the IMF loan swiftly. Through the regulations put on financial institutions that were discussed in Chapter 3, the Fidesz government shifted the burden of public debt on corporations and less onto the general population. In addition to raising \$837 million through taxes on the financial sector,¹⁸³ the government approved legislation that allowed foreign-denominated currency loans to be paid at a fixed, lower-than-market value, rate. This lowered household foreign debt by 23 per cent and transferred the burden to financial institutions at the cost of what equated to about 1 per cent of GDP.¹⁸⁴ Another massive influx of funding came from the pension system, with 2.95 trillion forints, or approximately 10 per cent of Hungary’s GDP, entering the national budget. 1.35 trillion forints of that amount was used to pay down Hungary’s sovereign debt.¹⁸⁵ As a result, these drastic economic measures, seen as protective of the everyday

¹⁸³ “Hungarian Lawmakers Approve ‘Brutal’ Bank Tax Defying IMF, EU.”

¹⁸⁴ Johnson and Barnes, “Financial Nationalism and Its International Enablers.”

¹⁸⁵ Mihalyi, “Renationalization and Recentralization in Hungary, 2010-2016.”

Hungarian and targeted at foreign-owned corporations, the Fidesz government was able to pay off the IMF loan early in 2013.

In addition to using these targeted economic policies to pay off the debt and stabilize the country macroeconomically after the Global Recession began, Fidesz has also used European Union structural funds to reward loyalists. As Chapter 3 outlined, a system of crony capitalism has developed in Hungary, in which a large percentage of public procurement goes to known allies of the party and its leader. Far beyond the tax benefits for the middle-class families that ascribe to Orbán's neo-traditionalist rhetoric, Orbán employs a system of economic benefits for those loyal to the regime. As Chapter 3 demonstrated, studies of public procurement from 2009 to 2015 showed that there was a single bidder in over one-third of tenders,¹⁸⁶ and there is ample evidence of EU funds being used to construct vanity projects by Fidesz loyalists.

As this section has demonstrated, the neo-feudalist economic policies of Fidesz serve as a reinforcement mechanism. They are used to reinforce cultural norms espoused by Orbán through financially rewarding behavior and identity that is seen within his prescribed definition of morally acceptable, by financially withholding from those that do not ascribe to his workfarist views, and by funding the social programs, party loyalists, and the country's debt through targeting certain sectors of the economy and claiming to reduce the direct burden on middle class households.

4.2 Neo-feudalism's Effect on Social Structures

As the last section clarified, the neo-feudalist economic system employed by Fidesz is used as a mechanism to financially incentivize loyalty to the party and adherence to its neo-traditionalist cultural ideals, but its effect goes far beyond economics and has a profound effect on Hungary's

¹⁸⁶ Mihalyi.

social structure. In Kollai's discussion of neo-feudalism, he talks about an alternative notion to democracy as "a very tightly-structured society with a small ruling class at the head, whose privileges of sovereignty are linked with the responsibilities of providing for the welfare of the subject masses."¹⁸⁷ This form of society, deemed neo-feudalist, rejects the concept of egalitarianism and legitimizes levels of cultural and social hierarchy.¹⁸⁸

As the last section demonstrated, the economic policies enacted by Fidesz serve to legitimize and reinforce their own hierarchy. At the top of the pyramid is the Fidesz party and its charismatic leader, Orbán. Below him, comparable to a type of modern-day privileged class of Lords, are the close party associates that benefit from loyalty to the regime. As Chapter 3 demonstrated, these loyalists gain privileges like exclusive licensing of tobacco sales, access to public procurement, and preferential access to privatization deals. In a more direct comparison to feudalism, they even have been awarded public agricultural land through the approval of subjective processes and Land Committees. Through recentralization of regulatory agencies and massive renationalization campaigns, Fidesz has seized control of the economy within the confines of the current governing system. As a result, the party has control over who benefits from the assets and conditions economic success on loyalty.

In the new Hungarian social hierarchy, the next level of vassals could be the Hungarian public, a sort of serfdom, in which people who adhere to the cultural values of the governing party, see economic benefits. As the last section demonstrated, falling within the norms dictated as culturally acceptable is associated with eased tax burdens and benefits. Non-conformity is akin to non-loyalty and is punished as such. This shift in the social and political structure is, as Kollai

¹⁸⁷ Kollai, "The Many Meanings of Neo-Feudalism: Analysis of Academic and Public Discourse Alluding Premodern Social Structures," 124.

¹⁸⁸ Kollai, "The Many Meanings of Neo-Feudalism: Analysis of Academic and Public Discourse Alluding Premodern Social Structures," 125.

describes, difficult to diagnose academically. He notes that the shifting social hierarchy does not “tackle the legal system and written norms...and is not coupled with some obvious political revisionism.”¹⁸⁹ Hungary, on the surface, still operates through the same democratic system that was installed in the 1990s. Fidesz gained its majority in parliament through a legitimate election process¹⁹⁰ and still operates under the confines of the constitution, despite using its majority mandate to adapt the constitution at its convenience. Furthermore, Orbán still claims to advocate for a democratic governing system, rejecting the “liberal” aspect alone.

As Kollai points out, neo-feudalism is often described in terms of an economic program. This thesis has detailed Fidesz’s economic program as neo-feudalist due to its massive nationalization and re-privatization programs, increasingly centralized control of the economy, and system of crony capitalism. However, the neo-feudalist economic system has implications for the cultural discourse and social system in the country. This chapter has demonstrated how the economic system of Fidesz strongly reinforces the cultural sentiments espoused in the leader’s rhetoric. Furthermore, the centralization of resources and intertwining of economic success with loyalty to the party reinforces a more hierarchical view of society, rejecting egalitarian ambitions. As the next section will demonstrate, this hierarchy has macroeconomic implications, including a rise in wealth inequality.

4.3 Macroeconomic Consequences

The last section examined the intersection and societal implications of the neo-feudalist economic programs and neo-traditionalist cultural narratives espoused by Fidesz. With such an

¹⁸⁹ Kollai, 127.

¹⁹⁰ This is arguably true for the first election. Legal changes made to the election process after the party took power have been criticized for benefiting the party’s large share of parliamentary seats.

unorthodox package of policies that are neither leftist nor conservative, it is also important to understand the macroeconomic consequences of the party's programs. Upon first look at traditional macroeconomic indicators, Fidesz's economic program seems quite successful. Compared to real GDP growth when the party took power, 2019 showed a growth rate of 4.9 per cent.¹⁹¹ By 2018, unemployment was below 3.8 per cent and inflation was around three per cent. Even critics of the economic policies, deemed "Orbanomics," saw indications that the economy was performing well.

At the beginning of its second term in office, Fidesz offered impressive macroeconomic statistics with real GDP surpassing pre-crisis levels.¹⁹² In 2014, Hungary boasted a growth rate of 3.6 per cent, with the deficit below three per cent and the debt to GDP ratio at 77 per cent.¹⁹³ Its growth rate that year outpaced most other European Union countries, including Poland and the Czech Republic.¹⁹⁴ The government was able to repay its IMF bailout a year earlier than needed in 2013, citing the leadership of Fidesz that created a "strong country" with "financial independence" that "sent [the IMF] packing."¹⁹⁵ Despite the fact that the Fidesz administration was able to pay off debt to the IMF before the deadline, the IMF and the European Union both expressed concern with the measures the administration utilized to pay the debt so quickly. Jorg Decressin, the then-deputy director of the IMF European department, said, "the unpredictability of policy making" and "crises taxes" on certain sectors of the economy "undermine the country's potential for moving to faster growth in the medium term."¹⁹⁶

¹⁹¹ "GDP Growth (Annual %) - Hungary | Data."

¹⁹² "Country Report Hungary 2019: 2019 European Semester: Assessment of Progress on Structural Reforms, Prevention and Correction of Macroeconomic Imbalances, and Results of in-Depth Reviews under Regulation (EU) No 1176/2011."

¹⁹³ Byrne, "'Orbanomics' Confounds Critics as Hungary's Economy Recovers."

¹⁹⁴ Piasecki, "Was Viktor Orbán's Unorthodox Economic Policy the Right Answer to Hungary's Economic Misfortunes?"

¹⁹⁵ Orbán, "Speech at the 28th Bálványos Summer Open University and Student Camp."

¹⁹⁶ Byrne, "'Orbanomics' Confounds Critics as Hungary's Economy Recovers."

Decressin's concern was echoed by investors and other European leaders, who expressed concern about the long-term sustainability of the party's policies. Recent analysis of the macroeconomic indicators in Hungary from 2010-2018, while showing decreased debt and deficit, combined with the creation of jobs and low unemployment figures, also hesitates to credit the entirety of this success to Fidesz's "unorthodox policies." Laszlo Csaba has highlighted the global economic conditions in which Hungary emerged from its financial crisis in the early 2010s as a contributing factor. He argues that "low global energy prices, growth recovery in the EU" and the "zero bound interest rate on capital global markets" all helped to push Hungary out of its economic slump.¹⁹⁷ Furthermore, a European Commission analysis has cautioned in 2018 that "the Hungarian economy is near the peak of a strong cyclical recovery," with growth predicted to slow by 2020.¹⁹⁸ Both of these analysis attribute, at least in part, Hungary's growth during its first two terms in office to the general conditions of cyclical growth that came in Europe after the onset of the recession.

Economists like Csaba differentiate Hungary from some Western counterparts that use nationalization and levy special taxes as a tool of economic recovery; Fidesz has incorporated these practices into its regular economic policies.¹⁹⁹ For instance, the levying of special taxes against financial institutions in 2011 was seen by many as a temporary measure. In fact, Orbán negotiated with the President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development in early 2015 to lower the financial tax slightly; despite this, the tax remains the highest in Europe and is still applicable in 2020.²⁰⁰ Because of Orbán's strong anti-globalist rhetoric and steep taxes on the

¹⁹⁷ Csaba, "Unorthodoxy in Hungary."

¹⁹⁸ "Country Report Hungary 2019: 2019 European Semester: Assessment of Progress on Structural Reforms, Prevention and Correction of Macroeconomic Imbalances, and Results of in-Depth Reviews under Regulation (EU) No 1176/2011." This was before the Covid-19 pandemic and its resulting economic impact.

¹⁹⁹ Csaba, "Unorthodoxy in Hungary."

²⁰⁰ Csaba.

banking sector, telecommunications, and media, analysts worried that foreign investment in the country would slow as businesses feared the repercussions of protectionist policies. Furthermore, economists say many of the “special taxes” in the retail and communications sectors were simply passed on to the consumers.²⁰¹ Despite this criticism, the Fidesz government has garnered a surprising reputation in recent years for being a friendly foreign investment hub for certain actors. It has developed a robust relationship with German car manufacturers in recent years, as well as negotiated deals with Russian energy company, Rosatom.²⁰² These relations, however, seem to operate similarly to Orbán’s domestic economic programs; they are largely based on personal relationships with Fidesz’s leader, and they are highly subjective to the whims of the administration. So, despite the fact that the predictions of an isolated and foreign investment free environment have not come to fruition, Csaba highlights that the long-term centralized control over all aspects of the economy may not lead to long-term sustainable economic growth or improved efficiency.²⁰³

In addition to traditional macroeconomic indicators, another result of Fidesz’s policies is an impact on demographics. As specified in Chapter 2, Orbán’s administration has emphasized the serious risks that demographic decline pose since the beginning of its tenure, and the government has enacted policies like family allowances to increase the birthrate. However, the party’s original policies did not seem to have the desired effect, resulting in a massive campaign in 2018 to promote the year of the family. Orbán himself, who famously insinuated that women were not capable of participating in certain professional fields, like politics, and advanced policies to encourage women to stay home and have children, has even started to recognize that the current economic

²⁰¹ Piasecki, “Was Viktor Orbán’s Unorthodox Economic Policy the Right Answer to Hungary’s Economic Misfortunes?”

²⁰² “Authoritarian Right: Hungary | Corporate Europe Observatory.”

²⁰³ Csaba, “Unorthodoxy in Hungary.”

situation would benefit greatly from women being entering the workforce. In fact, in 2018, Orbán admitted that he “wished to reach a comprehensive agreement with Hungarian women” regarding their role in the economy and demographic promotion.²⁰⁴ The Fidesz government announced in 2018 that they would expand the nursery scheme to offer childcare programs for a larger portion of the population.²⁰⁵ They also announced that women who pursued a Bachelors or Master’s degree would be entitled to extra compensation and an additional year of support, while offering a tax incentives for grandparents to care for children.²⁰⁶ These policy shifts indicate a change in the administration’s attitude in recent years towards women; while Orbán still regularly espouses misogynistic sentiments in his rhetoric, it is clear that the party recognizes that women joining the workforce is a crucial part of combatting demographic issues in Hungary.

While this shift in policy is encouraging in some ways, it does not seem to adequately address the demographic decline. The party’s strict stance on immigration and the mass emigration of young educated Hungarians, perhaps due to their increased likelihood to embrace liberal sentiments, remains a significant problem. With Hungary’s working age population expected to decline by four to five per cent in the next few years²⁰⁷ and an estimated half million of the country’s ten million people living abroad,²⁰⁸ the country is facing a shortage of workers. Furthermore, there seems to be a high level of educated workers emigrating; a 2018 study done by Tárki showed that 8 per cent of Hungarian post-secondary institution graduates live abroad, which is the highest figure in Europe.²⁰⁹ These statistics indicate that demographic issues in Hungary go beyond family planning; the anti-immigration cultural rhetoric that frames non-ethnic Hungarians

²⁰⁴ Pivarnyik, “Family and Gender in Orbán’s Hungary | Heinrich Böll Stiftung.”

²⁰⁵ Pivarnyik.

²⁰⁶ “About Hungary - Hungary Names 2018 the Year of the Family.”

²⁰⁷ “Many Countries Suffer from Shrinking Working-Age Populations.”

²⁰⁸ Szakaacs, “Investors Feel the Impact of Hungary’s Brain Drain.”

²⁰⁹ “XpatLoop.Com - Hungary Leads In Brain Drain Statistic.”

as a threat to the nation has pushed immigration levels low and coincided with emigration of highly educated workers. This trend and the party's policies could have serious implications for the work force in the long term.

The final macroeconomic indicator I will evaluate is the level of inequality in Hungary. This thesis has demonstrated the hierarchical dimensions to the neo-feudalist system and the economic favoritism used for some sectors of the population. But how does this system affect the wealth distribution? All economic indicators point to an increase in wealth inequality in Hungary since Fidesz took office. It is hardly surprising that a system of national works that pays far below the minimum wage, criminalizes homelessness, and the introduction of measures like a flat tax have done little to promote wealth redistribution. Hungary's Gini coefficient, or measure of inequality, stood at 29.4 in 2010 when the party took office. The most recent measure, from 2017, shows signs of steadily increasing inequality over the last seven years, with a Gini indicator of 30.6.²¹⁰ Economic analysis shows that the wealth of the top ten per cent of Hungarians increased from 48 per cent of total national assets in 2014 to 56.4 per cent in 2019.²¹¹ Furthermore, a 2017 European Commission report labeled the rise in Hungary's inequality as one of the biggest in the EU since the financial crisis.²¹²

As demonstrated by the policies outlined in previous chapters, Orbán's "cronies" often fall into the highest categories of wealth through procurement and regulatory preferential treatment; thus, their income has increased drastically. Below the country's wealthiest, there is a sector of the population, mostly middle class with multiple children, this is benefiting from state subsidized mortgages and child tax policies. However, there is also a growing class of disadvantaged

²¹⁰ "Gini Index (World Bank Estimate) - Hungary | Data."

²¹¹ "How Much of Hungary's Wealth Does the Richest 10% Control?"

²¹² Szakacs, "As Hungary roars ahead, Orbánomics leaves some of the poorest behind."

Hungarians that are falling into a poverty cycle. EU data from 2016 showed that Hungary has the largest percentage of the population that is at risk of poverty or social exclusion among Visegrad countries.²¹³ Nearly a million lower class Hungarians have seen a decline in their wealth since 2010,²¹⁴ and as of 2017, 75.6 per cent of the Roma population live in poverty or social exclusion.²¹⁵ These indicators demonstrate that while Hungary can boast GDP growth and a decline in debt under Fidesz's tenure, there are also indicators that the policies are increasing wealth inequality and targeting that wealth at certain subsets of the population.

As this section has demonstrated, the economic policies enacted by Fidesz did exhibit signs of success in some areas. In the wake of the Global Recession, these policies helped Hungary emerge from deep levels of debt and even the brink of collapse. The massive funds raised through regulation of industries and nationalization of the pension did fund the budget. However, economists see these actions as unsustainable in the long term, with foreign investment threatened, and a heavy dependence on EU funds leaving Hungary less "independent" than its leader often declares. Furthermore, these policies are doing little to quell demographic issues, and may even be exasperating them; income inequality has risen significantly and the system that neo-feudalism has created seems to be cementing a new hierarchy of party loyalists who hold the means of wealth and a lower class that is falling even farther behind.

4.4 Main Findings Summarized

This chapter has focused its analysis on the intersection of the economic policies of Fidesz and the cultural narratives espoused by its leader. In regard to the first research question: *How do*

²¹³ Szakaacs.

²¹⁴ Szakaacs.

²¹⁵ Bernát, "INTEGRATION OF THE ROMA IN HUNGARY IN THE 2010S."

the economic policies and the cultural discourse of Fidesz intersect to create a successful party program? This research concludes that the neo-feudalist economic policies of Fidesz serve as a *reinforcement* mechanism that *legitimizes* the party's espoused neo-traditionalist narratives. As Kollai has noted,²¹⁶ neo-feudalist economic programs have considerable impacts on both the social and political systems of the country. The mass system of re-nationalizations, regulatory taking, and re-privatizations has funded Fidesz's social programs that encourage traditional values and family roles. Furthermore, the system of crony capitalism and national works serves to solidify wealth in the hands of political loyalists while perpetuating a cycle of poverty for those deemed outside of Fidesz's cultural narrative of the 'the nation.'

The second research question: *What are the societal consequences of the neo-traditional cultural rhetoric that Viktor Orbán espouses?* can largely be answered by examining the reinforcement mechanism mentioned above. Neo-feudalism is clearly not just an economic policy, but rather a social, political, and economic structure for the state. It creates a highly centralized system that is hierarchical. The wealth, as well as the social and political power, is concentrated at the top of the system, which led by the charismatic leader, Orbán.

The final research question this thesis sought to explore was: *What are the lasting macroeconomic consequences of the neo-feudalist economic policies that Fidesz has enacted?* Macroeconomically, Hungary successfully recovered from the difficult conditions inherited by Fidesz at the beginning of its tenure. From 2010 to 2020, public debt and the deficit decreased, employment rose, and some strong trade relationships were created. However, demographic decline prevailed while inequality rose, causing concern over the lasting macroeconomic stability of the neo-feudalist economic system and how beneficial it is to all levels of society.

²¹⁶ Kollai, "The Many Meanings of Neo-Feudalism: Analysis of Academic and Public Discourse Alluding Premodern Social Structures."

In Kubik's conceptual discussion of delayed transformational fatigue, he discusses the economic, cultural, social and political implications of right-wing populist movements.²¹⁷ While this thesis focused its attention on the intersection of the cultural discourse and economic policies of Fidesz, it is evident that Hungary's economic system is transforming the political and social systems as well. It is creating a centralized, hierarchical system in which the charismatic leader, who acts as though endowed with a moral authority, defines cultural norms and determines who is able to economically thrive. As the conclusion will note, this amount of control is detrimental to democratic checks and balances and is indicative of a wider shift in the region away from the tenets of liberal democracy.

²¹⁷ Kubik, "FATIGUE and POPREBEL: What Are They All About? A Programmatic Statement."

Conclusion

This thesis set out to better understand the intersection of a populist radical right party's neo-traditional cultural discourse and neo-feudalist economic policies within the Hungarian national context. Chapter 2 highlighted the specificities of Orbán's cultural narrative by examining how he rhetorically shapes his vision of the nation, espouses traditional values, and uses missionary politics to create a personalized moral code under the guise of 'cultural Christianity.' Chapter 3 detailed the neo-feudalist economic nationalization and re-privatization campaigns, crony capitalism, and national works program that Fidesz has utilized. After evaluating Fidesz's discourse and policies, Chapter 4 presented the main findings that *the neo-feudalist economic policies of Fidesz serve as a reinforcement mechanism that legitimizes the cultural discourse espoused by Orbán*. Furthermore, it found that this neo-feudal economy is *reshaping the social system into a highly centralized and hierarchical structure*. It also found that the neo-feudalist policies are having lasting macroeconomic effects, *including demographic issues and increasing levels of wealth inequality*.

The implications of these findings are pertinent at both the national and wider regional level. Domestically, it is noteworthy that many of the economic policies enacted by Fidesz were originally considered by many as temporary means to alleviate the economic woes of the Great Recession. However, programs of nationalization and heavy financial sector taxation, which were used temporarily by other European countries in the wake of the Euro-crisis, have become standard policy tools for the Hungarian government. Thus, what seemed originally to be an unorthodox response to a major economic crisis is having lasting effects on the country's social and political structures. In order to maintain control of these sectors, the government has regularly used its parliamentary majority to adapt the constitution at its convenience. It has seized control of many

regulatory bodies, including the Land Committees referenced in Chapter 3. Furthermore, Kornai references parliament as a “law factory,” given that laws are often hastily presented and passed by Fidesz without any time for debate. As Csaba notes,²¹⁸ this has led to an increasingly centralized economy *and* political system.

More than ten years after the financial crisis of 2008, the government continues to operate economically as though it is still in a state of ‘crisis.’ It is rhetorically ‘at war’ with those that oppose Fidesz’s neo-traditionalist views and in a constant fight to ‘take back’ the country from ‘global leftists.’ By perpetuating a constant crisis mindset and rhetorical fearmongering, Fidesz has justified the establishment of an illiberal, state. As other scholars have noted, this illiberalism focuses more on outcomes than procedure.²¹⁹ The message that Fidesz sends to its electorate is that it is the protector of the true Hungarian nation. It will economically protect those that subscribe to its cultural Christian norms, and it will even help those within its definition of ‘the people’ to prosper economically. In an effort to do so, it has degraded democratic norms and seized a large share of control over what was previously a liberalized market economy, now operating as a neo-feudal state. This research goes beyond analyzing the rise of this kind of program, but also investigates its sustainability in the long term and the lasting consequences it can impose on Hungarian society.

In addition to shedding light on the shifting domestic political, economic, and social systems of Hungary, the findings of this thesis pertain to the wider regional study of delayed transformational fatigue. As this thesis recognized, the guiding structure of Hungary’s government has become increasingly centralized and feudal in nature. However, it does not manifest in the

²¹⁸ Csaba, “Unorthodoxy in Hungary.”

²¹⁹ Kubik, “FATIGUE and POPREBEL: What Are They All About? A Programmatic Statement.”

same full statism that emerged in the New Independent States.²²⁰ Hungary, and most comparably Poland, has emerged as a type of hybrid system. In the 1990s, the country took steps to develop into a liberal democratic regime and even joined the European Union, which has benefited its economic development immensely. Unlike some of its eastern counterparts, who did not establish strong democratic institutions in the 1990s, Fidesz's declared "illiberal" mandate in Hungary signifies an outright rejection of liberal democracy.

In the larger regional context, Hungary's shifting political system offers an appealing alternative to other CEE countries. Hungary has flouted liberal norms like respect for the rule of law and democratic checks and balances while going largely unpunished by the European Union. For leaders of the Eastern European countries that desire a close relationship with the European Union and the associated economic benefits, Hungary offers a potential illiberal alternative and inside ally to a scenario where liberal values are not a bargaining chip for close economic cooperation. Furthermore, while economic giants like China have previously enjoyed favorable trade agreements with the European Union, despite its lack of adherence to liberal norms, Hungary has demonstrated how a much smaller, economically inconsequential country can continue to benefit from the European market without adhering to the prevailing liberal democratic fundamentals of the bloc.

In May of 2020, Freedom House's *Nations in Transit* report declared that "Hungary is no longer a democracy."²²¹ The report, which covers 29 countries from "Central Europe to Central Asia," downgraded Hungary from a 'semi-consolidated democracy' to a 'hybrid regime.' While this development alone is striking for a member of the European Union, the authors also highlight a wider "democratic breakdown" in the region, noting that there are "fewer democracies in the

²²⁰ Csaba, "Unorthodoxy in Hungary."

²²¹ "Hungary No Longer a Democracy."

region today than at any point since the annual report was launched in 1995.”²²² While the debate on the viability of liberal democracy as a governing structure continues worldwide, Hungary’s continued centralization efforts and creation of a neo-feudalist system has solidified the ruling party’s position. Hungary is an illiberal state, and it is making every effort to ensure that it remains one.

²²² “Hungary No Longer a Democracy.”

Bibliography

- “2020: The Year of the Converging Crises - Rolling Stone.” Accessed December 14, 2020. <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/political-commentary/2020-crises-wildfires-pandemic-election-climate-crisis-1069907/>.
- “About Hungary - Hungary Names 2018 the Year of the Family.” Accessed December 5, 2020. <http://abouthungary.hu/blog/hungary-names-2018-the-year-of-the-family/>.
- “About Hungary - Prime Minister Orbán at the 27th Bálványos Summer Open University and Summer Camp [Full Text in English].” Accessed December 3, 2020. <http://abouthungary.hu/prime-minister/pm-orban-releases-his-enlightening-balvanyos-speech/>.
- “About Hungary - Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s Speech at the 27th Congress of Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Union.” Accessed December 2, 2020. <http://abouthungary.hu/speeches-and-remarks/prime-minister-viktor-orbans-speech-at-the-27th-congress-of-fidesz-hungarian-civic-union/>.
- Altheide, David L. *Creating Fear: News and the Construction of Crisis*. 1st ed. Routledge, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203794494>.
- Arter, David. “The Breakthrough of Another West European Populist Radical Right Party? The Case of the True Finns.” *Government and Opposition* 45, no. 4 (October 1, 2010): 484–504. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2010.01321.x>.
- “Authoritarian Right: Hungary | Corporate Europe Observatory.” Accessed December 14, 2020. <https://corporateeurope.org/en/2019/05/authoritarian-right-hungary>.
- Baker, Dean. “Is Globalization to Blame?” Text. Boston Review, January 9, 2017. <http://bostonreview.net/forum/dean-baker-globalization-blame>.
- Baldinger, Mackenzie. “Fidesz’s National in the International: Global Implications of a Domestic Populist Government.” Central European University, 2018.
- Batory, Agnes. “Election Briefing No 51 Europe and the Hungarian Parliamentary Elections of April 2010.” European Parties Elections and Referendums Network. University of Sussex, June 17, 2010.
- Batory, Agnes. “Populists in Government? Hungary’s ‘System of National Cooperation.’” *Democratization* 23, no. 2 (February 23, 2016): 283–303. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2015.1076214>.
- Becker, Jens. “The Rise of Right-Wing Populism in Hungary.” *SEER: Journal for Labour and Social Affairs in Eastern Europe* 13, no. 1 (2010): 29–40.
- Bernát, Anikó. “INTEGRATION OF THE ROMA IN HUNGARY IN THE 2010S,” 196–214, 2019.
- Boros, Tamas. “Hungarian Land as Political Instrument.” Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Budapest, December 2015.
- Brubaker, Rogers. “Between Nationalism and Civilizationism: The European Populist Moment in Comparative Perspective.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, March 3, 2017. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01419870.2017.1294700>.
- Brubaker, Rogers. “Populism and Nationalism.” *Nations and Nationalism* 26, no. 1 (2020): 44–66. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12522>.
- Byrne, Andrew. “Hungary to Finalise Deal for 15% Stake in Erste Bank Arm,” May 5, 2016. <https://www.ft.com/content/2c369512-12c9-11e6-91da-096d89bd2173>.

- Byrne, Andrew. “Hungary under Fire over Growing Use of Public Works Labourers,” August 13, 2015. <https://www.ft.com/content/9ab6dd04-3c1d-11e5-bbd1-b37bc06f590c>.
- Byrne, Andrew. ““Orbanomics’ Confounds Critics as Hungary’s Economy Recovers,” June 9, 2015. <https://www.ft.com/content/027eaf9a-05e9-11e5-b676-00144feabdc0>.
- “Center-Right Fidesz Party Sweeps to Victory in Hungary - CNN.Com.” Accessed December 2, 2020. <http://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/europe/04/26/hungary.election.results/index.html>.
- Cleen, Benjamin de. “Populism and Nationalism.” *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, October 26, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198803560.013.18>.
- Cleen, Benjamin de. *Populism and Nationalism*. Edited by Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, Paul Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo, and Pierre Ostiguy. Vol. 1. Oxford University Press, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198803560.013.18>.
- “Country Report Hungary 2019: 2019 European Semester: Assessment of Progress on Structural Reforms, Prevention and Correction of Macroeconomic Imbalances, and Results of in-Depth Reviews under Regulation (EU) No 1176/2011.” European Commission, 2019.
- Csaba, Laszlo. “Unorthodoxy in Hungary: An Illiberal Success Story?” *Post-Communist Economies* 0, no. 0 (August 13, 2019): 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14631377.2019.1641949>.
- Daily News Hungary. “How Much of Hungary’s Wealth Does the Richest 10% Control?,” April 12, 2019. <https://dailynewshungary.com/how-much-of-hungarys-wealth-do-the-richest-10-control/>.
- “Eastern and Western Europeans Differ on Importance of Religion, Views of Minorities, and Key Social Issues.” *Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project* (blog), October 29, 2018. <https://www.pewforum.org/2018/10/29/eastern-and-western-europeans-differ-on-importance-of-religion-views-of-minorities-and-key-social-issues/>
- European Roma Rights Centre. “10 things he really said: Zoltán Balog, Hungarian Minister for Human Resources.” Text. European Roma Rights Centre. Hungary. Accessed December 12, 2020. <http://www.errc.org/news/10-things-he-really-said-zoltan-balog-hungarian-minister-for-human-resources>.
- European Institute for Gender Equality. “Gender Equality Index | 2020.” Accessed December 5, 2020. <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2020/HU>.
- Fairclough, Gordon. “IMF Pulls Out of Hungary Loan Talks.” *Wall Street Journal*, July 19, 2010, sec. World News. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748704196404575374971584979964>.
- Froese, Paul. “Hungary for Religion: A Supply-Side Interpretation of the Hungarian Religious Revival.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 40, no. 2 (2001): 251–68. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0021-8294.00054>.
- Fruzsina, Albert. “Reforms to the Hungarian Public Works Scheme.” European Commission, June 2017.
- “GDP Growth (Annual %) - Hungary | Data.” Accessed December 14, 2020. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=HU>.
- Gidron, Noam, and Bart Bonikowski. “Varieties of Populism: Literature Review and Research Agenda.” *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2013. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2459387>.
- Gidron, Noam, and Peter Hall. “The Politics of Social Status: Economic and Cultural Roots of the Populist Right.” *British Journal of Sociology* 68 (November 1, 2017): 57–84. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12319>.

- “Gini Index (World Bank Estimate) - Hungary | Data.” Accessed December 14, 2020.
<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI?locations=HU>.
- Hawkins, Kirk A. “Is Chávez Populist?: Measuring Populist Discourse in Comparative Perspective.” *Comparative Political Studies* 42, no. 8 (August 2009): 1040–67.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414009331721>.
- “How Do European Countries Differ in Religious Commitment? Use Our Interactive Map to Find Out.” *Pew Research Center* (blog). Accessed December 7, 2020.
<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/12/05/how-do-european-countries-differ-in-religious-commitment/>.
- “Hungarian Lawmakers Approve ‘Brutal’ Bank Tax Defying IMF, EU.” Accessed November 22, 2020. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2010-07-22/hungarian-lawmakers-to-approve-brutal-bank-tax-in-defiance-of-imf-eu>.
- “Hungarian Leader Says Europe Is Now ‘under Invasion’ by Migrants,” March 15, 2018.
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/15/hungarian-leader-says-europe-is-now-under-invasion-by-migrants>.
- “Hungarian Public Works Schemes Just Hide Problems,” December 1, 2016.
<http://www.intellinews.com/hungarian-public-works-schemes-just-hide-problems-111311/>.
- “Hungary Deepens Control of Banking Sector,” February 9, 2015.
<https://www.ft.com/content/a16f4f4a-b082-11e4-9b8e-00144feab7de>.
- “Hungary Government Proposes Same-Sex Adoption Ban.” *BBC News*, November 11, 2020, sec. Europe. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54902048>.
- “Hungary No Longer a Democracy: Report,” May 6, 2020.
<https://www.politico.eu/article/hungary-no-longer-a-democracy-report/>.
- “Hungary Outlaws Changing Birth Gender on Documents.” *BBC News*, May 19, 2020, sec. Europe. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-52727615>.
- “Hungary’s Banks Thrive in Era of Nationalization,” n.d.
- “Hungary’s Future: Anti-Immigration, Anti-Multiculturalism and Anti-Roma?” Accessed December 3, 2020. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/hungarys-future-antiimmigration-antimulticulturalism-and-antiro/>.
- “Hungary’s Homeless Fear They Are Viktor Orbán’s next Target,” October 10, 2018.
<http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/oct/10/hungary-homeless-fear-they-are-viktor-orban-next-target>.
- Inglehart, Ronald F., and Pippa Norris. “Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-Nots and Cultural Backlash.” *Harvard John F. Kennedy School of Government*, Faculty Research Working Paper Series, August 2016.
- Johnson, Juliet, and Andrew Barnes. “Financial Nationalism and Its International Enablers: The Hungarian Experience.” *Review of International Political Economy* 22, no. 3 (May 4, 2015): 535–69. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2014.919336>.
- Jolly, David. “IMF Bailout Lifts Hungarian Markets.” *The New York Times*, October 29, 2008, sec. Business. <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/29/business/worldbusiness/29iht-forint.1.17341173.html>.
- Kalyvas, Andreas. *Democracy and the Politics of the Extraordinary: Max Weber, Carl Schmitt, and Hannah Arendt*. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Kent, Lauren and Samantha Tapfumaneyi. “Hungary’s PM Bans Gender Study at Colleges Saying ‘People Are Born Either Male or Female.’” CNN. Accessed December 5, 2020.

- <https://www.cnn.com/2018/10/19/europe/hungary-bans-gender-study-at-colleges-trnd/index.html>.
- Kollai, Istvan. "The Many Meanings of Neo-Feudalism: Analysis of Academic and Public Discourse Alluding Premodern Social Structures." *Köz-Gazdaság* 1 (2020): 122–32.
- Kornai, Janos. "Hungary's U-Turn." *Capitalism and Society* 10, no. 1 (July 11, 2015): 24.
- Kriesi, Hanspeter, and Takēs S. Pappas, eds. *European Populism in the Shadow of the Great Recession*. Studies in European Political Science / ECPR. Colchester, United Kingdom: ECPR Press, 2016.
- Kubik, Jan. "FATIGUE and POPREBEL: What Are They All About? A Programmatic Statement," October 2019. <https://populism-europe.com/poprebel/research-outcomes-and-publications/>.
- Laclau, Ernesto. *On Populist Reason*. London; New York (N.Y.): Verso., 2018.
- Lexico Dictionaries | English. "Crisis | Definition of Crisis by Oxford Dictionary on Lexico.Com Also Meaning of Crisis." Accessed June 14, 2020. <https://www.lexico.com/definition/crisis>.
- "Many Countries Suffer from Shrinking Working-Age Populations." *The Economist*, May 5, 2018. <https://www.economist.com/international/2018/05/05/many-countries-suffer-from-shrinking-working-age-populations>.
- McLaughlin, Daniel. "150 Injured as Hungarians Riot over PM's Lies." *the Guardian*, September 19, 2006. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/sep/19/1>
- Mihalyi, Peter. "Renationalization and Recentralization in Hungary, 2010-2016." Polish Academy of Sciences and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2016.
- Moffitt, Benjamin, and Simon Tormey. "Rethinking Populism: Politics, Mediatisation and Political Style." *Political Studies* 62, no. 2 (June 2014): 381–97. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.12032>.
- Mudde, Cas. *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*. Cambridge New York Melbourne Madrid Cape Town Singapore: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Mudde, Cas. *The Populist Radical Right: A Reader*. Routledge Studies in Extremism and Democracy. London New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017.
- Mudde, Cas. "The Populist Zeitgeist." *Government and Opposition* 39, no. 4 (September 2004): 542–63. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2004.00135.x>.
- Mudde, Cas. "To Save Hungary's Liberal Democracy, Centrists Must Work with the Far Right" *the Guardian*, March 28, 2018. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/mar/28/hungary-liberal-democracy-tactical-alliance-far-right>.
- Mudde, Cas, and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser. "Exclusionary vs. Inclusionary Populism: Comparing Contemporary Europe and Latin America." *Government and Opposition* 48, no. 2 (April 2013): 147–74. <https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2012.11>.
- The Orange Files. "Nationalization of Private Pension Funds," October 2, 2014. <https://theorangefiles.hu/nationalization-of-private-pension-funds/>.
- The Orange Files. "Notable Quotes: Prime Minister Viktor Orbán," June 4, 2014. <https://theorangefiles.hu/notable-quotes-prime-minister-viktor-orban-by-subject/>.
- "Orbán under Fire over School Segregation Comments," January 10, 2020. <https://www.politico.eu/article/viktor-orban-under-fire-over-school-segregation-comments/>.

- Orbán, Viktor. “Ceremonial Speech on the 170th Anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution.” Budapest, Hungary, March 15, 2018.
- Orbán, Viktor. “Doorstep Statement before the Meeting of the European Council.” Brussels, Belgium, December 15, 2016.
- Orbán, Viktor. “Speech at Christian Democrat International’s Conference on Interfaith Dialogue.” Budapest, Hungary, February 16, 2018.
- Orbán, Viktor. “Speech at the 28th Bálványos Summer Open University and Student Camp.” Romania, July 22, 2017.
- “Orbán Vows to Squeeze Hungary’s Banks on Foreign Exchange Loans,” October 13, 2014. <https://www.ft.com/content/1f36ffa2-52a2-11e4-9221-00144feab7de>.
- “Orbán Warns of Dangers of European ‘empire’ – POLITICO.” Accessed December 3, 2020. <https://www.politico.eu/article/viktor-orban-warns-of-dangers-of-european-empire/>.
- Ost, David. *The Defeat of Solidarity*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005.
- Pappas, Takis S. “Are Populist Leaders ‘Charismatic’? The Evidence from Europe: Are Populist Leaders ‘Charismatic’?: Takis S. Pappas.” *Constellations* 23, no. 3 (September 2016): 378–90. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8675.12233>.
- Piasecki, Marcin A. “Was Viktor Orbán’s Unorthodox Economic Policy the Right Answer to Hungary’s Economic Misfortunes?” *International Journal of Management and Economics* 46, no. 1 (June 1, 2015): 41–71. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijme-2015-0021>.
- Pivarnyik, Balázs. “Family and Gender in Orbán’s Hungary | Heinrich Böll Stiftung,” July 4, 2018. <https://www.boell.de/en/2018/07/04/family-and-gender-viktor-orbans-hungary>.
- Rodrik, Dani. “Populism and the Economics of Globalization.” *John F. Kennedy School of Government*, 2017.
- Staff, Reuters. “Hungary to Sell MKB Bank for \$134 Million - Central Bank.” U.S. Accessed November 23, 2020. <https://www.reuters.com/article/hungary-mkb-bank-idUSB3N120005>.
- Staff, Reuters. “Hungary Will Defend Traditional Families, Stop Demographic Decline, Orban Says.” *Reuters*, May 25, 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hungary-orban-idUSKCN1IQ0V8>.
- Staff, Reuters. “Multiculturalism Doesn’t Work in Hungary, Says Orban.” *Reuters*, June 3, 2015. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hungary-orban-idUSKBN0OJ0T920150603>.
- Staff, Reuters. “UPDATE 1-Hungary Bank Tax to Wipe out 2010 Profits -Bank Group.” *Reuters*, November 12, 2010. <https://www.reuters.com/article/hungary-banks-idUSLDE6AB0DU20101112>.
- Stanley, Ben. “Populism in Central and Eastern Europe.” *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, 2017.
- Szakacs, Gergely. “As Hungary roars ahead, Orbanomics leaves some of the poorest behind.” *Reuters*, April 2, 2018. <https://fr.reuters.com/article/us-hungary-election-economy-idUSKCN1H90ES>.
- Szakacz, Gergely. “Investors Feel the Impact of Hungary’s Brain Drain.” *Reuters*, November 3, 2015. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hungary-labour-insight-idUSKCN0SS02E20151103>.
- Szelenyi, Ivan, and Tamás Csillag. “Drifting from Liberal Democracy: Traditional/Neo-Conservative Ideology of Managed Illiberal Democratic Capitalism in Post-Communist Europe.” *Intersection - East European Journal of Society and Politics* 1 (February 11, 2015): 1–31. <https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v1i1.28>.

- Tóth, -Csaba. “Full Text of Viktor Orbán’s Speech at Băile Tuşnad (Tusnádfürdő) of 26 July 2014.” *The Budapest Beacon*, July 29, 2014. <https://budapestbeacon.com/full-text-of-viktor-orbans-speech-at-baile-tusnad-tusnadfurdo-of-26-july-2014/>.
- “Truth to Tell: Populism and the Immigration Debate,” March 4, 2017. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2017/03/04/truth-to-tell-populism-and-the-immigration-debate/>.
- “Viktor Orban: Era of ‘liberal Democracy’ Is over | DW | 10.05.2018.” DW.COM. Accessed December 7, 2020. <https://www.dw.com/en/viktor-orban-era-of-liberal-democracy-is-over/a-43732540>.
- “Viktor Orban’s Oligarchs: A New Elite Emerges in Hungary | Financial Times.” Accessed November 24, 2020. <https://www.ft.com/content/ecf6fb4e-d900-11e7-a039-c64b1c09b482>.
- Visegrad Insight. “Viktor Orbán’s Work-Based Society - Work-Based Society in Hungary,” April 23, 2020. <https://visegradinsight.eu/true-colours-hungary-work-based-society/>.
- Walker, Shaun. “Orbán Deploys Christianity with a Twist to Tighten Grip in Hungary.” *The Guardian*, July 14, 2019, sec. World news. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jul/14/viktor-orban-budapest-hungary-christianity-with-a-twist>.
- Weldes, Jutta. “Constructing National Interests.” *European Journal of International Relations* 2, no. 3 (September 1996): 275–318. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066196002003001>.
- Weyland, Kurt. ““Neopopulism and Neoliberalism in Latin America: Unexpected Affinities.”” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 31, no. 3 (1996): 3–31.
- Wodak, Ruth. *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. 6 Bonhill Street, London EC2A 4PU: SAGE Publications, Ltd, 2001. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857028020>.
- Wodak, Ruth. *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean*. London: Sage, 2015.
- “XpatLoop.Com - Hungary Leads In Brain Drain Statistic.” Image. XpatLoop.com. Hungary. Accessed December 14, 2020. <http://xpatloop.com/channels/2018/11/hungary-leads-in-brain-drain-statistic.html>.
- Zúquete, José Pedro. “Missionary Politics – A Contribution to the Study of Populism.” *Religion Compass* 7, no. 7 (2013): 263–71. <https://doi.org/10.1111/rec3.12048>.

LIST OF APPENDICES

Table 1: Fidesz's Discursive Triad

35