

## WHAT WENT WRONG IN HUNGARY\*

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After adding no members in more than a decade, the European Union is now embarked on a fresh enlargement process. The goal is ambitious. Added to EU ranks may be Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, plus the six countries of the Western Balkans. Success in each of the nine will depend on whether it can consolidate democracy. The track record from the EU's past enlargement is promising. Ten of the dozen Central and East European countries admitted between 2004 and 2013 (when Croatia became the EU's newest member) have made fairly steady progress toward democratic consolidation. This includes Bulgaria and Romania (both admitted in 2007), which might have seemed hard to imagine as the twentieth century ended. Of the two more difficult cases, Poland has recently experienced turnover of power by means of the ballot. "The only exception is Hungary."<sup>1</sup>

That exception is a warning. What if Hungary was never a democracy? Hungary is not Russia, where the same small group of people wrestled each other for power and have remained in control through the end of the Soviet regime and all the way up until the present.<sup>2</sup> On the contrary, Hungary was the country that played a crucial role in bringing down the Iron Curtain while engineering a peaceful and consensual transition away from communism. Members of the communist Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party reorganized as the Hungarian Socialist Party only

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to lose the first national election, held in March 1990. After that, “a whole generation of leading communist politicians disappeared from politics.”<sup>3</sup>

Hungary’s current prime minister, Viktor Orbán, was a 26-year-old running for parliament in 1990 at the head of the party he still leads, Fidesz. That year’s fifth-place finish notwithstanding, Orbán seemed to represent a new generation of political leadership. He was about change, not continuity. It took him until 1998 to get into power, by which time an electoral pattern of left-right alternation seemed set in place. In 2002, the Socialists finished just behind Fidesz in the seat count, then joined with a much smaller third party to make Orbán an ex-premier. Deeply resenting this loss of power, upon his return to office in 2010 he moved swiftly to ensure that he would not have to repeat it. The process was a two-step: First he changed the requirements to change the constitution, then he changed the constitution.<sup>4</sup> Orbán’s democratic credentials had been an illusion, but he was not a member of the *nomenklatura* seeking to extend his influence; his authoritarianism was—and is—of a different kind.

Orbán’s singular success teaches us what the failure to democratize looks like. It also tells us what to look for in anticipating the failure of democracies. Hungarian elites built institutions that were formally democratic. The Hungarian people wanted to break from their communist past. But these things were never enough on their own to make a stable democracy. As EU policymakers look for signs of democratic consolidation elsewhere, they would be wise to pay attention to what went wrong in Hungary and to how early the signs of failure were visible. The Hungarian warning also resonates in the United States.

### **Start with How**

The transition from formal democracy to authoritarianism is essentially a form of state capture. The mechanism does not require a sophisticated understanding of democracy because it does not require democracy at all. Instead, as Kiran Auerbach and Jennifer Kartner explain, a turn to authoritarianism needs politicians who are willing and able to do four things at the same time: They must create a storyline or narrative that distracts people from the politicians' true intentions; they must find ways to neutralize or deactivate any potential controls or watchdogs; they must gain control over state resources and access to state institutions; and they must rewrite the rules in such a way as to ensure that they cannot easily be dislodged.<sup>5</sup>

This sequencing is important because it puts Orbán's 2010 election win and the introduction of the 2011 Fundamental Law that effectively put an end to Hungary's democracy-building attempt at the *end* of the story. By that time, the narrative was already well established, the watchdogs were mostly deactivated, Orbán and Fidesz's control over resources and penetration of institutions was manifest, and all that was left for him to do was to layer on supportive constitutional arrangements, to staff the non-majoritarian institutions such as the Budget Commission or the Hungarian National Bank with long-term appointees, to push through the cardinal laws that require a two-thirds majority to amend or repeal, and to funnel public monies to trusted individuals, firms, and foundations.<sup>6</sup> What the standard democracy indices record as "democratic backsliding" is not the narrative arc of the Hungarian tragedy, it is the aftermath.

The tragedy itself starts with Orbán's capture of Fidesz in the early 1990s. What works for a state can also work for any other institution, a political party included. Zsuzsanna Szelényi, who was a founding member of Fidesz in 1988 and later played a leading role in the opposition, offers a detailed description of how Orbán tried to disguise his true intentions while running for

party leadership. She also explains how he systematically cut people out of the inner circle, leveraged the party's resources—including its headquarters building—to generate private wealth, and ultimately accumulated so much power that Fidesz became an extension of himself and his closest allies.

The initial consolidation was quick. When Fidesz—the name is an acronym for Alliance of Young Democrats—stepped out of its first phase as a student movement and registered as a political party prior to the 1990 election, the leadership was collective. It was only after the election that the parliamentary group decided to make Orbán its leader. Rather than bringing the different parts of Fidesz together, Orbán began fostering divisions between those groups that supported him and those that were more likely to oppose his decisions. He also maneuvered to ensure that his principal rival within the party, Gábor Fodor, would not stand against him. “In spite of Orbán being the only candidate, the mood at the congress in February 1993 was extremely tense.”<sup>7</sup> Once Orbán was elected leader, he amplified his nationalist discourse and set about eliminating internal opposition. Fellow student dissidents who had been his partners in founding Fidesz now left as they realized Orbán's right-wing authoritarian inclinations. Many, including Fodor, joined the liberal Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ) in 1993.

Orbán became closer to the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP) and its nativist and religious doctrine, attending KDNP meetings that complained about Hungary's territorial losses at the hands of Western and Soviet decisionmakers during the 1946 Paris Peace Conference that settled post-WWII borders. None of this prepared Fidesz well for the 1994 parliamentary races—it finished in sixth and last place—but it did succeed in driving out potential rivals.

In our interviews of early witnesses, Orbán's pivot from taking over the party to taking over the country comes soon after the liberal minded Fidesz founders left, when Orbán shifted Fidesz further to the right and embraced an "ethnocultural" identity that broke with the party's roots in civic liberalism. This represents the start of a new distracting narrative that casts Orbán as the protector of Hungary's traditional Christian values in the fight against more secular political movements in the liberal center and postcommunist left.<sup>8</sup> It also started a polarization of Hungarian politics, with Orbán's supporters among the conservative Christian nationalists on one side, and the social liberals and former communists on the other.

By the time Orbán first came to power in 1998, he had already amassed considerable resources via Fidesz. He had also begun using businesses under his allies' control to influence the media. His appeals to cultural nationalism and Christian heritage, reinforced by his charisma, grew the Fidesz vote share from about 7 percent to just under 30 percent (with a seat share that went from 20 to 148 in the 386-member parliament). This was not enough for a Fidesz legislative majority, but it was enough to make Orbán the senior partner in a three-party governing coalition.

As prime minister, Orbán began centralizing power in his office and reshaping the government to wall it off from any influence by the parliamentary opposition.<sup>9</sup> As we have noted, Orbán named Fidesz loyalists to key posts in institutions such as the Constitutional Court and the central bank, thereby disabling as many watchdogs as possible. Not all these new appointments were self-dealing. Some eliminated older forms of corruption or patronage that were hindering the public administration at all levels of government. Even so, the point is that these institutions would not act as a check on Orbán's ambitions.<sup>10</sup>

Fidesz and its allies rewarded their business backers with government contracts. The ex-communists' influence over the press was broken via personnel appointments, selective public investments, and more government-friendly programming.<sup>11</sup> Orbán's self-dealing was hardly the only form of clientelism that Hungary has seen. But his effort at state capture was more comprehensive than other attempts. "The leaders of Fidesz [and its eventual partner, the Hungarian Civic Alliance or MPP] not only wanted to make democracy work, but also wanted to re-create it in their own image."<sup>12</sup>

What "democracy" would look like when recast in the image of Fidesz and its allies was something far from its liberal potential. But the path did not run smooth. Orbán failed to complete his capture of the state during his first term, and was narrowly voted out in the bitterly contested 2002 election. Neither he nor his supporters proved gracious in defeat.<sup>13</sup> In a practice not seen following earlier elections, Orbán's supporters lodged numerous complaints and protests; some even engaged in violent demonstrations.

This extraparliamentary engagement set the pattern for the politics of Fidesz in opposition. Orbán spent less time in parliament and more building popular support through local organizing while attacking the government via Fidesz-aligned media outlets. This approach failed to carry the 2006 election, but put him beyond challenge as leader of the opposition. It also cemented his role in his supporters' eyes as the defender of Christianity and traditional values against the "threat" posed by social liberals and former communists.<sup>14</sup>

That polarization is what set the stage for Orbán's return to power in 2010. This climax in the narrative started with a leaked 2006 recording of Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány as he bragged to his fellow Socialists—they had just won the election—of his success in lying to voters about the economy's true state and the scale of reforms required for Hungary to remain

competitive as a new EU member (admitted in 2004). The disillusionment the speech created on the center-left was enormous. Orbán and his media allies jumped on this leak to demonize the Socialists and rally support for Fidesz. He organized demonstrations, some of which became violent, and made no secret of his intention to centralize authority if he became prime minister again. Widespread unrest and the alleged threat of a return to communist rule became justifications for reasserting his authority. “For Orbán,” writes András Bozóki, “it is not freedom, but a tight-fisted leader who can assure order.”<sup>15</sup>

In 2010, this mobilization paid off. The Fidesz victory that year was overwhelming. Orbán’s party and its ally the KDNP won almost 53 percent of the vote and a 68 percent parliamentary supermajority—the seat bonus was courtesy of the disproportionate nature of Hungary’s mixed electoral system. With more than two-thirds of the unicameral parliament behind him, Orbán was able to erase the requirement for a four-fifths majority to amend the 1949 Fundamental Law (which had been revised in 1989 as communism fell). The last obstacle to his plan for a 2011 constitutional rewrite was gone. The opposition could object, but it could not stop him. During this second time in office, Orbán would succeed in capturing the state much as he had captured Fidesz.<sup>16</sup>

### **Now Think of Why**

The 2010 election took place in the shadow of the global economic and financial crisis. This dealt a powerful blow to the Hungarian economy and an even stronger one to Hungarian households that held mortgages in foreign currencies, usually Swiss francs, which appreciated sharply against the Hungarian forint. Having weathered the furor over his leaked speech three

years earlier, Gyuresány stepped down from the prime minister’s office in March 2009 as the downturn battered the country. “[It] became obvious to everyone that the Socialist and Liberal forces behind the government would suffer severe losses during the 2010 general elections.”<sup>17</sup>

Here again, Hungary is an exception. Other countries faced the same powerful economic and financial shock, with pain both national and personal. Many incumbents were swept out, often by wide vote margins. Politics became tumultuous. And yet in almost every wealthy country—including those that had only recently left communism behind—democracy proved resilient. Why did Hungarian democracy have a harder time developing and rooting itself than democracy in other countries?

The answer lies in the overlapping institutions and incentives that create democratic resilience. Democratic institutions ensure the peaceful transfer of power, which requires incumbents to lose gracefully but also gives them a real prospect of coming back. Those same institutions give politicians at least some voice (and influence) in opposition. To put it in Albert O. Hirschman’s terms, they remain loyal to the larger constitutional system but are free to voice dissent, and do not have to “exit” by quitting public life or fleeing the country.<sup>18</sup>

The relationship between voters and politicians is another source of resilience. Electoral accountability is an iterative game in which the voters should care at least as much about guarding their ability to influence future elections as they do about winning the current one. In addition, voters benefit from the rule of law that democracy establishes: Political leaders must submit to process both in how they are selected and in what they are allowed to do with their powers of office. This same notion of process—with the predictability that comes from formalized procedures—creates benefits for civil society and the economy and helps to underpin international commitments. In theory, virtually everyone in (and around) a democratic society



should have an interest in safeguarding the continued functioning of the system and in pushing back against those who would try to capture it. In Hungary, that theory did not apply.

Part of the problem lies in what János Kis refers to as a lack of “constitutional partnership.”<sup>19</sup> Political elites in Hungary never finished their constitutional transition from communism to democracy. They began well, with roundtable talks on amending the existing constitution to elect new political representatives, but they never agreed on a new democratic constitution to replace the one inherited from the communist era. This did not have to be fatal for Hungarian democracy. Democratic constitutional arrangements can build on predemocratic foundations—constitutional monarchy comes to mind.<sup>20</sup> But it did raise awkward questions about whether elites across the political spectrum held the same understanding of how democracy should function. It also raises questions about whether they would use democratic processes to consolidate this cobbled-together arrangement, or to work its downfall.

Such questions could only be answered collectively, Kis argues. Unfortunately, the window of opportunity for such collective deliberations closed before that could happen. The 1998 elections polarized Hungarian politics around competing conceptions of democracy in ways that made it hard to imagine reaching consensus on a shared constitutional arrangement. Orbán offered a strong state that would protect Hungarian society from the threat of social liberalism or, worse, a return of communism. His opponents in the Socialist Party sought a constitutional arrangement that would protect democracy from the social forces mobilized through the rhetoric of conservative Christian nationalism. Instead of seeing the incentives available through the peaceful transition of power, Hungarian politicians worried—not without justification—that their opponents would cut them out of decisionmaking and use state institutions against them. The Socialists tried to draft a new constitution but lacked a sufficient

majority without cooperation from Orbán and Fidesz. The imposition of the 2011 Fundamental Law put an end to any thought of consensus.

The Socialists and Fidesz offered very different conceptions of democracy and Orbán made no secret that his revolved around a program of strong leadership and state capture that looks to many definitively undemocratic. This raises the question why Orbán would win support from just over half of the electorate even in the middle of an economic crisis. The easy answer is economic voting: People may care about democracy, but they care even more about jobs, the cost of living, and income. Fidesz came to power in 1998 because of the mid-1990s economic crisis, and returned to power in 2010 for the same reason. There is good statistical evidence for this, and for the claim many Hungarians continued to support Fidesz for pocketbook reasons even after 2010.<sup>21</sup>

Economic voting is nevertheless only part of the explanation because it focuses on what motivates the people who do vote, and not on who is motivated (or not motivated) to turn out in the first place. In a stable democracy, you would expect prodemocratic voters to surge to the polls like antibodies in defence against undemocratic candidates. Hence, a good measure of “a country’s democratic resilience [is] its electorate’s willingness to punish a preferred party or candidate for undermining democracy.”<sup>22</sup> Alas, not all parts of the electorate are willing to play that defensive role. Voters on the right and those who are disenchanted by democratic politics are likely to support undemocratic candidates for a range of reasons that extends far beyond the economy. While the aggregate data suggest that economic voting predominates, experimental data show a more complex set of motives. These data also reveal a much deeper sense of “democratic indifference.” This suggests that turnout may have played an important role. By

Hungarian standards, both 1998 and 2010 were low-participation contests. Fidesz won in part at least because prodemocracy voters failed to show up.

Then again, it is also possible that not all Hungarians have the same conception of democracy. Christian Welzel argues that the same democratic procedures can be paired with a greater or lesser emancipation of society. In that sense, “people who defy emancipative values are no less likely to express support for democracy than anyone else.”<sup>23</sup> This is potentially problematic insofar as any decoupling of “emancipation” from “democracy” creates a permission structure in which people can seek to have the government control what they regard as deviant behavior while at the same time believing that government is democratic. Hence, Welzel argues, there is a weak and yet non-negligible tendency for democracies that are more liberal than their societies to become more autocratic.

According to Welzel’s reading of the World Values Survey data, post–Cold War Hungary falls squarely (and to a degree unusual for an EU country) in that cluster of societies with low emancipative values. Hence it is likely that the democratization of Hungary led to a liberalization of society that ran beyond what most Hungarians supported. “Populist leaders intuitively recognize such regime-culture misfits,” writes Welzel, and “capitalize on them in their campaigns, win elections this way and eventually cut back on democracy’s liberal qualities. Victor Orban’s [sic] propagation of ‘illiberal democracy’ is paradigmatic.”<sup>24</sup> The point is not that voters are moved more by cultural than economic issues, but that voters are motivated by cultural issues to discount the threat to democracy that a more authoritarian politician or party might represent. In turn, this cultural alignment makes it easier for such voters to engage in economic voting.

Civil society was unlikely to push back against this tendency to discount the threat to democracy in Hungary for at least three reasons. The first is that Hungary already had an extensive civil society before the fall of communism, but it was low-key and tended to focus on accommodating the regime rather than challenging it.<sup>25</sup> This go-along habit survived the fall of communism and the difficult transition to a market economy. Informal institutions and civil society groups were more prone to adapt to political changes rather than go (even if metaphorically) “to the barricades” to save democratic norms and institutions.

Second, and perhaps more important, informal institutions were subject to party capture. Orbán was hardly the only Hungarian politician to use party resources to penetrate both the economy and society. If anything, the Socialists were even more deeply embedded in these informal networks. This domination of civil society by political parties – known as *partyocracy* – reinforced polarization by squeezing out smaller political movements that lacked the size and influence to take over informal institutions. If parties wanted to maintain their respective networks, moreover, it was necessary to hang onto power. In Hungary, therefore, civil society may have had as much potential to act as a catalyst for the 2010 Fidesz transformation as it had to stand as a bulwark against it.

Certainly, on Orbán’s side, civil society was a source of strength. As Attila Ágh explains, by 2010 Fidesz “had embraced and colonized, step by step, a large part of the economic, social, political, and cultural sectors in Hungary.”<sup>26</sup> At least part of that strength was captured from the left. As Béla Greskovits explains: “During two terms in opposition in 2002–2010, Fidesz-MPSZ and its main ally, the Civic Circles Movement, worked hard to take control of civil society and dislodge the left and liberals.”<sup>27</sup> In turn, Orbán used his influence over these networks in civil society to frame his political message, deliver it to his target audience, and turn out the vote in

his favor. Once Fidesz was safely in control of parliament, those informal institutions began to adapt to the new political arrangement.

There were of course many elements in civil society that pushed back against this development. Many of those institutions and the people who staffed them were viciously attacked by Fidesz and its allies throughout this process. And Fidesz was not even the most extreme political movement in Hungarian politics. The point in making this argument is not to denigrate the efforts of those prodemocracy groups to or minimize the suffering of their members. Rather it is to highlight that the simple existence of civil society is no guarantee of democratic resilience. Like individuals, civil society groups have complex motives, and they react to many different incentives and permission structures. In Hungary, many of those incentives and permission structures were shaped under communism; their relationship with democracy cannot be taken for granted.

Third, Hungary's international ties and commitments not only gave outside forces such as the EU leverage on its government, but also gave the Hungarian government leverage on the EU and made the government more powerful vis-à-vis civil society. To join the EU, Hungary had to prove that it had made a transition to democracy, while EU membership was in turn expected to advance that transition's consolidation. The expectation was that the EU would help to fend off any threat to Hungary's democratic institutions. This expectation assumed that the most likely threats to Hungary were external, not internal.<sup>28</sup>

The reality is more complicated when the threats to democracy are homegrown because of the way Hungarian politics and politics at the European level are interconnected. When Hungary joined the EU, Fidesz joined the European People's Party (EPP) as a pan-European political family. The EPP gave Fidesz international legitimacy and even at times shielded Fidesz

from international criticism.<sup>29</sup> The EU also provides money and resources that whoever is in power in Hungary can use as patronage to help maintain its networks. Every EU member state has access to some EU resources, so Hungary is not unique. Corruption is in this sense an integral part of the EU system.

The EU struggles against its own tendency to support authoritarianism. Although, it has developed rules to sanction countries that jeopardize the rule of law and engage in democratic backsliding, European institutions have tremendous difficulty disciplining the governments of member states. Worse, the EU provides resources to support less-than-democratic regimes—Orbán’s government soaks up roughly US\$6.5 billion a year in EU cash and benefits—while at the same time providing an escape route for all those who want to flee authoritarianism. As a result, the EU finds itself in a sort of “authoritarian equilibrium” or “autocracy trap.”<sup>30</sup>

These three factors—civil society’s communist-era habits of complaisance, its openness to party capture, and the additional patronage resources sluiced to Budapest by the EU—explain why Hungary was so vulnerable to state capture by Fidesz. Hungarian politicians may have agreed to make a transition to democracy, but that commitment was more formal than real. Hungarian citizens embraced democracy, but they did so with differing interpretations of it. Meanwhile, informal institutions and civil society organizations gave politicians a channel through which to work their will and compete for influence, resources, and position. This competition polarized society around different conceptions of democracy in ways that prevented politicians from completing their democratic transition.

By 2010, Kis points out, “there was growing agreement, shared even by some columnists and pundits on the left that the constitution was somehow responsible for what was perceived as weakness and inefficiency of the state on the one hand and disintegration of social solidarity on

the other.”<sup>31</sup> Slightly more than half the voters, and much of civil society, opted for Fidesz and against the incumbent Socialists. Voters had varied reasons for choosing Fidesz, many of which revealed Hungary’s indifference toward democracy. Orbán took advantage of the opportunity handed to him, and made the state his captive.

### **Implications for Autocracy and Democracy**

This explanation for why Hungarian democracy failed is in many ways unexceptional. Hungary is hardly the only wealthy country where politicians disagree on what democracy’s rules should be and challenge existing constitutional arrangements. Hungarian voters are also not unique in prioritizing pocketbook issues, or in having values that they believe outrank civil liberties, at least in close cases, or in feeling that their political system is out of tune with their society. They are also not unique in operating through informal institutional relationships or civil society organizations that have little strong connection to democracy, any more than it is unique to see those institutions penetrated by political parties. The relationship with the EU is uniquely European, but the idea that external actors can little affect domestic politics is not, and neither is the notion that outside resources may heighten domestic political competition as they flow in.

If the “why” is not exceptional, the “how” is even less surprising. Most political leaders do not try to capture political parties so that they can capture the state, but enough do try to make the prospect seem familiar. Italy’s experience with Silvio Berlusconi was unnerving for many in that country, not least because he had the wealth and the media empire to build and finance his own political party without the need to capture it. In the end, Berlusconi did not manage to capture the Italian state, but he did succeed in dominating the country’s politics for the better part

of two decades. The situation with Donald Trump in the United States is even more unsettling for those who would preserve U.S. democracy. Few would doubt that Trump has captured the Republican Party or that he means to use it to attempt a rewrite of the political rules both in opposition and in government. Americans are wealthy, but that does not stop them from having other priorities at the ballot box than the protection of U.S. democracy.

Study of the Hungarian case suggests two important implications. The first is that autocracy may prove surprisingly resilient. Hungarians are not ignorant of what has happened to their democracy since 2010 and yet Fidesz continues to win elections and rack up super majorities in parliament. In 2022, it won 54 percent of the vote. As Kim Lane Scheppele notes: “While the Hungarian case has distinctive features, it demonstrates more generally how autocrats can rig elections legally, using their parliamentary majorities to change the law to neutralize whatever strategy the opposition adopts.”<sup>32</sup> Moreover, the longer more-autocratic politicians remain in office, the more technical obstacles they can throw in the path of any prodemocratic opposition. Hence, even a rising sense of disaffection with autocracy in the electorate may have little impact at the ballot box.

The second implication is that the best way to ensure the stability of democracy is through forward-looking analysis. Milan Svobik and his colleagues describe their research into the potential electoral support for authoritarian politicians as a “stress test.”<sup>33</sup> This is a good metaphor for the kind of analysis that is required. Rather than trying to assess democratic stability by focusing on the architecture of government institutions and their record of performance, it is necessary to lay out plausible scenarios and assess what might go wrong and how poor performance can be identified early enough to intervene with corrective action. Ideally, such analysis would also identify who is, or should be, best able to perform the intervention.



Developing the methodology for such forward-looking analysis would be challenging but seems imperative as the EU embarks on its new enlargement program. The criteria currently used to assess a candidate country's democratic status are designed to make sure that the countries that the countries joining are as similar as possible to those that are already members. These criteria cannot "ensure that [new members] *stay the same*."<sup>34</sup> Hungary looked like a democracy when it joined the EU in 2004, but Hungarian efforts to consolidate democracy were already failing. The European Union can learn from this experience.

#### NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, "Democracy's Surprising Resilience," *Journal of Democracy* 34 (October 2023): 5–20.

<sup>2</sup> Maria Snegovaya, "Why Russia's Democracy Never Began," *Journal of Democracy* 34 (July 2023): 105–18.

<sup>3</sup> Zsuzsanna Szelényi, *Tainted Democracy: Viktor Orbán and the Subversion of Hungary* (London: Hurst, 2022), 5.

<sup>4</sup> János Kis, "From the 1989 Constitution to the 2011 Fundamental Law," in Gábor Attila Tóth, ed., *Constitution for a Disunited Nation: On Hungary's 2011 Fundamental Law* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2012), 4.

<sup>5</sup> Kiran Rose Auerbach and Jennifer Kartner, "How Do Political Parties Capture New Democracies? Hungary and North Macedonia in Comparison," *East European Politics and Societies* 37, issue 2 (2023): 538–62.

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<sup>6</sup> Matthijs Bogaards, “De-democratization in Hungary: Diffusely Defective Democracy,” *Democratization* 25, issue 8 (2018): 1481–99.

<sup>7</sup> Szelényi, *Tainted Democracy*, 37; Paul Lendvai, *Orbán: Hungary’s Strongman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 29.

<sup>8</sup> Szelényi, *Tainted Democracy*, 67. See also Kim Lane Scheppele, “What They Say and What They Do: Populist Distraction and Dual-Use Political Technologies in the European Union,” *Journal of European Public Policy* (forthcoming).

<sup>9</sup> András Bozóki, “Consolidation or Second Revolution? The Emergence of the New Right in Hungary,” *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 24, issue 2 (2008): 200–201.

<sup>10</sup> Auerbach and Kartner, “How Parties Capture,” 549; Bozóki, “Consolidation or Second Revolution?” 206.

<sup>11</sup> Szelényi, *Tainted Democracy*, 235.

<sup>12</sup> Bozóki, “Consolidation or Second Revolution?” 213.

<sup>13</sup> Racz, “The Left in Hungary,” 761.

<sup>14</sup> Bogaards, “De-democratization in Hungary,” 1491; Bozóki, “Consolidation or Second Revolution?” 227.

<sup>15</sup> András Bozóki, “The Transition from Liberal Democracy: The Political Crisis in Hungary,” *Meditations* 26, issue 1 (2012): 10; Lendvai, *Orbán*, 73–82.

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<sup>16</sup> Péter Krekó and Zsolt Enyedi, “Explaining Eastern Europe: Orbán’s Laboratory of Illiberalism,” *Journal of Democracy* 29 (July 2018): 39–51.

<sup>17</sup> Bozóki, “Transition from Liberal Democracy,” 8.

<sup>18</sup> Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970).

<sup>19</sup> Kis, “From the 1989 Constitution,” 14.

<sup>20</sup> The refashioning of constitutional monarchies to bring them into line with democratic rules is explored in Alfred Stepan, Juan J. Linz, and Juli F. Minoves, “Democratic Parliamentary Monarchies,” *Journal of Democracy* 25 (April 2014): 35–51.

<sup>21</sup> Bermond Scoggins, “Identity Politics or Economics? Explaining Voter Support for Hungary’s Illiberal FIDESZ,” *East European Politics and Societies* 36, issue 1 (2022): 3–28.

<sup>22</sup> Milan W. Svobik, et al., “In Europe, Democracy Erodes from the Right,” *Journal of Democracy* 34 (January 2023): 6.

<sup>23</sup> Christian Welzel, “Democratic Horizons: What Value Change Reveals About the Future of Democracy,” *Democratization* 28, issue 5 (2021): 997.

<sup>24</sup> Welzel, “Democratic Horizons,” 995.

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<sup>25</sup> Bozóki, “Transition from Liberal Democracy,” 3.

<sup>26</sup> Attila Ágh, “The Decline of Democracy in East-Central Europe: Hungary as the Worst-Case Scenario,” *Problems of Post-Communism* 63, numbers 5–6 (2016): 280.

<sup>27</sup> Béla Greskovits, “Rebuilding the Hungarian Right Through Conquering Civil Society: The Civic Circles Movement,” *East European Politics* 36, issue 2 (2020): 249.

<sup>28</sup> Signe Larsen, *The Constitutional Theory of the Federation and the European Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 146.

<sup>29</sup> R. Daniel Kelemen, “Europe’s Other Democratic Deficit: National Authoritarianism in Europe’s Democratic Union,” *Government and Opposition* 52 (April 2017): 211–38.

<sup>30</sup> R. Daniel Kelemen, “The European Union’s Authoritarian Equilibrium,” *Journal of Public Policy* 27, issue 3 (2020): 481–99.

<sup>31</sup> Kis, “From the 1989 Constitution,” 13.

<sup>32</sup> Kim Lane Scheppele, “How Viktor Orbán Wins,” *Journal of Democracy* 33 (July 2022): 45–61.

<sup>33</sup> Svobik et al., “In Europe, Democracy Erodes from the Right,” 6.

<sup>34</sup> Larsen, *Constitutional Theory*, 135 (italics in original).