



The Rise of 'Illiberal' Democracy: The Orbánization of Hungarian Political Culture

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Abstract

This article examines the rise of the political right and far-right in Hungarian political culture. It highlights the contribution that world-systems analysis can bring to an historical sociological understanding of the concept of political culture, with a particular focus on contemporary Hungary. Many commentators are asking: how it can be that 30 years of democratic transition has led to the dominance in Hungary of a politics of intolerance, illiberalism and ethno-Nationalism, as manifested in both the current government, Fidesz, and the neo-fascist party, Jobbik. This paper argues that the correct way to frame the question is to ask: why, given the legacy of authoritarian social and political movements that have shaped Hungary's modern history, should a stable, liberal, political culture emerge after communism? Instead what the paper shows is that the goals of classical liberalism and a liberal political culture have long been destroyed by three factors: capitalism; the nation-state; and the persistence of traditional and sometimes irrational forms of social hierarchy, prejudice and authority. Hungary's current Orbánisation reflects an on-going tension between liberal and illiberal tendencies, the latter being part of the foundations of the modern world-system. Rather than viewing Hungary as a dangerous exception to be quarantined by the European Union, it should be recognised that the political right in Hungary is linked to broader trends across the world-system that foster intolerance and other anti-enlightenment and socially divisive tendencies. Political cultures polarised by decades of neoliberal reforms and in which there is no meaningful socialist alternative have reduced Hungary's elite political debates to the choice of either neoliberalism or ethno-nationalism, neither of which is likely to generate socially progressive solutions to its current problems.

Keywords: political culture, far-right, authoritarian right, neo-fascism, Hungary, Orbanization



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The on-going attempt by the Fidesz government to close down the Central European University in Budapest is a stark reminder of the illiberal nature of the Orbán-led government. It has led to international criticisms and massive protests within Hungary from citizens opposed to the authoritarian actions of the government. This raises questions which are frequently asked by commentators: After nearly 30 years of democracy, why has the democratic transition led to an authoritarian and increasingly ethno-nationalist government and the rapid emergence of a successful far right social movement/political party, Jobbik? This paper argues that it is more appropriate to ask a slightly different question: Why would one expect a stable liberal political culture to develop in Hungary after 40 years of authoritarian communism and the impact of its subsequent full integration into the modern world-system?

In the immediate aftermath of the democratic transition period in East and Central Europe (ECE) Western intellectual culture was dominated by ideas about the 'end of history' and the revolutionary spread of liberal, capitalist, democracy across the world, which would bring a universal panacea to all people: peace, prosperity and freedom (Lane 2005; Rustow 1990; Fukuyama 1989). This optimistic narrative faded quickly, to be replaced by pessimistic analyses about the consequences of the end of the Cold War, of which the most persistent has been the idea of a 'clash of civilisations.' This politically and rhetorically powerful thesis is articulated frequently by Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, and we can see how the dominant post-Cold War geo-political narratives moved from a utopian end of history story to a dystopian clash of civilisations in the span of a few years. These two narratives are played out in contemporary Hungarian political culture with the post-communist liberal-left (reform communists and neoliberals) insisting that Hungary "returns" to Europe and completes its modernisation into a fully-fledged neoliberal capitalist democracy. This is underpinned by a rhetorical commitment to universal liberal values of human rights, freedoms and markets (Kornai 1990b). At the same time the political right has articulated the idea of a strong national-developmental state to build up Hungarian capitalism, underpinned by an exclusive ethno-nationalist ideology, paraphrasing Huntington's cultural determinist thesis (Huntington 1993; Wilkin 2016; Chirot 2001).

One of the virtues of world-systems analysis as a framework for understanding what is taking place in Hungary is that it situates these events in their context as part of a political entity within the spatial and temporal configurations of the modern world-system (MWS) and the power relations that have structured it. This is always an on-going process of change and adaptation between a specific political entity and the structural properties of the world-system and its dominant actors. The dominant structures of the world-system are: capital accumulation, geo-political conflict, and what Wallerstein has called the 'geo-culture' – structures of knowledge that have served as the ideological foundations of the system, including: nationalism, racism, sexism and other socially divisive ideologies (Wallerstein 1991; Gagyí and Eber 2015).

At the same time one must also situate Hungary's transformation from communist to democratic system in the context of its place in the core-periphery relations that have structured the modern world-system. As Janos has argued in his account of the underdevelopment of ECE, the traditional role of the region has been to act as a source of cheap labor and raw materials to the powerful core economies of Western Europe (Berend and Ránki 1982; Berend and Ránki 1985; Janos 2000; 2001). Although this relationship has become more complicated in the twenty-first century as Western firms have sought to use Hungary, for example, as a transmission belt into the EU for the production of manufactured goods (cars in particular) and some high-tech goods (particularly computers) this changed relationship still rests upon the fact that labor in Hungary is comparatively cheap, de-politicised, non-unionised and subject to draconian forms of workplace discipline (Andor 1998; 2014, Bögel et al 1997; Bohle and Greskovits 2006). Further, as we will see, core-periphery relations have taken on ever more complex forms, shaped by the rise of increasingly dominant regional and global cities which tend to become the centers of what are termed "national economies," but which are in fact highly uneven patterns of social and economic organization. Thus, in Hungary post-communist economic activity is dominated by and around the capital Budapest (the Budapest Metropolitan Region), with former industrial regions left to wither and decay, creating a classic neoliberal pattern of uneven development. Such cities have tended to rebuild themselves as what Berend calls "service cities," dominated by the service economy (Enyedi 2009; Kiss 2010; Smith and Timár 2010; Berend 2009: 247-250).

The argument of this paper is that when one considers Hungary's development in the *longue durée* since the 1848 revolutions that brought republicanism and democracy to the fore across Europe, we see a narrative of quasi-feudalism, reactionary aristocracy, fascist movements, authoritarian state socialism, and finally a neoliberalism that has systemically dismantled Hungary's welfare system and re-feudalised its economy and society (Szalai 2005: 47-51). In the face of such a legacy why should it be expected that post-Communist Hungary would have a stable liberal political culture? Hungary's illiberal and 'Orbánised' political culture is held up by many left-liberal critics as something to be quarantined and beyond the pale, but it is in fact part of a broad spectrum of illiberalism in the MWS. It is simply more extreme and focused, but always in tension with the universal aspirations of classical liberalism and the Enlightenment (Cassirer 1951; Israel 2002; Sternhell 2010).

The paper begins by addressing the development of liberalism and illiberalism as political concepts before explaining how illiberalism is embedded in the foundations of the modern world-system. It then provides a brief overview of the key historical trends underpinning the evolution of Hungarian political culture. In short, it answers the question: how did Hungary's entrance into and position in the modern world-system affect its subsequent political cultural

development? The paper then provides an examination of the failures of Hungary's post-communist development, a problem experienced across ECE, which has allowed the opportunistic rise to power of Fidesz and Hungary's eventual Orbánization. The paper then situates Hungary's illiberalism in the context of the long-term persistence of illiberal tendencies across the modern world-system.

Part One: From Liberalism to Illiberalism – The Contested Nature of Liberalism in the Modern World-System

As Ramet has argued in a major work on the problems of post-communist ECE, the goals of classical liberalism are sharply in conflict with what has come to be called neoliberalism (Ramet 2007). The classical liberal revolution that took place across Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries, allied with the scientific revolutions driven by the works of Newton, Galileo, Kepler and others, created a new world view which placed humanity at the center of the universe and saw the emergence of a new kind of secular universal doctrine that argued for the equality of human beings in terms of their rights and liberties (Cassirer 1952; Sternhell 2010). In classical liberal thought, the good society would be one in which people were free to develop their talents and creative abilities, with as little intervention by external authorities as necessary (Korkut 2012; Humboldt 2008).

Ramet notes that classical liberal ideals are actually in conflict with what capitalism and the nation-state have become. The failure of classical liberalism is not because universal ideals are mistaken or impossible to defend rationally. On the contrary, classical liberalism failed because it ran into the realities of capitalism, nationalism, and the state, which have systemically undermined and perverted its universal and humanitarian ambitions (Ramet 2007). For some writers, including radical Hungarians, the logical development of classical liberalism was for it to evolve into a form of libertarian socialism (anti-state socialism) so that its ideals of universal human autonomy and fulfilment might be pursued (Bak, 1991; Jászi 1942; Guerin 1970; Bozóki and Sükösd 2006; Prichard et al 2017). The idea of libertarian and authoritarian socialism emerged out of the tumultuous split in the First International which took place in 1872 (Graham 2015; Eckhardt 2016). Although this is a complicated story, it revolved around 3 main issues: first, the role of political parties in bringing about socialism as opposed to it being the outcome of autonomous working class movements; second, the role of the state in a future socialist society; and finally, the means by which a socialist society could be achieved. All of these issues became starkly clear with the emergence of Bolshevism and the Russian revolution in 1917, when the Bolshevik party used the state, violence, and coercion of autonomous working-class activity to take power (Rai 1917; Maximoff 1979). As Rai has recently argued, the Russian revolution was largely driven by mass nonviolent resistance and civil disobedience, it took the

authoritarian Bolshevik party to take over and subvert these essentially libertarian movements (Rai 2017).

In fact, the roots of illiberalism in the modern world-system are a reaction, in part, to the threat that liberalism presented to established social hierarchies, secular or religious, in the 17th and 18th centuries. The idea that all human beings were the bearers of rationality and to be considered equal before the law was a revolutionary doctrine that posed severe threats to the established social order. Further, the idea of a natural and universal moral law that could be used to judge the actions of *all* people was also a fundamental challenge to the arbitrary power and privilege of established authorities, secular or religious (Ramet 2007). Subverting, co-opting and blocking the fulfilment of these ideals were priorities for dominant social orders across Europe.

The first obstacle to classical liberal goals has been the development of the modern nation-state. This has had two profound consequences. First, it has tended to divide people into exclusive communities based on biological or cultural characteristics, the very antithesis of the universal aspirations of Enlightenment thought. Borsody, echoing the Hungarian sociologist Jászi, notes that the extension of the nation-state form across ECE after WW1 at the expense of a federal structure which might have contained nascent ethno-nationalist ideologies, has proven to be a tragedy for the region (Borsody 1993: 292-294; Jászi 1923). The potentially destructive power of nationalist ideology is well understood (Mestrovic, 2004). However, as Mestrovic argues it remains the dominant form of social and political identity in the modern world-system and the greatest obstacle to the emergence of any form of secular, universal and humanitarian system. As Rudolf Rocker argued, in practice nationalism is the secular religion of the state, fusing disparate groups of people together under the direction of political and bureaucratic elites (Rocker 1937).

The second factor undermining the goals of classical liberalism was capitalism itself, neoliberalism in its current guise. As Ramet says, in ECE the consequence of neoliberal reforms and the subsequent transformation of the region have produced social divisions that make the realisation of classical liberal goals extremely difficult (Ramet 2007). Indeed the social polarization generated by neoliberal policies of privatization, deregulation and liberalization of the economy, allied with the dismantling of welfare systems, has provided fuel for the current illiberal right across ECE (Mudde 2007; Ramet 2010; Minkenberg 2013). Neoliberal reforms, taking different shape in different states, have nonetheless tended to valorise inequality, undermine the rule of law by producing kleptocratic political-state systems, and dismantled welfare systems that might have guaranteed a decent quality of life to all citizens during the transition (Birch and Mykhenko 2009; Magyar 2016; Pittaway 2004; Bohle and Greskovitz 2012). Corrupt privatisation programs across the region have produced new forms of political and economic elites who have gained great wealth at the expense of their fellow citizens (Tökés

1996: 434; Marangos 2005; Gagyí and Eber 2015; Frydman 1993: 125; Higley and Lengyel 2002). As Ramet notes, this is not compatible with the vision of a good society in classical liberalism.

Finally, classical liberalism failed because it was unable to fully overcome the deeply engrained forms of social hierarchy, prejudice and superstition that have long preceded the rise of the modern world-system. The persistence of social hierarchies based on authoritarian forms of knowledge and belief systems is a marked feature of the modern world-system and a major challenge to the idea of universality first articulated in Enlightenment thought (Bookchin 1982). These factors have all served to act as ideological foundations in the modern world-system and also to generate the grounds for the persistence of illiberal and often irrational social and political movements. The current concern with the spread of right-wing political and religious populism is one manifestation of this persistent illiberalism, threatening as it does civil liberties, minority rights, and social equality, whether in Orbán's Hungary, Trump's United States, or in territories controlled by ISIS.

Thus, this reading of the development of liberalism in the modern world-system is of a continual tension between classical liberal and illiberal tendencies. In short, the promise of the Enlightenment has always had to struggle against the persistence and prejudices of anti-Enlightenment forces, and in contemporary Hungary the latter are dominant (Sternhell 2010). These tensions in liberal thought have manifested themselves in what Wolin sees as the liberal fear of the masses, an idea that he traces to Hobbes (Wolin 2009). This fear of a mass democracy that might destroy the freedoms that liberalism had promoted led liberal elites to defend an elitist version of democracy in order to keep these freedoms in place (Higley and Burton 2006). Representative democracy became the classic liberal form of government and democracy, placing power in the hands of elected political elites and reducing the role of the public to one of voting in elections rather than participation in governance areas of life such as the economy or community self-determination (Schumpeter 2013; O'Toole 1977; Pateman 1970; Prichard et al 2017). Classical liberals believed in the freedom and the rationality of all human beings, but at the same time they feared that a majority would lack the *qualities* needed to govern a democracy. So a liberal political system was needed which would keep the potentially irrational masses at bay, lest they challenge the fundamental things that liberals viewed as sacrosanct, most importantly respect for private property. Wolin's point is an important one, then, as it illuminates a contradiction at the heart of Classical liberal thought – in practice it both requires and legitimizes a form of elite-led democracy, despite espousing an egalitarian commitment to universal rationality and individual liberty. As many Hungarian commentators note, this model of elite-led democracy was particularly suited to a Hungarian political culture that had long been dominated by intellectual elites (Tökés 1999; Lomax 1997b 1999; Bozóki 1999). Having set out

the relationship between classical liberalism, neoliberalism, and illiberalism, we can turn now to the evolution of Hungarian political culture since the revolutions of 1848 to trace the way in which liberal values have been checked by illiberal social forces.

Part Two: Methodological Nationalism and Hungarian Political Culture in the Modern World-System

Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. And just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionizing themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honoured disguise and borrowed language. Karl Marx, *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1963).

Marx's statement is an apt description of the development of democratic political culture in Hungary since the end of communism. Both main political groupings (liberal-left, conservative and nationalist right) have embraced ideas from Western political culture that have dominated mainstream political discourse, more or less since the end of the Cold War, in particular the two themes of a *clash of civilisations* and the *end of history*. In distinct ways, these two themes have provided a discursive framework that has shaped the parameters of mainstream political debate in many parts of the world-system, but especially in the core. To paraphrase Marx, then, it is the traditions of past generations that press most upon Hungary's nascent democratic political culture and the legacy of authoritarian rule, most firmly imposed under communism, which has helped to shape the rise of illiberalism in the current period. This need not have been the case, however. One cannot simply read history from past traditions, as social change and continuity is always a question of the conjunction of necessary and contingent factors. In this case, as has been noted by many writers, the lack of support from the core for economy, social welfare, and democratic institutions across ECE has been a pivotal factor in the weakness of liberal ideas and practices across the region. The incorporation of Hungary into the modern world-system (the latter understood as a structural relationship building dependent relations between core, periphery and semi-periphery) allied with its national political cultural traditions provides the

most persuasive framework for understanding the emergence of illiberalism there. It is the relationship between these world-systemic structural factors and the specifics of local history that have to be drawn out in an understanding of the development of particular political cultures. As a consequence, one should not expect to see the *exact* same outcomes repeated endlessly across ECE, for example, as local traditions, habits, territories, and resources vary markedly. That said, it is also quite clear that across ECE the political right in nationalist and illiberal forms are increasingly ascendant in Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. World-systems analysis helps make sense of these regional developments, because it allows analysts to move across different levels, from the local to the national to the regional, examining patterns of economic, political and social change, and crucially, drawing out the relations between them.

Approaches based upon what Wallerstein has called methodological nationalism, by contrast, as manifest in such disciplines as comparative politics, democratisation and modernisation theories, comparative sociology, political science and international relations, start from an assumption of sovereign states rather than by situating states in the broader structural context of the world-system (Wallerstein 1974; 2004). Thus, the advantage of world-systems analysis as a framework for understanding the development of illiberalism in Hungary is precisely that it situates Hungary in a structural context of material and ideational forces that have direct impact on its post-communist development and over which any sovereign national government has limited control. This includes such matters as the flow of investment into and out of the country, its alignment with regional and global military forces, and the relationship of the Hungarian government to EU institutions and national governments. To start an analysis of Hungary with the sovereign state as the basic unit is a fundamental error: the sovereign nation-state has always to be understood in relationship to the political-economic structures of the world-system. The reification of national history has been an important ideological strand of the dominant geoculture of the world-system, presenting a static and ahistorical account of national identity that can be seen quite clearly on the political right in contemporary Hungary with their claim to represent the real Hungary against its enemies. By contrast, world-systems analysis emphasises the fluid nature of social identities and the transient nature of social relations and structures – they have a history that transcends nation-state borders.

The concept of political culture is relatively under-examined in world-systems analysis, though there is no necessary reason for that to be the case. Critics often claim that world-systems analysis is macro-sociology unconcerned with the narrative and details of concrete historical events and processes. In fact, world-systems analysis can be seen as following the dictum laid down by C. Wright Mills, who talked about the sociological imagination as being one that is able to locate the personal in the broader structural context in which it is located: biography is always a part of, and embedded within, social structures that are historically rooted. Thus, recent work in

world-systems analysis has sought to develop this specific theme as evidenced in the writings of Derluguian, Wilkin and McQuade (Derluguian 2005; McQuade 2015, Wilkin 2010). As Blokker notes in his work on ECE, there is always more than one political culture, there are multiple and overlapping political cultures that can and do transcend nation-state boundaries (Blokker 2008; 2009). The post-communist emergence of far-right social and political networks across the region and across the European Union (EU) illustrates this (Goettig and Lowe 2014; Virchow 2013; Marche 2012). In this sense a political culture should not be seen simply as a bounded unit contained by a nation-state but always in relation to flows of ideas, people, communication and commodities across the MWS. The task for world-systems analysis is to develop plausible narratives that can account for the development of specific political cultures in the context of their relationship to broader regional and global social relations (Lane 2013).

There are a number of political, economic, social and cultural factors that have dominated Hungary's evolution since the 1848 revolutions, and these brought the possibility of republican democracy to the fore across Europe. In outlining these we can see the socio-historic context in which Hungary has been incorporated into the modern world-system and the social forces that have shaped the development of its political culture. In so doing, it becomes clearer that the democratic and libertarian elements in Hungarian society have always faced a dominant mixture of authoritarian and reactionary social groups that have opposed the possibility of liberal freedoms taking firm root in the country. To be clear, this is not a culturalist argument that says that the failure of liberalism and democracy in Hungary is because the Hungarian people aren't capable of realising it due to their cultural differences: illiberalism has been a persistent feature of the world-system. The current development of illiberalism in Hungary and across the world-system is a recent instance of these illiberal and anti-Enlightenment social forces.

Taking the defeat of the 1848 revolution as our starting point we can see that there are broadly 4 major social-historic periods that have shaped the development of Hungary as a nation-state.

1. Restoration of the monarchy and the establishment of the Austro-Hapsburg Empire

The defeat of the democratic revolutions of 1848 across Europe led to the persecution of liberal and republican forces in Hungary and the restoration of a reactionary and absolute form of monarchy which eventually allied with the Austrian empire after 1867 (Berend 2003; Gerő 1995; Taylor 1954). The nature of this political order was reactionary and anti-modern, resisting the industrialisation of the country and attempting to retain classic feudalistic relations with political power resting in the hands of a largely unaccountable aristocratic social order. It was also, understandably, deeply hostile to liberal ideas of universality and equality, preferring instead to entrench social life in traditional social hierarchies shaped

through the church and respect for secular authority in the forms of the King and the aristocracy (Molnár 2001; Janos 2000; Gerő 1995; Deák 2001). Nonetheless, this period saw Hungary develop in world-system terms into a classic dependent role with the core regions of Western Europe, providing raw materials, agricultural produce and some industrial goods (Janos 2000). The dilemma for the ruling reactionary social forces was how to manage a gradual transformation of the economy into a capitalist system while at the same time resisting the demands of emerging social groups for political democracy. This became more acute after the formation of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1867, which saw the development of industrial production in Hungary leading to the formation of a bourgeois class (Chirot 1991; Berend 2003; Janos 2000).

2. WW1 and the inter-war turbulence

The defeat of the Austro-Hungarian forces in WW1 saw the massive transformation of Hungary and the Empire at Versailles where it suffered drastic loss of territory and population through the Treaty of Trianon (Kontler 1999: 342; Wolin 2011). This left a lasting legacy of resentment amongst the country's right-wing social forces, which still manifests itself rhetorically today with both Fidesz and Jobbik. The brief interlude of a Bolshevik style Hungarian Republic under the leadership of Bela Kun (1919) was swiftly ended by both Hungarian military forces under the leadership of Admiral Horthy and external actors who feared the spread of socialism across the region. The defeat of the Bolshevik Republic was followed by widespread slaughter of communists, socialists and Jews, an anti-Semitism which has been a significant cultural factor in Hungarian political history (Molnár; Kovrig; Kontler 1999; Janos 2000; Száraz 1987; Gerő 1995; Braham 2000). The restoration of a reactionary political system under Horthy's leadership was meant to resist moves towards greater modernisation of economy and society, with both communists and fascists viewed as potential revolutionary threats to the established order (Chirot 1991: 219–221). Indeed, the later leader of Hungary's brief fascist regime, Szálasi, was imprisoned by the Horthy regime in 1939 for the threat that his party, Arrow Cross, presented to the established order. In this period, even the relatively modest liberal goals of free and open democratic elections and accountable government were forcefully resisted and as the economy suffered in the 1930s the political right sought traditional scapegoats to explain this in the form of Hungary's then large Jewish and Roma community. Horthy's reactionary regime soon found that fascist revolution was more acceptable than a move towards a more liberal polity, and an alliance with the Axis ensued. As is almost invariably the case, conservative and reactionary governments acted as a gateway to the rise of fascism (Blinkhorn 2003; Paxton 2007).

3. WW2 and fascism in Hungary

WW2 presented an opportunity for the Horthy regime to reclaim territory lost after WW1 in return for support of the axis powers. Although Horthy appears to have been sceptical about the Axis he was nonetheless prepared to go along with its targeting of Jews, Roma and other groups in order to defend Hungary's political system. In terms of cultivating racist and other prejudices the established churches in Hungary were pivotal institutions of reactionary and intolerant thought, as indeed they have become again after the end of communism (Molnár 2001; Hanebrink 2006).¹ Horthy was replaced by the Nazis in 1944 for attempting to broker a deal with the allies in the face of the by then inevitable defeat of fascism in Europe. But he was replaced by Szálasi, a fascist whose enthusiasm for the Final Solution was implacable. As Mann notes, at times SS officers in Hungary had to restrain the Hungarian forces from their enthusiastic slaughter of the Jewish population, and around 450,000 Jews were ultimately murdered. The uncontrolled nature of these actions was too much for the more systematic, ordered and bureaucratic Nazis to tolerate (Mann 2004; Lozowick 2005; Kontler 1999; Braham 2000). The defeat of the fascist government by the invading Russian army in 1945, bringing its own violent retribution against the Hungarian population, was too late to save Hungary's Jewish and Roma populations.

4. A democratic interlude and the triumph of authoritarian communism.

The end of WWII saw a brief period of democracy emerge in Hungary, which led to the election of the Independent Smallholders Party between 1945 and 1947. At the same time, the Russian army remained in the country and by then the division across the newly defined geo-political map of Europe was becoming clearer: Russian forces across central Europe were supporting the overthrow of liberal democracy and the imposition of authoritarian socialist republics (Wilkin 2016). As noted earlier, socialism had long been divided into authoritarian and libertarian approaches, with the former viewing the state as the mechanism by which socialism could be achieved and the political party as the instrument for leading the working classes to socialism, often draping itself in uncomfortable nationalist rhetoric (Kemp 1999). By contrast, the libertarian socialist tradition has been anti-statist and against *all* forms of social hierarchy and division, arguing that the emancipation of the working classes could only be brought about by their own actions and not by an external agent, be it a socialist state or party. This is often termed as being a commitment to a prefigurative ethics, which says that the means by which social change is generated will have a direct relationship to the

¹ To be clear, this is not to suggest that all religious institutions or beliefs encourage xenophobia or are reactionary, merely to note that in Hungary and other ECE nation-states this has often tended to be the case.

outcomes. It is therefore a rejection of an instrumental view of the means by which social change can be generated, as libertarian critics have argued can be found in authoritarian socialist practices (Bookchin 1982; Guerin 1970; Kenez 2006; Prichard et al 2017). This was to be Hungary's fate in 1947, and the authoritarian regime that emerged after the Communist Party won the 1947 election followed a familiar Stalinist pattern with an extensive secret police force, repression of dissent, the dissolution of political parties, and the establishment of gulags for dissidents. Authoritarian socialism had won. The death of Stalin in 1953 and the apparent loosening of social control after Khrushchev came to power saw the Hungarian revolution emerge in 1956. This was to be a radical and dramatic event similar in significance to predecessors such as the Paris Commune and the Spanish civil war, which saw working class Hungarians trying to build a new political order based on radical forms of direct democracy, workers control of industry, and the self-management of communities. This was far beyond any liberal conception of representative democracy and in keeping with the libertarian socialist tradition that had been crushed in many states after WW1 by their authoritarian opponents, communist and capitalist alike (Van der Walt and Schmidt 2009; Lendvai 2010). Unsurprisingly, the Soviet authorities demanded the end of the revolution—which was officially re-defined as a “counter-revolution”—and used its troops to crush the workers revolt (Nemes 1973). Although there was a gradual loosening of social and economic control by the Kadar government after the revolution was crushed until the fall of communism in 1990, the principle of the leading role of the authoritarian socialist state remained in place. The workers had to be guided, at best, by the party, lest they wander from the true path.

When one views the historical narrative of the evolution and transformation of Hungarian political culture since 1848 what is striking is the persistent attempt by very different social forces, both Hungarian and external, to deny the very things that classical liberalism brought to the fore: individual liberty, equality, the need for autonomous civil society and self-determination. Although at times and places, most importantly in the 1956 revolution, this authoritarian legacy was resisted, its historical weight must be considered when evaluating the development of post-communist Hungary. Communism, like its predecessors, sought to eliminate a civil society in which autonomous social forces might develop (Lomax 1997a: 53). This control was challenged by various groups in Hungarian society: in the workplace, by the young, and in everyday leisure activities, but nonetheless it had a profound effect in eroding the natural social instincts for trust, sympathy and cooperation which tend to shape social life (Kropotkin 2012; Ward 2017; Kürti 2002; Arpad 1995). To assume that liberal social forces would simply emerge after the end of communism without significant economic support from

the core was optimistic, if not utopian. Indeed, what is clear is that one of the legacies of communism in Hungary was both to undermine the natural inclination for autonomous and spontaneous actions in civil society and to reinforce the power and control of elites (Sissenich 2007: 161-175). Hence the Orbánization of the country has to be situated in this longer-term socio-historic context of illiberal forces that have shaped Hungary's evolving political culture.

Part Three: Democrats against Democracy

The Orbánization of Hungarian Political Culture

Demobilising Democracy – Elites after the Transition

As Bozóki notes of the transition period of 1989-1990, the new political elites, like their predecessors, wanted to demobilise the nascent civil society movements that had helped to undermine communist rule, lest they lead to people making demands that went beyond the variants of neoliberal reform packages that they were offering in the forthcoming elections. The new political elites were, as he tellingly observes, democrats against democracy (Bozóki 1992; Renwick 2002; Tökés 2002: 109; Arato 1999: 235). Hungary was to be fully re-integrated into the world-system, primarily through its relations with the EU, in a role that was to undermine the possibility for a liberal political culture to be established. This also encouraged the rise of the illiberal right in the context of a historically discredited and failed political left. The model of democracy was to be a Schumpeterian one in which the masses were to be invited to participate in elections, but in which any greater expression of democracy was to be prohibited (Schumpeter 2013).

The 20-year period of democratic transition that shaped Hungary between 1990 and Fidesz's second election victory in 2010 was marked by a number of factors. As happened elsewhere across ECE, the formation of new political parties proved to be a fluid process, with new political actors attempting to define themselves in the face of both the communist past and in relation to what they saw as the promise of integration into Europe and perhaps the EU itself. NATO Membership, too, was seen by all parties as the means by which resistance to future Russian intervention could be secured (Tökés 1996; Simon 2003). Fidesz is a good example of this as it started life as a party established by a group of dissident university students who were committed to a form of neoliberalism that drew inspiration from the Thatcher administrations in the UK in the 1980s (Fowler 2004). It was only after their electoral failure in 1990 that Orbán and his immediate allies sought to transform it into a Conservative party more in the manner of the German Christian Democrats, in an opportunistic move to seize the hegemonic position on the nationalist right-wing of Hungarian politics, a move that they successfully completed with electoral victory in 1998 (Korkut 2012).

As in other ECE countries the political culture that emerged in the transition period was to be built upon a legacy of communism that had discouraged or made very difficult spontaneous and autonomous forms of civil or political association. The transformation of *Solidarność* in Poland from a form of libertarian socialist social movement into a vehicle for the authoritarian instincts of its leader, Lech Walesa, and its subsequent support for radical neoliberal shock therapy, is a good illustration of the way in which powerful social movements were co-opted in this period (Gagyí and Eber 2015; Ost 2005; Kowalik 2012).

The impact of the democratic transition across the region has been measured in a number of trends including widening inequality, deepening health and social problems, the persistence of patterns of discrimination, and violence towards minorities. In Hungary this has included widening regional inequalities as the country rapidly de-industrialised (Bohle and Greskovitz 2012; Andor and Summers 1998; Förster et al 2005). In particular, it can be seen in the retreat in the position of women in post-communist societies (Haney 2002; Ramet 2007). Communist systems across ECE had made significant steps in both modernising countries and promoting forms of equality that were later discarded in the newly democratic countries (Fodor 2002). The evidence shows that across the region it is women that have been the biggest losers in the transition to democracy, whether measured in terms of wealth, income, occupation, positions in public life, declining health, or the increase and normalisation of domestic violence (Fábián 2009; Ramet 2007). If communism had ultimately been defeated in its authoritarian efforts to force forms of equality upon people in the region, democracy simply abandoned such goals altogether and retreated behind the barrier of the invisible hand of the market, the rule of law and individual liberty. A newly liberated people were to discover that their fates were to be determined by a form of capitalist market relations that paid little regard for social welfare.

At the same time as democracy emerged in Hungary, and with initially popular enthusiasm as measured in terms of turnout at elections, a number of other trends emerged which did much to puncture the euphoria around the transition. Almost immediately, neo-fascist and anti-Semitic movements began to emerge in Hungary and across the region, often rooted in a youth skinhead sub-culture, but also manifesting itself in the rhetoric and political movements led by intellectuals such as István Csurka (Feldman and Jackson 2014; Mudde 2014). The attempt by communist rulers to eliminate fascism had failed in Hungary and across the region. Equally striking was the rapid revival of religion and nationalism in the country and region, often in extremely intolerant and xenophobic forms (Ramet 1998).² With the left discredited as a political force, this left the development of Hungary's political system to be dominated by either

² Again, and to clarify, this is not to imply that any religious movement must be intolerant or xenophobic, but simply to note that in the case of Hungary that this has been a powerful trend.

neoliberal parties such as the reform communists and liberal parties (MSZP and SZDSZ) who governed between 1994-98 and 2002-2010; or conservative-nationalist coalitions led initially by the MDF who governed from 1990-94, with Fidesz in office between 1998-2002, leading a coalition including the Christian Democrats and the Smallholders Party (Körösényi 1999a; Tökés 1996). The liberalism that was being advocated by the left-liberal parties was in part to gain legitimacy with the EU and international financial institutions. It was strictly a form of neoliberalism that would impose austerity on the Hungarian population in return for the promise of securing membership of the European Union (EU) and NATO. The problem was that these austerity policies were against what the majority of the Hungarian population actually wanted at the time. It was a question of democrats (elites) making decisions against democracy (the masses), as Bozóki describes it (Bozóki 1999). Indeed, the new political elites emerging in Hungary hoped that their counterparts in the West would assist them in establishing stable liberal democracies. Instead, the true goal was to incorporate the region into a dependent relationship with the core of the world-system—effectively a re-feudalisation of ECE (Stephan 1999: 235-248; Lane 2010 2012; Hudson 2015; Berend and Ránki 1974).

Hungary's full integration into the modern world-system took place at a time when the forms of social democracy that many Hungarian had hoped would be built in the country were under attack across the nation-states of the core, with wages, working conditions, and welfare being challenged, curbed, and rolled back in the UK, France, the United States and elsewhere (Bauman 2004). In such a moment, the balance of social and political forces meant that it was most unlikely that Hungary would be able to do anything other than embrace the same kind of neoliberal policies. The main conflict in the world-system, then, was between populations who were demanding more spending on public services (health, education, welfare, housing, transport) and capital, which was demanding the very opposite. The capture of political systems by financial elites, as noted by Wolin, meant that policy in the region as across the core of the world-system was to be driven by the agenda of financial services industries rather than the general population: profit was to trump human need as a political priority (Wolin 2010).

What ensued in Hungary was a pattern seen across ECE and a pattern indicative of the impact of neoliberal reforms. Deepening inequality and the redistribution of wealth from the majority to the newly formed political and economic elites led to the establishment in most countries of political parties heavily linked with or funded by oligarchs whose interests were largely neoliberal: lower taxes, reduced public services, removal of the rights of workers, and low wages (Bohle and Greskovitz 2013). Indeed this “race to the bottom” culture has been a classic feature of neoliberalism in the world-system, distinguished by the drive to lower wages, render working conditions precarious, and reduce the power of unions in the workplace (Bohle 2009). Political parties that might oppose such policies face the threat of being attacked by

capital and major institutions for not following the norms of “good governance,” which also means a loss of legitimacy in the eyes of the media. Such political figures are usually deemed to be causing concern for the markets and are described as either populists or extremists who threaten political stability (Rupnik 2007). This notion of good governance largely reflects an idealised view of how markets and representative democracy function, what Andor and Summers call “Western models, Eastern realities” (Andor and Summer 1998: 58). It provides an ideological justification for attacks on disobedient governments who do not tackle what are seen as the most important issues of good governance: to curb public spending, dismantle and privatise welfare, deregulate the economy, and implement a number of pro-capital and anti-labor policies (Körösiényi 1999b; Kornai 1990).

Although privatisation was slower in Hungary than elsewhere across the region and its version of shock therapy had to wait until 1996, nonetheless the general liberalisation of the economy had significant results (Marangos 2005; Andor and Summer 1998). The result was an unstable economy that became one of the most open in the world. Hungary was largely dependent on securing external financial investment, particularly from the EU and Japan (Than 2016; Nagy 2005; Lane 2012 2012). This placed clear limits on the capacity of any government to pursue policies other than those that reflected the interests of the international financial sector. The norms of good governance had been determined by political elites of the core, not the periphery or semi-periphery. Hungary’s political elites had little room to maneuver on this, even if they had wanted to.

Having experienced periods of massive contraction (1990-97) the economy began to grow in the early twenty-first century but from a very low base and always subject to sharp swings between growth and contraction (Marer 1999; Andor and Summers 1998). No government was able to address this issue in anything other than a temporary way, as it was not a factor that could be rectified by reforms to the Hungarian economy alone, subject as it was to the financial flows of the world-system. Rather, the dramatic shifts in the economy were being driven by a globally deregulated financial system that was shaped by the search for capital accumulation. Unproductive, rather than productive capital, was in the ascendancy across much of the world-system, in which parasitical institutions (financial, insurance, land-owning) used their power to drain the productive economy through rent-seeking activities.³ This took the form of establishing credit-interest-debt relations as established through the financial and insurance sectors as well as

³ I use the term parasitical in the sense in which classical political economists from Smith to Mill used it as being one to describe unproductive capital, which was a drain on both labor and productive (manufacturing, agricultural) capital (Hanauer 2016)

rent from a booming and out of control property market pricing ordinary people out of the housing market or into massive debt (Hudson 2015).

Hungary's economy could hardly escape these trends, and the development of the post-communist economy saw the destruction of unprofitable industries that were eventually replaced by a service economy and a small high-tech sector that operated as a relatively cheap transmission belt for west European multinationals targeting the EU market (Andor and Summers 1998). As seen elsewhere, neoliberal policies create distinctive spatial patterns: areas of prosperity (a core, usually around the major or capital city) surrounded and supported by layers and regions of de-industrialisation and inequality and poverty (the periphery) (Timár and Váradi 2001). The social polarisation caused by these policies has generated an important shadow economy across the region shaped by organised crime that has used killings, corruption and violence to build its power (Kampfner 1994: 207-218; Pittaway 2004). In Hungary, for example, this has seen the rise in the sex trafficking of men, women and children from vulnerable communities (Kligmann and Limoncelli 2005; U.S. Department of State 2016). As Ramet notes, there must be a moral basis for sweeping social and economic transformations if they are to take root in a population and gain legitimacy (Ramet 2007). Instead, neoliberal reforms across the region and in the core have encouraged a form of consumerism in which consumers are encouraged to define what is good through personal gratification. The backdrop to this is a global consumer culture which, as McGuigan notes, has been narcissistic and hedonistic rather than one which promotes ideas of social solidarity (McGuigan 2014; Fromm 2012: 33-35). As if to confirm this anti-social outlook the neoliberal writer Åslund calls welfare systems in the region "traps" as they promise people things that cannot be afforded, most obviously a decent quality of life for all (Åslund 2013). As McGuigan has argued, neoliberal individualism is often marketed as empowering people to take control of their lives, but in practice it amounts to much less than this, rather the control of one's consumption as far as one has the income to consume, and the marketization of the self as a commodity in the marketplace. The contemporary sex trade is but one manifestation of how commodification can remove the moral boundaries to practically any human activity (Kaul 2009).

At the same time, the massive wealth and corruption that accompanied privatisation programs in Hungary and across the region only developed the anger felt by citizens. This was to provide fuel for the ire of the political right, which would add this general degradation of public life to their rhetoric (Schwartz 2006; Andor 2009). The collapse of the liberal-left in Hungary after the 2006 election was in part due to economic collapse but also the exposure that then Prime Minister Gyurcsány had deliberately lied to the public regarding the state of the economy before the 2006 election. When this speech, delivered in private to Socialist Party MPs, was leaked to the press, riots ensued in Hungary. Fidesz seized the moral high ground as the only

party committed to ridding Hungary of parasitical political elites who were portrayed as a legacy of the Communist era (Lendvai 2012). For Fidesz, Hungary needed a real revolution to rid itself of its Communist past.

By this time Fidesz had successfully re-branded itself as a party of the center-right and become the dominant right-wing party in Hungary. Hungary's political culture had developed to span a spectrum from the neoliberal (end of history) to the far-right (clash of civilisations). Although people could be mobilised in protest against specific government actions, it was the political right that was to make the most dramatic and rapid inroads in establishing a grassroots political culture that would challenge Hungary's cosmopolitan neoliberal parties. As is taking place in other parts of the EU, it is the political right that has claimed the mantle of standing up for ordinary citizens against the forces of globalization and migration, as personified in the shape of the neoliberal EU (Ivarsflaten 2008; Liang 2016).⁴ The Hungarian liberal-left, like its counterparts across the EU, remain largely wedded to a neoliberal "end of history" narrative that promises the prospect of more social polarisation. By way of contrast, a new political culture was emerging in Hungary led by a new social movement known as Jobbik, or the *Movement for a Better Hungary*. What was being mobilised after the founding of Jobbik in 2003 was a popular discontent with the democratic transition that targeted a host of enemies of the "real" Hungarian people: corrupt cosmopolitan elites, foreign investors who had stripped Hungary of control of its natural resources, the established political parties, as well as more obvious minority targets including Jews, the state of Israel, Roma, sexual minorities and any other groups that did not conform to a far-right litany of what constitutes normality and decency (Karácsony and Rona 2011).

The Kraken Awakes: 2010 and the Triumph of the Illiberal Right in Hungary

The surprise in the 2010 election was not that Fidesz won and that the liberal-left parties were defeated, rather it was the extent of Fidesz victory. In securing a majority of over 66%, Fidesz had the legal right to revise the constitution. This flaw in the post-Democratic Transition (DT) constitutional reforms was noted by commentators who feared that it could come back to trouble Hungarian democracy in the future (Arato 2000; Pogány 2013). Years in opposition had hardened Orbán and Fidesz rhetoric, seeing them shift from a familiar Conservative narrative of family, nation and god to a more strident form of ethno-nationalism that for its critics had overtones of anti-Semitism, intolerance and an ethnically exclusive form of Hungarian national identity (Marsovszky 2010). This has manifested itself, for example, in Prime Minister Orbán's

⁴ The position of the 'radical right' on free markets is quite mixed. It is the issue of migration and the erosion of cultural values through globalisation that tends to be most unifying between them (Zaslave 2004; Norris 2005).

recent pronouncements on Hungary as part of a Central European migrant-free zone, which had successfully thwarted both cultural globalisation and an influx of foreigners (Associated Press 2017a).

This kind of rhetoric is illustrative of the similarities between Jobbik and Fidesz, whom critics often view in terms of a good cop, bad cop relationship: different parties whose ideologies are overlapping rather than opposed (Dornbach 2013; Lendvai 2012). Sweeping electoral success in 2010 meant that Fidesz was able to revise the constitution in a rapid process, which called into questions its legality in both Hungary and in terms of its membership of the EU. Anti-EU rhetoric and criticism has been a powerful discourse for both Jobbik and Fidesz since 2010, but neither are committed to leaving the EU and certainly not NATO. Neither Fidesz nor Jobbik are hostile towards Russia in the way that the left-liberal parties have been in Hungary. This outlook reflects the economic reality that Hungary is still dependent upon Russia for its gas supplies, but also because of the right wing opposition to being dominated by the West (Gyöngyösi 2018). Allied to this dramatic shift to the political right was the remarkable success in the election of the neo-fascist party Jobbik, which having been formed in 2003 moved rapidly to become a major political actor, securing 16.4% of the vote.

In terms of Hungary's political culture, Fidesz's ambitions were two-fold. First the party wanted to construct a new constitution that would enable it to remain in power even if out of office. This was to be achieved by the establishment of new posts overseeing the media and judiciary, where appointments would be for 9 year periods, exceeding the lifetime of two parliaments (Bánkuti, Halmai and Scheppelle 2012; Wilkin 2016). In itself this is not an unusual feature of a liberal democracy. What was significant was that Fidesz filled these posts with their own supporters. The new constitutional framework was to create a permanent bias in support of Fidesz so that if they were to lose an election their appointees would still be in positions of power over whatever actions alternative governments might take.

The second development for Fidesz was to try to establish a political culture that would place them in the center of Hungarian politics. This was to be a new center that would be founded on a battle over nationalism and national identity—a battle that the liberal-left has been ill-equipped to fight. To do this, Fidesz had advocated a "bourgeoisification" of the country that would create a middle-class who would regard Fidesz as its natural political home (Wilkin 2016; Eyal et al 2005). At the same time, this also meant building relationships with Hungarian oligarchs and creating a political system which enabled Fidesz to direct contracts to its supporters and deny them to its opponents, a point that led Magyar to describe Hungary as a "post-communist Mafia State" (Magyar 2016). In addition, Fidesz also sought to undermine protests in civil society or the emergence of autonomous groups by effectively criminalising the overseas funding of many grassroots NGOs working in the country (Til 2015: 373).

The speed with which the new constitutional reforms and the wholesale revision of the fundamental laws were rushed through parliament left little room for meaningful debate. Fidesz's illiberalism was reflected in both the nature of the institutional reforms and the practices through which the party governed (Pogány 2013). Although condemned by left-liberal parties both within Hungary and across the core of the world-system, Fidesz's defence of the new constitution was that it was essentially reflecting policies found throughout the EU. For example, its new media laws enforced by a Fidesz dominated Media Council, made it possible to punish speech for causing harm to communities by the incitement of hatred against them. This was justified by the need to combat racism and intolerance in Hungarian society, the very same reason used in countries like France and the UK to justify a variety of restrictions on free speech and a free press (Newlands 2013; Boromisza-Habashi 2011; Koltay 2013). Illiberalism is not unique to Hungary, but the Orbán government very skilfully sought to graft together as many illiberal aspects of existing legislation in European democracies as they could, creating what Scheppelle called a "frankenstate" (Scheppelle 2013; Krasztev and Til 2015).

Thus, Hungary's media remains free but under significant pressures to conform to the Fidesz-dominated Media Council. Each media institution has to show that it provides "balanced" coverage of Hungary, with the definition of balance determined by the Media Council. It has also to respect not just the rights of minorities but unusually also those of majorities by not harming their "human dignity," a vague term whose meaning is also to be defined by the Media Council. There are also significant restrictions on the showing of sex and violence and the need for media organizations to act in accord with "good faith" and "fairness" (National Media and Infocommunication Authority 2011). All of these restrictions may appear reasonable to left-liberal viewpoints, and variants of them can be found across EU member states. But when they are to be implemented by a Media Council that is controlled by Fidesz-supporting appointees, it creates a media culture in which journalists are under immense pressure to conform to Fidesz's political agenda. This has led, as the German journalist (and supporter of the Orbán governments) Igor Janke notes, to a widespread self-censorship by the media who are afraid to be overtly critical of Orbán or his government for fear of either an immense fine, losing advertising revenues derived overwhelmingly from the government, or losing their license to broadcast (Lendvai 2012; Janke 2016; Bajomi-Lazar 2013; Krugman 2012).

Unsurprisingly the actions of the Orbán government provoked a number of reactions both internationally (with investigations by the EU into the legality of the constitutional reforms) and domestically (Pogány 2013). Domestically, two main strands of protest against Fidesz have developed—on the liberal left and on the far right. On the liberal-left, the Facebook protest movement Milla (One Million Voices for a Free Press in Hungary) emerged very quickly. Milla was founded by members of the liberal-left in Budapest, led initially by entrepreneur Peter

Juhász. Their aim was to inform the public about the challenges to free press and speech in Hungary and to provide a platform for critical information that could not otherwise find its way into the mainstream Hungarian media. In addition, Milla organised a series of mass demonstrations in Budapest against the new constitution (Wilkin, Dencik and Bognar 2015; Petőcz 2015). Milla's stance reflected the tradition of anti-politics that had shaped dissident movements across the region under communism. The idea here is that the goal is not to take power but to refuse it, as power and the exercise of power over others is part of the process that leads to authoritarianism, unless held in check by a liberal constitution and the rule of law (Bankuti, Halmai and Scheppelle 2015). Thus, Milla made it clear that it wanted nothing to do with the disgraced left-liberal parties but would build links with other groups in civil society defending, for example, minority rights. Milla's strengths and weaknesses are reflective of left-liberal politics in Hungary after communism. Driven by the desire to construct a democratic, open, and non-hierarchical form of protest movement, Milla suffered from a fundamental weakness. To challenge Fidesz it had to reach beyond the capital Budapest and become a truly national protest movement. Fidesz, by contrast, had built a very effective national organization throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century based around public meetings and consultations which were to feed ideas into the policy making process of the party. Milla simply lacked the resources or capacity to build itself as a national protest movement even with the use of the internet. Worthy though its aims were from the left-liberal perspective, in practice it was almost inevitably drawn into establishing links with new left-liberal party coalitions for the 2014 election (Petőcz 2016; Wilkin 2016). Even appealing to the EU for support was counter-productive in that it enabled Fidesz and Jobbik to brand them as a cosmopolitan and therefore not truly a Hungarian movement, shaped by the traditional Budapest intellectual elites.

By contrast, Jobbik helped to drive Hungarian political culture to the far-right by its normalising of a variety of prejudices aimed at Jews, globalization, the gay community, the EU, Roma, and migrants (Balogh 2012; Kovai 2012; Murer 2015). Jobbik appealed to the disaffected Hungarians who were looking for a nationalist party to protect them from the market and globalisation (Toth and Grajczjar 2015; Wolin 2011). To this end Jobbik have made skilful use of the internet and grassroots organising to develop their support base in ways which Milla, by comparison, were simply unable to do. Symbolically they have utilised ethno-nationalist rhetoric and provocative public actions including: calling for the criminalising of the promotion of homosexuality as normal, and demanding that Jews who were deemed as a threat to national security be listed by the state (Politics.hu 2014; Dunai 2012). Much of Jobbik's support comes from the young and university educated who have found themselves part of the un- or underemployed global graduate community (Minkenberg and Pytlas 2012; Toth and Grajczjar 2015; Mason 2016).

Jobbik has mixed classic fascistic language, symbols and ideas with a very telegenic and modern political appearance (Erős 2012). At the same time, the party has moved to denounce racism and anti-Semitism (Associated Press 2017b). How can we explain this apparent contradiction? Reid Ross has written of the rise of far-right political movements as part of “the fascist creep” (Reid Ross 2017). By this he means two things: first that many political figures on the far-right and neo-fascist right move between movements, from those viewed as being legitimate conservative or nationalist parties, to openly neo-fascist movements. The AfD in Germany and the FPÖ in Austria are both successful examples of this as Klikauer has shown, with many leading figures having a committed neo-fascist past (Klikauer 2016 2017). This fluid movement across right-wing political lines enables neo-fascists to gain legitimacy and credibility in the public realm, as seen in recent electoral successes. There are many ways for the illiberal political right to seize the state and this strategy is having some measurable success. Second, Reid Ross notes that the fascist creep represents the fact that neo-fascists try to downplay their true political heritage for public consumption. Simply put, these figures and movements have good reasons to hide their ideological background, hence the claim to be against anti-Semitism while at the same time espousing anti-Semitic slogans and rhetoric (Kovács 2013; Tartakoff 2012). The fascist creep can be seen in the way that political rhetoric on the political right in Hungary and elsewhere has become increasingly illiberal and intolerant of ethnic minorities. This persistent theme in the history of fascism manifests itself in the current rhetoric of Jobbik and Fidesz alike. Prime Minister Orbán’s idea of a migration-free zone in Central Europe could just as easily be the rhetoric of Jobbik. The blurring of the boundaries on the political right has worked to the advantage of neo-fascists who see their views becoming increasingly part of mainstream political discourse. In fact, Fidesz have viewed Jobbik as a significant challenge to their hegemony on the illiberal right, leading them to adopt many policies that were advocated by Jobbik including: lowering taxes, nationalising utility companies, reducing the pensions of former Communist Party cadres, to introduce public works instead of welfare, and to recognise the right of citizenship to Hungarians living in neighbouring countries.

The significance of this fascist creep is that the centre of gravity in Hungary’s political culture has shifted towards the illiberal right and intolerance towards minorities, with opinion poll surveys revealing widespread fear of minorities among the Hungarian population—even though Hungary is one of the most ethnically homogenous nation-states in the EU (Til 2015: 369-370; Tomka and Harcsa 1999: 61). As with Fidesz, Jobbik sees the solution to Hungary’s ills in the construction of a strong state that will guide and protect the economy and society from its enemies. In comparison with its predecessor, this strong state will be underpinned by an ethno-nationalist ideology, not communism or Marxism-Leninism. In the democratic Hungary, nation trumps class as a form of identity, with class remaining a taboo subject, to the permanent

disadvantage of the left. This unwillingness to talk about the realities of class re-organization after the end of communism is a feature of political culture across the region, fueled both by political elites who want to avoid the subject because of the persistent antipathy to what is seen as inherently leftist political discourse (Bale et al 2010). Objectively class is fundamental to a capitalist society – subjectively discussing or analysing it in political debate has, as the Hungarian dissident Gaspár Tamás argues, largely disappeared in East Central Europe (Fiala 2016). Instead political debate is dominated by such issues as: the nation, migrants, the unemployed, the EU and the community (Gagyí and Eber 2015).

Fidesz's quasi-developmental state aims to be a form of national capitalism that will aim to protect sectors of the Hungarian population from the pressures of the market, enveloping this move in an argument about reclaiming Hungarian sovereignty from the EU and the threat of globalization (Ablonczy 2015; Gagyí 2016). As with Jobbik, Fidesz's economic policies are not a fundamental challenge to neoliberalism. In practice they both adhere to many neoliberal norms of austerity, an open economy to attract foreign investment, lowering taxes, reducing public spending. Rather, both parties wish to use authoritarian social policies and state power to reward their allies, punish their Hungarian opponents and to create an ethno-nationalist Hungarian citizenry. Although Jobbik has critically supported many of Fidesz's policies, it nonetheless sees Fidesz as simply a continuation of the old party-system established in 1990 (Orbán was himself a recipient of a Soros scholarship to study at Oxford). For example, Fidesz introduced Schumpeterian-style workfare for unemployed Hungarians in 2014; re-classifying Hungary's unemployed into the familiar "deserving" and "undeserving" poor categories. Refusal to take a job offer after 90 days unemployment means automatic qualification for workfare programs or loss of all benefits (Lakner and Tausz 2016; Blyth 2015; Jessop 1993). Jobbik opposed this on the grounds that it was simply a form of cheap labor that exploited Hungarian workers when what they needed were well-paid jobs. Thus, an intriguing battle is emerging on the illiberal right in Hungary over exactly how the new ethno-nationalist Hungarian society is to be stratified and what it means to be a "real" or "good" Hungarian citizen and what, as a consequence, one is entitled to. For Jobbik the constitutional revolution undertaken by Fidesz changes little. It is not the real revolution that Hungary needs, and Fidesz is simply part of the post-communist system.

Conclusions: Re-Feudalising the Hungarian Economy

Orbánization is to be understood as the transformation of Hungarian political culture into a form of illiberalism where the formal mechanisms of liberal politics remain (elections, a judiciary, a free press, the rule of law), but where the political system has been reorganised in a way that gives the government authoritarian power on a variety of levels. On one level Orbánization was an opportunistic response to a specific local event—the unanticipated 2/3 majority secured in the

2010 election, triggered by the refusal of many left-liberal voters to vote in the 2nd round of the elections. The reasons for this may be multiple, but in part reflect popular discontent with the corruption and duplicity of the previous left-liberal coalition. On another level, Orbánization reflects the rise of the illiberal right and ethno-nationalism across not just ECE but many parts of the world-system.

The contribution of world-systems analysis, as this paper has shown, to an understanding of the concept of political culture in Hungary can be seen in two ways: first, it is an approach that rejects methodological nationalism in order to understand the construction of political cultures. By this is meant that it rejects the idea that a political culture, any more than a nation-state, can be understood as a sealed unit of analysis characterised by domestic or internal features alone. Political cultures and nation-states are always constructed in relation to the structural trends that have shaped the development of the modern world-system, most prominently those related to capital accumulation, geo-political power and what Wallerstein has termed the geo-culture, by which he means the dominant ideas that often help to underpin inequalities of power. Thus, illiberalism in Hungary cannot be seen as a problem specific to Hungary; it is a factor in the construction of the modern world-system itself and can be found throughout it. Second, it explains a political culture in the context of wider social traditions and habits that have connected peoples across nation-state boundaries, through the flow of ideas, beliefs, practices and traditions. These have often manifested themselves in the construction of hierarchical forms of social relations that predate the rise of the modern world-system, through institutions such as the family, education, religion, personal relationships, the army, the workplace, and the state itself (Bookchin 1982). Historically, a persistent point of conflict within and across nation-states has been between those social groups whose interests have tended to reflect the persistence of these hierarchies, and those who have sought to challenge and overturn them. Thus, in Hungary liberal social movements have had to struggle against an array of reactionary Hungarian and world-systemic social forces, which have been either opposed to liberalism and to democracy, or which have sought to construct forms of democracy which are primarily responsive to the interests of capital, national elites and of the core.

The dominant modernist narratives that have shaped the modern world-system (liberalism and socialism) have tended to present stories of progress towards a better society (Mestrovic 2004). For liberals, such a society will be one built around individual liberty, while for socialists it will be one where class differences are ended. Both, interestingly, subscribe to an “end of history” argument that still resonates on the liberal-left, but now in the form of a neoliberal story that says “there is no alternative” to the market (Bokros 2013). In Hungary, liberal-left political elites still subscribe to this narrative and attempt to square the circle of subordinating the Hungarian economy and society to the dictates of global finance while trying to stand up for

some notion of social justice. By contrast the illiberal right in Hungary persist with a “clash of civilisations” narrative which serves to offer legitimacy to racist narratives about Hungary’s friends and enemies and its travails in the modern world-system.

The success of Fidesz and Orbánization is not inevitable, although authoritarian regimes do tend to present an aura of invulnerability. Clearly there are divisions both within Fidesz and between the party and its powerful financial supporters (Dunai 2015). All political movements are coalitions of often conflicting interests. Further, Fidesz have no real solution to the problems facing Hungarian citizens beyond introducing yet more authoritarian measures. The forthcoming 2018 general election is already taking a familiar pattern with a divided liberal-left and a dominant Fidesz. This time, however, Fidesz has taken steps to destroy Jobbik, using its control over the state to fine the party 331.7m forints through the national audit office for paying below market prices for its anti-government electoral posters. The fact that the state can take such actions illustrates the reason for Fidesz’s revision of the constitution in 2010, to exercise power through the state to guarantee its hegemony and disable its opponents. Both the audit office and the state prosecutor’s office are run by Fidesz supporters (Reuters 2018).

There is ample space for a libertarian left to emerge in Hungary as is happening in other parts of the world-system, but what is missing at present is a coherent narrative about what that means and the ability to organise and mobilise Hungarian citizens around it (Lomax 1997a: 60-62). If Hungary’s liberal-left can see no further than a revamped neoliberal agenda, then even an electoral victory will lead only to a deeper re-feudalisation of the economy, subordinating it to the dictates of global capital—the very thing that has helped the illiberal right to thrive.

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