

A b s t r a c t s

Under the Knife

The illiberal state in Hungary and Poland

Marta Bucholc, Maciej Komornik

The levering out of the separation of powers

The reconstruction of the Polish judiciary, 2017

The national conservative Law and Justice party (PiS) that has been in office in Poland since the end of 2015 has de facto brought an end to the separation of power. With a wave of new laws, it first paralysed the constitutional court and then appointed almost the entire judiciary under the control of the executive. It has discredited the institutions of the constitutional state, accused judges of all official channels and legislative branches of whom it does not approve as being members of a post-communist clique, and on the basis of the new laws dismissed those who refuse to do their bidding. For the first time since 1989, when successors are appointed, the governing party is again playing a central role. Entirely in the spirit of the ideology of the PiS, a strong state, which professes to act in the name of the people, has emerged to replace the pluralistic division of power.

Ellen Bos

The Orbán system

Anti-pluralism in action

The Orbán government has completely remodelled the political system in Hungary since coming to power in 2010. It has focussed political power on the executive and declared the governing party to be the only legitimate representative of the will of the people. The government has an instrumental understanding of law and constitutional law, and regards its success in the elections as a justification for assuming sweeping powers. It is creating a permanent state of emergency, with elections in particular being held in an atmosphere of alleged threats from domestic and foreign enemies. The worldview and politics of the government are illiberal and anti-pluralist.

Peter Frank

Permanent mobilisation in Hungary

The xenophobic campaigns of the Orbán government

Since 2015, *Fidesz*, the ruling party in Hungary, has been mobilising the population on an ongoing basis. Here, the central theme is immigration. Although the number of new arrivals to Hungary is low, the government, primarily Prime Minister Orbán, is using a huge amount of resources to stoke fear of migrants. Several 'national consultations' and a referendum, prior to which the government staged campaigns lasting several months,

served to generate enemy images through suggestive questions. The government is doing battle against the European Union, the opposition parties and civil society. The main figure behind these and other enemies of Hungary is George Soros, who is pursuing a plan to flood Hungary and the whole of Europe with Muslim migrants. The government is aiming for nothing less than the destruction of open society.

Anna Wolff-Powęska
Drummers of the revolution
 Young conservatives and Poland's right wing

There is an influential group within the Polish right wing that regards itself as the avantgarde of a conservative revolution. Its ideology and rhetoric are reminiscent of the 'conservative revolutionaries' in Germany after the First World War. Like them, these Polish right-wingers characterise themselves as pioneers in the fight against liberalism and parliamentary democracy, against western civilisation and its allegedly corruptive influence on the state and national culture. Its goal is to renew the 'national spirit', or 'Volksgeist', in the traditions of the nobility during the early modern period and romantic messianism. The fact that the 'conservative revolutionaries' prepared the ground during the Weimar era for the racial madness of the National Socialists should serve as a warning example to Poland.

Kai-Olaf Lang
Fraternal twins
 The Law and Justice party (PiS) and *Fidesz*: commonalities and differences

The ruling parties in Poland and Hungary have much in common. Both are striving to rebuild the state and society along neo-traditionalist lines. They regard democracy as being the rule of the majority; the mandate that they have received by the people in the ballot boxes should not be restricted by checks and balances. In the EU, the PiS and *Fidesz* back the reinforcement and expansion of national government jurisdiction. However, due to differences in foreign and European policy – in particular with regard to security policy and their relationship with Russia – no national conservative axis has been created in Central and Eastern Europe. Despite their ideological similarities, this alliance can also fracture.

Piotr Buras, Zsuzsanna Vegh
Stop, Brussels!
 Poland and Hungary in the European Union

The governments of Poland and Hungary are in conflict with the European Commission, which regards democracy and the rule of law as being at risk in both states. Hungary and Poland reject such criticism and invoke their national sovereignty. The government's view themselves as being democratically legitimised. Budapest and Warsaw are of the opinion that European integration has gone too far, and propose a strengthening of the nation states within the EU. At the same time, Poland and Hungary are pursuing different foreign and European policy interests and are opting for divergent strategies.

Klaus Bachmann, Dominik Héjj
The path to 'illiberal democracy'
Construction plans from Hungary and Poland

In Hungary and Poland, national conservative parties have taken over power and re-shaped the political system. They have expanded the power of the executive, restricted the separation of powers and curtailed the freedom of the media. While their rule has been democratically legitimised by elections, they are working towards creating an authoritarian state. In Hungary, the system is handing all power over to the Prime Minister. By contrast, in Poland, there have to date been several power centres within the ruling party.

András Bozóki, Dániel Hegedűs
Hybrid regimes under external control
On the nature of Hungarian politics

Hungary's political system is neither a democracy nor a dictatorship. It is instead a specific hybrid regime. The government under Viktor Orbán has largely put paid to the separation of powers that characterised the liberal constitutional state. However, to date, the basic rights of Hungarian citizens have remained intact. This is due to Hungary's membership of the European Union and its seat on the Council of Europe. However, the role of the EU is ambivalent. Its legal system is designed to prevent the establishment of an authoritarian system. At the same time, EU funds are helping to stabilise the regime in Budapest. Since the EU is regarded as an association of democratic states, Orbán is also using Hungary's membership of the EU to legitimise his regime.

Gerhard Gnauck
The uncharismatic charismatic individual
Jarosław Kaczyński and the secret of power

Jarosław Kaczyński is the strong man in Poland who determines policy direction. Yet Kaczyński is neither president nor prime minister, and has attained power through his party. What is the basis for his authority? Kaczyński is no brilliant speaker and no impressive personality, and yet his rule is based on charisma. His supporters follow him because they value his exceptional toughness, his moral integrity and his firmness. Kaczyński wants radical change, and his national conservative ideas are designed to achieve cultural hegemony. He regards himself as the commander of a besieged fortress, who protects the weak and is not afraid of the strong.

Gregor Mayer
The striker
The rise of Viktor Orbán

Viktor Orbán has indisputably dominated Hungarian politics since 2010. While in the early 1990s, Orbán still presented himself as liberal, today, he has assumed the role of defender of the Christian west, and is mobilising nationalist sentiment against the EU. In some cases, the friendships with oligarchs, who are now part of the backbone of his regime, date back to his student years. From the moment he first set foot on the political stage in 1989, his tactics were the same as they are today: fuelling conflicts, torpedoing compromises, and dictating his own conditions. His power rests on his self-presentation as a victor.

Felix Eick
Lőrinc Mészáros
A fairy-tale ascent

In Hungary, the relationship between government and big business is very tight. A precondition for economic success is being close to power. Prime Minister Orbán makes use of politically-close tycoons to secure his power. Lőrinc Mészáros has been the most important of these since 2016. He has risen from small-scale entrepreneur to multi-millionaire within just a few years. The source of his wealth is, above all, public-sector contracts, which are financed by EU structural funds.

Ellen Bos
Forming a majority from a majority
The parliamentary elections in Hungary, 2018

In Hungary, the *Fidesz*-KDNP alliance won the parliamentary elections for the third time in April 2018. Viktor Orbán's party was particularly successful in the rural regions, with the opposition parties having weakened their own position through their inability to reach agreement. International observers reported incidents of misuse of administrative resources by the government during the election campaign, with the government blurring the boundary between state and party. Certain features of the electoral system make it easier for any single party to gain a majority. These were further consolidated by *Fidesz*-KDNP in 2014, thus enabling the Orbán government to gain a two-thirds majority in parliament. In the eyes of the government, it has now been empowered to continue in its pursuit of such anti-pluralist policies.

Sebastian Płóciennik
Potential for protest despite economic growth
Poland and globalisation

Poland has benefited strongly from the opening up of its economy since 1989. The majority of the population regards the integration of Poland on the global market as a positive development. However, there is also criticism of the lack of fairness of trading processes, tax avoidance by international companies and the dependence on foreign capital. A general shift in opinion in relation to globalisation could come from those who lost out as a result of redistribution and from uneasy 'winners'. The government currently in office is proving to be more open towards protectionist tendencies than the previous one. However, an expansion of social security systems would make more political sense than protectionism.

Krzysztof Jasiński
Polish state capitalism
On the economic policy of the PiS

Under the Law and Justice party (PiS), Polish economic policy is changing. The government wants to bring its dependence on foreign investments to an end and to push back the dominance of foreign capital in key areas of the Polish domestic economy. In 2016, it founded the Polish Development Fund. One of the goals of the fund is the re-Polonisation of strategically important sectors. For this purpose, the strategy pursued the PiS consists of state interventionism, active investment policies for major state-owned companies, and the centralisation of the administration. These are elements of a form of state capitalism.

Hella Engerer

Without a plan

Economic development and economic policy in Hungary

A decade ago, Hungary's domestic economy was mired in deep crisis. The country was on the brink of insolvency. However, the gross national product has been growing for years, and other indicators are also showing a positive development. However, the comparison with Poland and the Czech Republic shows, that Hungary is mainly benefiting from the strong development in the global economy. The country is also profiting from EU funding. At the same time, structural weaknesses have not been overcome and state debt remains high, making the country susceptible to crises. The unpredictable nature of the government is damaging the investment climate, and Hungary is becoming less competitive.

Péter Bajomi-Lazar, Dalma Kékesdi-Boldog

Back to the future

Authoritarian media policy in Hungary

During the 1990s, Hungary was a pioneer of democratisation in eastern Europe. Twenty years later, the country is again at the forefront of a trend, but this time one that is heading towards authoritarianism. Media policy plays a key role in this regard. In 2010, the state already passed new laws that put a tight rein on public broadcasting companies. Since then, they have been transformed into government propaganda tools. The print media market is now also dominated by publications owned by oligarchs close to the government. In many ways, the situation is similar to that of the 1980s.

László J. Győri

King Ubu in Hungary

Viktor Orbán's 'total attack' on culture

The conquest of the exclusive right to cultural interpretation is one of Viktor Orbán's key goals. While during his first period in office, he primarily pursued symbolic political strategies, since 2010, his priority has been to replace the cultural elites. His reasons for doing so are not purely ideological; power and money are also motivating factors. Key positions are being filled by *Fidesz* supporters, institutions are being 'cleaned up', committees are being infiltrated and democratic procedures undermined. While the outgrowths of this process of bringing these institutions to heel may often appear absurd, their impact is profound.

Paweł Potoroczyn

'Only culture can save us'

Purges and Paranoia

Paweł Potoroczyn used to be Director of the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, but was stripped of the post without being told why. Potoroczyn is taking legal action against his dismissal, and in this interview, he laments the legal nihilism that lies at the heart of his removal from office. In his view, his dismissal is a part of a programme to replace the elite that has been systematically pursued by the Law and Justice party (PiS) since 2015. He is disconcerted by the government's instrumental concept of culture, the purges being conducted in the cultural field, and by the attempt to define what the real national culture is. However, there are no grounds for pessimism. To date, all attempts to destroy culture have failed – by foreign and domestic occupying forces alike.

István Bibó

The deformed Hungarian character
Hungarian history on the wrong path

In Hungary, a lament was struck up many years ago that can still be heard today: the true nature of the Hungarian. He used to be a noble and courageous figure, but now, the national character has been spoiled. Non-Hungarian influences are to blame, namely foreign dominance and the impact of foreigners within the country. This attitude leads nowhere. To answer the question as to why in decisive moments in its history, Hungary failed to grasp the nature of its own position and the resulting challenges, the country needs to evaluate its own responsibility, rather than blaming adverse conditions and pointing its finger at others. 70 years later, István Bibó's structural historical essay directed against historical determinism, written in 1948, is of striking relevance to the present-day situation.

György Schöpflin

Central Europe in a trap
On the misalliance with the EU

Western Europe is characterised by the hegemony of a quasi-fundamentalist form of liberalism, which is being asserted by a supra-state elite with the aid of a deterministic view of history and of so-called 'human rights'. This leads to tensions with the central European states. The societies in this region have experienced a different history, one of suppression and forced modernisation. This trauma is being repeated; once again, the hope for a revival of the free nation has not been fulfilled, and once again, the democratically elected governments are having to defend themselves against changes that are being forcibly imposed from the outside.

Krisztián Ungváry

Return of history?
Orbán & Horthy: a comparison of two regimes

The political order established by Viktor Orbán bears traits of that of the Horthy regime. As was the case in the inter-war years, Orbán's party manipulated the electoral system in order to gain power. As it did then, the ruling party claims to represent the entire nation. *Fidesz* under party leader Orbán is even more powerful than the governing party during the 1920s and 1930s. However, during the Horthy era, society was much stronger. Today, the political and economic elite of Hungary is almost entirely dependent on the state and therefore also on the government. Under these conditions, democratic institutions are nothing more than a backdrop designed to legitimise the government's compliant 'system of national cooperation'.

Maciej Górny

Weak brothers

Poland and Hungary in the inter-war years

Hungary was a loser in the First World War, while Poland was a winner. Yet the devastation left behind by the war meant that both countries faced similar challenges. Violence was endemic, and poverty was widespread. Most people were indifferent to democracy, which made it impossible for it to take root. Anti-Semitism forged a path through to the centre of society, while the governments curtailed civil liberties to an increasing extent in the name of a 'national rebirth' and 'purity of the nation'. The development of both countries took an authoritarian turn.

Joachim von Puttkamer

Family dissimilarities

Poland and Hungary since 1945

There are parallels between the most recent political events in Poland and Hungary. It is tempting to explain them from the perspective of their similar historical development during the course of the 20th century. However, in reality, the experiences of the two countries were very different. They were on different sides during the Second World War, and while in 1956, the uprising in Hungary was put down by the Red Army, in Poland, the party leader Gomułka succeeded in preventing Soviet troops from marching into the country after the Poznań riots. Accordingly, the relationship between the regime and society, as well as the history of the opposition during the three decades that followed, developed in different ways. The rise of the Law and Justice party (PiS) and *Fidesz* is not a direct consequence of the communist era. Both parties owe their success to their specific portrayal of history.

Klaus Bachmann

The greater the danger, the greater the honour

History policy and foreign policy in Poland

The Polish government under the Law and Justice party (PiS) is promoting an active history policy. State funds are being used to reinforce patriotism and Christian values. This is having an impact on foreign policy. An erratic personnel policy and a lack of coherence in the foreign policy decision-making process are contributing to an increase in influence by history policy interest groups with regard to foreign policy towards Ukraine, for example. This is leading to alienation and conflicts with regard to Ukraine and creating closer ties with Belarus.

Ferenc Laczó

Totalitarianism without perpetrators?

Hungary's new history myth

The Hungarian government is investing large sums of money into history policy measures. Since *Fidesz* won the election in 2010, it has founded three new historical institutes, which are creating an official interpretation of history with numerous publication series. This portrayal includes radical anti-communism as well as an ambivalence towards the Horthy era. A special role is played by the myth of Hungary as the innocent victim of two foreign, totalitarian regimes.

Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska, Sabine Stach, Katrin Stoll

Prescribed history

Nationalist narratives in Poland

In Poland, history is an important political field. History policy is designed to reinforce a sense of patriotism among the population and to protect Poland's 'good name' in the world. In terms of its basic concept of the nation, national history and history policy practice, the Law and Order (PiS) government differs only marginally from its predecessors. It invokes well-known motifs from Polish historical culture and draws on the infrastructure that was created under the Civic Platform. Its interpretation of history is based on the commemoration of warring heroes, a rejection of a (self-)critical examination of history and on widespread anti-communist sentiment.

Peter Oliver Loew

Germany, an anti-fairytale

The bogeyman of the Polish right

In the Polish right-wing media, anti-German themes are omnipresent. Many relate to the Second World War, and are being very positively received. National conservatives are portraying Germany as the hegemon of Europe aspiring to colonise Poland. These politicians are attempting to exploit the depiction of Germany as a bogeyman to mobilise their own supporters and unite society. Anti-Germanism is an expression of the search for identity in a traumatised, polarised and socio-economically fragile society.

Adam Balcer

Dubious traditions

The PiS, the Kresy and ethnonationalism

Poland is undergoing profound changes with regard to its policy towards eastern Europe. The Law and Justice party (PiS) is abandoning the concept that has been state policy since 1989. In the past, the core principle has been that Poland's freedom depends on the sovereignty of Ukraine, Lithuania and Belarus, that Poland supports their democratisation, processes its own hegemonial traditions and pursues a policy of reconciliation. Now, a renaissance of the myth surrounding the Polish eastern territories (Kresy) can be observed. The PiS is borrowing from the ethnonational, polonocentric ideas of the inter-war years. This history policy, as well as the re-evaluation of the Volhynia massacre, are putting a strain on relations with Ukraine in particular.