Moving the Goalposts: Orbán's Fidesz, Strategies of Party Competition and Electoral Authoritarianism

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Abbreviations

DK - Democratic Coalition

EU - European Union

EVS - European Values Study

GDR - German Democratic Republic (East Germany)

LMP - *Lehet Más a Politika* Hungary's Green Party

MDF - Hungarian Democratic Forum

MSZP - Hungarian Socialist Party

OLS - Ordinary Least Squares (regression)

OSCE - Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe

PCA - Principal Components Analysis

PR - Proportional Representation

SMD - Single Member District

SZDSZ - Alliance of Free Democrats

WVS - World Values Survey

Introduction

Hungary has been on a path to electoral authoritarianism since 2010. Viktor Orbán's Fidesz has dominated Hungary's political system, using three successive supermajorities to centralise power and undermine independent institutions, despite Hungary being considered one of the most consolidated postcommunist democracies. However, the move towards authoritarianism in Hungary has been constrained by membership of the European Union. As a result, Fidesz deployed a two-pronged strategy. Firstly, Fidesz passed a new electoral law in 2011, on an entirely partisan basis. The new electoral system is more majoritarian and concentrates liberal voters into a small number of districts, whilst retaining elements of the pre-reform system to be seen as democratic. Fidesz then altered its political messaging to woo Jobbik supporters and the less-educated, socially conservative voters that the new electoral system overrepresents. I will draw on spatial models of party competition to argue that Fidesz altered the distribution of voters and successfully targeted the new median voter to dominate Hungarian politics, whilst retaining a democratic façade.

Hungarian democracy was formed in the transition from communism to capitalism in the late 1980s and 90s. Following the failed Hungarian revolution in 1956, 'goulash communism' was the basis of communist rule in Hungary. This fairly liberal form of communism rewarded popular compliance with modest economic gains through the 1960s and 70s. As such, when communism collapsed in the 1980s it was a negotiated decline. Hungary did not experience the mass opposition movements witnessed in Poland, the emigration and protests seen in the GDR, or the violence seen in neighbouring Romania. Compared to its neighbours, the communist successor party (Hungarian Socialist Party - MSZP) emerged relatively successfully as a European social-democratic party. In 1994, it was the first communist successor to win an election and return to government with a majority of seats (Argentieri, 2015). In the wake of the

1994 election, Fidesz - a small liberal party formed by young anti-communist activists - sought to consolidate the centre-right vote. By 1998, it was the largest party and Viktor Orbán became Prime Minister.

It was in this period, 1998-2006, that Hungary experienced the greatest political stability. Fidesz lost power in 2002, to be replaced by a coalition of liberals and socialists which was re-elected in 2006. All parties were relatively centrist, committed to EU membership and continued integration into western markets. Underneath the surface, there were some polarizing developments. Antisemitism and anti-Roma sentiment was common, with Jews discriminated against based on their perceived association with Bolshevism and a growing divide between the economic opportunities of Roma and ethnic Hungarians. The economy, whilst growing, was heavily reliant on foreign investment and a large budget deficit. The situation unravelled in 2006. Socialist Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány lost legitimacy when a recording of a speech in which he described how the government had 'screwed up' and 'lied morning, noon and night' was released (BBC News, 2006). From 2008, Hungary's reliance on foreign investment meant it was hit hard by the global recession and the economy shrank (White, Lewis and Batt, 2013). The MSZP-led government was thoroughly discredited.

In the 2010 election the MSZP lost over half of its support. Fidesz came to power with an unprecedented majority of votes and supermajority of seats. With the Hungarian party system collapsing, Fidesz began a process of consolidation which would put Hungary on a path to electoral authoritarianism. Since the 2010 election result owed more to the MSZP collapse than Fidesz's popularity, the party needed to create a more sustainable base of support. Institutionally this meant using legal instrumentalism for political ends: replacing independent civil servants with Fidesz supporters, destroying checks and balances, and regulating all socio-economic fields (Ágh, 2016). With its supermajority Fidesz could change the constitution and frequently did so when challenged. However, these reforms were initially timid by comparison to some electoral

authoritarian regimes. Constrained by EU membership, Fidesz had to test the will of European leaders by introducing authoritarian measures in a piecemeal fashion.

Fidesz set about changing the basis of Hungarian party competition so that it could retain a democratic basis for its authoritarianism. It did this in two key ways. Firstly, Fidesz changed the electoral system in 2011. Despite there being a consensus on the need for electoral reform and new district boundaries, the Fidesz proposal was roundly condemned by opposition parties and was passed on an entirely partisan basis. Crucially, the reform reduced the number of MPs and stripped away the compensatory national list. This reform was a sharp move in a majoritarian direction and created an electoral map which was significantly more favourable to Fidesz.

To cement this advantage, Fidesz recast its messaging to build a new social base for the government. This focussed on adopting socially conservative and religious rhetoric. In the 2011 constitution, the party symbolically enshrined the rights of 'embryonic and foetal life' and banned same-sex marriage (Constitute Project, 2019, p. 8). Fidesz strengthened its appeals to Roman Catholics, framing the government's mission as protecting Christian nationhood in the face of Islam. After being re-elected in 2014, the party used the migrant crisis to sow fear and entrench its popularity. This strategic realignment allowed Fidesz to build its support with those who were overrepresented in the new electoral system: less educated rural and suburban voters. It also allowed Fidesz to undermine Jobbik, the only opposition party to their right.

It is important to understand Fidesz's approach - combining electoral reform with electoral strategies - for several reasons. One is the rise of electoral authoritarianism since the third wave of democratisation. Under electoral authoritarianism, elections are regular and competitive, but as Schedler (2006, p. 3) writes, they 'violate the liberal-democratic principles of freedom and fairness so profoundly and systematically as to render elections instruments of authoritarian rule'. As Morse (2012) argues, the rise of these regimes necessitates paying greater

attention to the quality of elections. The literature on electoral authoritarianism often focuses on the most flagrant anti-democratic reforms. In Hungary, where authoritarianism was constrained by EU membership, authoritarian measures had to be coupled with an electoral strategy which would provide Fidesz with a sustainable base.

This electoral strategy speaks to the rise of populist parties more generally. Fidesz is routinely identified as one of the most successful populist-right parties. It is a particularly interesting case, as a mainstream party which turned to populism in the face of populist opposition to its right (Jobbik). The rise of Fidesz is a useful data point on the strategies deployed by populist parties, and the ways they can shape the supply-side environment to their advantage when in power.

Finally, the Hungarian case contributes to the growing literature on political geography and electoral systems. Rodden (2019) considers the effects of a rural-urban divide on representation in western democracies using majoritarian electoral systems. In Hungary, a growing rural-urban divide is also evident, but not along the same dividing lines as in Rodden's case studies. The distribution of voters under the new, more majoritarian, electoral system in Hungary has significant implications for political competition. It is also an example of a would-be authoritarian regime exploiting political geography for partisan ends, without violating the procedural definitions of democracy that allow it to keep a democratic façade.

I will review some of the literature on this topic in **Chapter 1**. The rise of electoral authoritarianism is well studied but it lacks discussion of constrained authoritarianism. Fidesz has had to rely on similar electoral strategies to parties in democratic systems, meaning spatial theories of party competition can be applied. The interaction of underlying attitudinal divides and uneven electoral representation created the conditions for a transformed party system and Fidesz dominance.

In **Chapter 2** I will use Principal Components Analysis of the 2008 European Values Study and 2009 World Values Survey to consider the attitudinal fault lines of Hungarian society. I will then use K-means cluster analysis to group voters by their attitudes before analysing cluster membership based on demographic characteristics and party support. I will consider the effect of education on attitudes and show how Fidesz's position in 2008 was commanding but precarious.

Drawing on this cluster analysis, I will consider Fidesz's approach in **Chapter 3**. Firstly, I will explore the new electoral system, the ways it underrepresents opposition parties and the demographic nature of the new electoral districts. I will then discuss how Fidesz support has changed since 2008 and the strategic decisions made by Fidesz in this time. I will support this with evidence from the 2014 and 2018 elections, as well as the European Values Study 2017.

Finally, in **Chapter 4**, I will consider the implications of my findings on Hungarian politics, including responses by other parties, patterns of opposition support, and the effect of Fidesz's dominance. Hungary continues to backslide under a government which appears to have no real checks and balances. With a two-thirds majority in Parliament and an electoral strategy which has crippled the opposition, Fidesz remains in a dominating position.

Chapter 1 - Literature Review

From 1974, the third wave of democracy toppled authoritarian regimes across the world, from Latin America to the Far East (Huntingdon, 1993). As authoritarianism fell, diverse new 'democratised' regimes emerged. This boom in democratic and semi-democratic regimes placed a huge strain on classifications of democracy and literature on hybrid regimes proliferated (Morse, 2012). The focus of this new literature was the process of transition. It was assumed that democracy was a natural endpoint for semi-authoritarian regimes and much of the literature reflected this. This paradigm was not without its critics. Zakaria (1997) argued that illiberal democratic regimes posed a serious threat to democracy - drawing strength from their democratic elements while fundamentally undermining constitutional liberalism. Carothers (2002, p. 20) declared the end of the transition paradigm, arguing it 'was a product of a certain time—the heady early days of the third wave—and that time has now passed'.

This conceptual shift was pivotal for the study of electoral authoritarian regimes. Under electoral authoritarianism, elections are held regularly but are so unfair that they facilitate incumbent victory, rather than genuinely expressing popular preferences. These elections are not solely a façade - they could result in the alternation of power - but the likelihood is that they will perpetuate regime control. With the study of electoral authoritarianism, we have been better prepared for democratic decline experienced in recent years. In 2020, Freedom House recorded a global decline in political rights and civil liberties for the 14th year in a row (Freedom House, 2020). Many of the countries that have experienced decline now have electoral authoritarian systems.

The literature on electoral authoritarianism largely focuses on issues of definition, typology, functions of authoritarian elections, methods of manipulation and sources of strength and vulnerability for electoral authoritarian regimes. In these areas, scholars have provided

insights which are indispensable for discussing the rise of electoral authoritarianism in Hungary. Zakaria (1997), for example, discusses how western focus on 'electoralism' gives authoritarian regimes considerable room to manoeuvre providing they hold multi-party elections, as can be seen in Fidesz's continued membership of the European People's Party. Levitsky and Way (2010) discuss the importance of state organisational power in regime stability, an issue which can be seen in the importance Fidesz places on state and party ties to all socio-economic sectors. Schedler (2002, p. 39) surveys the 'complex and controversial frontier between electoral democracy and electoral authoritarianism', providing insights into the manipulation that can occur at the fringes of democracy, as in Hungary.

Schedler's approach rests on the idea that elections should provide people with a genuine choice over the direction of a county. From this, Schedler draws seven normative premises of democratic choice which in turn provide a framework for potential manipulation by authoritarians. This approach is summarized in Table 1, with examples of manipulation from Orbán's Hungary before March 2020. Fidesz has made significant efforts to undermine democratic choice in several key areas, especially by undermining the empowerment of elected officials and violating the formation of preferences through a biased information environment. Schedler's 'Menu of Manipulation' is a useful starting point for considering Fidesz's authoritarian strategies.

Despite these helpful developments in the literature on electoral authoritarianism, there is limited discussion of the electoral strategies used by would-be authoritarian parties. Scholarly discussion primarily focusses on the most flagrant violations of democratic norms. In recent cases of democratic erosion, strategies of popular mobilisation are decisive. In Hungary, EU membership initially provided a significant check on authoritarianism, as Orbán's Fidesz sought to test the EU's will to oppose them. As a result, authoritarian measures had to be balanced by maintaining the façade of democracy. As we can see in Table 1, Fidesz had not substantially

Table 1 - Orbán's Hungary in Schedler's Chain of Democratic Choice (before the March 2020 enabling act)		
Dimensions of choice	Normative premise of democratic choice	Fidesz strategies
1. The object of choice.	*Empowerment*: Democratic elections involve the delegation of decision-making authority.	Centralising power in the Prime Minister's Office. Increasing the number of laws that require a two-thirds majority to amend. Undermining the formal role of the opposition. Attempts to wrest control of budget powers from the Budapest Assembly.
2. The range of choice.	*Freedom of Supply*: Citizens must be free to form, join, and support conflicting parties, candidates and policies.	Mandatory registration of civil society groups that receive foreign funding. Opaque and restrictive rules regarding election participation.
3. The formation of preferences.	*Freedom of demand*: Citizens must be able to learn about available alternatives through access to alternative sources of information.	Associations between media organisations and Fidesz-supporting oligarchs. Partisan laws regulating 'disinformation' leading to journalist self-censorship. Overlap between state and Fidesz 'public information' campaigns.
4. The agents of choice.	*Inclusion*: Democracy assigns equal rights of participation to all full members of the political community.	
5. The expression of preferences.	*Insulation*: Citizens must be free to express their electoral preferences.	
6. The aggregation of preferences.	*Integrity*: One person, one vote. The democratic ideal of equality demands weighting votes equally.	Gerrymandered electoral districts, 2011. More majoritarian electoral system ensured retention of two-thirds majority.
7. The consequences of choice.	*Irreversibility*: Elections without consequences do not qualify as democratic.	

limited inclusion in the political system, perverted the expression of preferences or reversed election results before March 2020. Hungary sits on the margins of democracy and electoral authoritarianism, raising the importance of electoral support.

Whilst many scholars recognise that popular mobilization is vital for sustaining electoral authoritarianism, this is rarely coupled with considerations of voter preferences and electoral strategies. Schedler (2013, pp. 128-30), for example, argues that 'voter preferences do not explain but a (possibly small) part of electoral outcomes'. Although Schedler includes voter preferences in his theoretical consideration of sustaining electoral authoritarianism, he laments the 'sad detail' that we 'possess very little factual knowledge about voter preferences and campaign evaluations in electoral authoritarian.' This is not the case in Hungary.

In the Mexican context, Magaloni (2006, p. 19) argues that existing voting theories are unable to explain why voters support autocrats because they make a set of assumptions which differ in the electoral arena of the authoritarian system. But in the Hungarian setting – at least for elections in 2014 and 2018 - these differences are not so stark. The first difference that Magaloni identifies is that under authoritarianism 'opposition parties are highly uncertain entities to voters because they have never governed'. In Hungary, this is not the case. The current leader of Democratic Coalition - the second-place party in the 2019 European Elections in Hungary - is Ferenc Gyurcsány, Prime Minister of Hungary from 2004 to 2009.

Magaloni's second difference is that 'the ruling party monopolizes the state's resources and employs them to reward voter loyalty and to punish voter defection'. Whilst Fidesz has certainly exploited state resources, this has happened primarily on an elite level, with Fidesz rewarding friendly oligarchs with EU transfers and public procurement (Àgh, 2016). The basis of authoritarianism in Hungary is control of supposedly independent institutions, rather than clientelism.

Thirdly, Magaloni argues that 'the ruling party can commit electoral fraud or threaten to repress its opponents, in which case violence might erupt'. Whilst the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) report on elections in 2014 and 2018 was critical, there appears to be little evidence of widespread electoral fraud. The biggest factors affecting the 2014 election, according to the OSCE report, were 'restrictive campaign regulations, biased media coverage and campaign activities that blurred the separation between political party and the State' (OSCE, 2014, p. 1). In Hungary's constrained setting, it is unlikely that fear of violent repression weighed heavily on voters' minds.

Unlike in other electoral authoritarian regimes, spatial models of party competition have much more potential purchase in Hungary. Even in the warped environment of Hungarian electoral authoritarianism, it is likely that people vote based on policy goals. This is especially so given the Hungarian party system was, until recently, very fluid. Voters do not have strong tribal attachments to any political party or the social pressure of long-term community connection to parties (Minkenberg and Pytlas, 2012). This lends itself to a rational/economic approach to voting, in which voters try to maximise the policy utility of their vote – voting for candidates they believe will further personal policy objectives.

The traditional starting point for spatial models is Downs (1957). Downs' model is based around the idea that the source of political controversy is alternative policies. Downs theorised that policies can be broadly placed along a scale. Each voter has a preferred point along the scale, as well as some amount of preference for every other point along the scale, decreasing from her optimum. The preference of the electorate as a whole is the sum of preferences held by individuals at each point along the scale. A political party's position on the scale can be thought of as the average of their positions on multiple issues. Downs' prediction based on this model is that voters will support the party which has the closest position to them along the policy scale. This spatial model is logical, but it requires several revisions, particularly in the case of Hungary

since 2010. Stokes (1963) provides a good starting point for these revisions, criticising four axioms of the Downsian model - (1) unidimensionality, (2) fixed structure, (3) ordered dimensions and (4) common reference. Of these, (2) and (3) are of particular relevance to my argument.

Stokes argues that a major flaw in Downs' model is the assumption (axiom) that political competition happens in a fixed structure. Stokes contends that the space in which political parties compete may be of variable structure and that the salient dimensions may change. This is evident in Hungary, with the collapse of the party system in 2010. Fidesz won an unprecedented majority of votes and supermajority of seats due to the collapse of the MSZP and complete disappearance of previous centre-right and liberal parties while the far-right Jobbik and green LMP won seats for the first time. The collapse of the party system altered the structure of Hungarian electoral competition. The salience of different political issues has also changed. The 2006 and 2010 elections were mostly fought over economic concerns. In power, Fidesz pushed to increase the salience of other issues. As Wilkin (2018, p. 23) puts it, Fidesz tried to 'establish a political culture that would place them in the centre of Hungarian politics…founded on a battle over nationalism and national identity—a battle that the liberal-left has been ill-equipped to fight'. This meant fighting election campaigns over issues such as the EU, Catholicism versus Islam, and the influence of George Soros. With the migrant crisis from 2015, it also meant whipping up fear around immigration.

Stokes also criticises Downs' axiom of ordered dimensions. Voters rarely consider themselves as points on a neat sliding scale of policy options. Often, political competition is instead based on parties' associations with certain values (positive or negative). This is apparent in Hungary, where since 2006 the MSZP was inescapably associated with Ferenc Gyurcsány's famous *Őszöd* (autumn) speech and the economic crisis. Fidesz victory in 2010 was in large part a reaction against these negative associations with the MSZP, rather than because voters felt in

closer proximity to Fidesz on policy issues. This chimes with Todosijević (2005), who finds a directional approach may be more appropriate in Hungary, looking at the direction and intensity of parties' positions, rather than their place along a scale. Todosijević finds that this is especially the case amongst less politically sophisticated voters.

Finally, it is important to consider the distribution of voters. In Downs' model, this is a key variable, and in a Hungarian context it takes on particular importance. Downs argues that the distribution of voters will decide issues such as the number of parties and their positioning along the scale. Rodden (2010) builds on this to argue that political geography, particularly in Single Member District (SMD) systems, has a significant effect on spatial competition. Most spatial models either assume every district matches the national distribution of voters, or that the district medians broadly match the national distribution of preferences. Rodden (2019) points to this mistaken assumption to explain the underrepresentation of left-of-centre parties in western democracies that use SMD electoral systems, arguing that urbanization has led to the (inefficient) concentration of more educated, cosmopolitan, liberal voters in a small number of urban districts, while more conservative voters form a bare majority across the rest of the electoral map. A similar effect can be observed in Hungary, with an increasing urban-rural split in election results. Coupled with gerrymandered district boundaries, the geographical clustering of political preferences has a significant impact on spatial competition.

With these revisions, we can use spatial models of party competition to explain the electoral dominance of Fidesz since 2010, allowing it to move Hungary towards electoral authoritarianism. Firstly, Fidesz changed the electoral system, increasing the importance of SMDs, reducing the number of deputies and reducing proportionality. New district boundaries clustered highly educated liberal voters in a small number of urban districts, outside of which left-liberal parties struggled to compete. Fidesz changed the distribution of voters to its advantage. Secondly, Fidesz altered its messaging and re-centred Hungarian political culture

around issues which appealed to the voters that the new electoral system overrepresents. Together with media allies, they bolstered the salience of cultural issues and nationalism.

Considering spatial models of party competition when studying electoral authoritarianism in Hungary allows us to see the ways that Fidesz built a formidable electoral base, as well as manipulating the spaces in which parties compete. With increasing democratic erosion around the world, the number of cases of electoral authoritarianism where spatial models of party competition may be applicable is rising.

Chapter 2 - Hungary's Attitudes

To understand Hungarian party competition from a rational/economic perspective, in which voters try to use their vote to maximise policy utility, we must understand the attitudes held by Hungarian voters. The purpose of this chapter is to identify the axes along which Hungarian attitudes diverge, to better explain the issues and cleavages political competition could be fought over.

Voters' policy views are frequently grouped along a left/right axis. This axis is usually interpreted as 'left' being more socially liberal and economically redistributive, whilst 'right' is socially authoritarian and fiscally conservative. These labels are frequently used in Hungary, especially by politicians and journalists, but in the context of Hungarian politics, they do not always hold the same meanings. Instead, this left-right dichotomy can obfuscate the diverse attitudes that Hungarians hold. As Enyedi and Todosijević (2003) find, Hungarians are often divided along lines relating to the communist past, clericalism and nationalism. Those who are nostalgic for communism, for example, may have conservative views on social issues, even when this clashes with communist rhetoric. Enyedi and Todosijević argue that none of the classic western ideologies - social democracy, liberalism, conservatism - constitute major dimensions of the ideological space in Hungary.

In this section I will show that the most coherent attitudinal divides relate to social and religious values, particularly homosexuality, abortion and secularism. I will then show that education has a significant effect on attitudes, particularly along this social axis. Finally, I will consider Fidesz's electoral coalition in 2008. Despite attitudinal differences, Fidesz drew support from across social groups, meaning its support in 2008 was broad but precarious. This is crucial as it informed Fidesz's approach after coming to power.

Principal Components Analysis. I use data from the European Values Study 2008 (EVS) and World Values Survey 2009 (WVS) to examine attitudes and values among Hungarians. EVS and WVS are high-quality, cross-national surveys of attitudes and values. The 2008 EVS and 2009 WVS waves include individual-level data for 2,520 Hungarian respondents (1,513 and 1,007 respectively) interviewed face-to-face in their homes. Both surveys use multi-stage, stratified, random probability samples based on region and size of locality (Budapest, city, town or village), and EVS also stratified based on age. WVS includes a weighting variable whilst EVS does not, so I decided not to weight the combined dataset. This means there is a slight risk of an unrepresentative sample, but this risk is low because the unweighted WVS data is broadly representative of census data in terms of gender, education and age. EVS and WVS include questions on a range of issues: political, social and demographic.

I use Principal Components Analysis (PCA) to analyse the associations between these attitudes. PCA is intended to simplify the large number of attitudinal variables considered. It does this by converting the variables into principal components which each explain a certain amount of variability in the data. The first principal component explains the largest amount of variation, whilst each succeeding component explains as much variation possible whilst remaining orthogonal to the preceding components until all the variation in the data has been explained. By plotting respondents against the first (x) and second (y) principal components, we can express the effects of different variables as vectors. This can help visualise the distribution of attitudes amongst survey respondents, and which attitudes are correlated with which others. This is plotted in Figure 1.

The variables included in the PCA are: how justifiable is homosexuality; how justifiable is abortion; should Hungarians have priority over immigrants for jobs; is more government or private ownership of business preferable; are immigrants/foreign workers undesirable neighbours; is competition positive or negative; should men have priority over women for jobs;

is a strong leader who ignores parliament preferable; should politicians believe in god; is respect for authority good; are you proud to be Hungarian; would you give some of your income for the environment; do you have confidence in the EU; should incomes be more equal.

Figure 1 - Principal Components Analysis Biplot, N = 1990
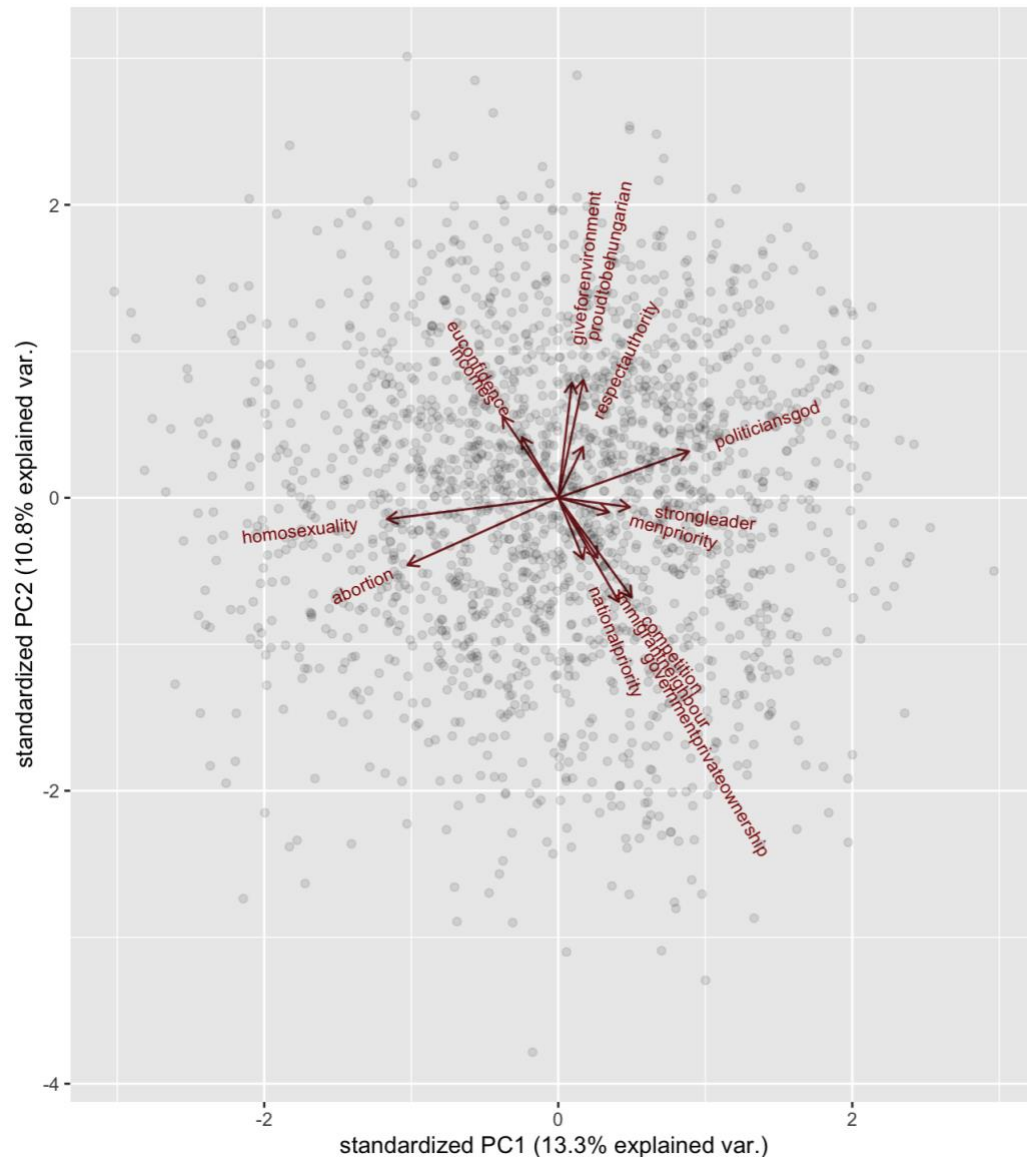
There are two apparent attitudinal axes on the biplot. Firstly, the three largest vectors appear to be attitudes to abortion and homosexuality (more justifiable) in one direction, and that politicians should believe in god in the other. These three attitudes pull approximately along one axis. This makes sense, given the social conservatism of Catholicism, the largest religious denomination in Hungary. As Müller and Neundorf (2012) argue, religion has taken on renewed

importance in the postcommunist setting. Roman Catholics tend to have less liberal views on homosexuality and abortion, whilst they are less likely to trust politicians who do not believe in God.

The second apparent axis is higher confidence in the EU and believing that incomes should be unequal as an incentive in one direction, and in the other Hungarians having priority for jobs over immigrants, government ownership of business should be increased, naming immigrants/foreign workers as undesirable neighbours, and competition is harmful. This can be summarised as globalist versus statist or protectionist. The correlation between these attitudes stems from the politics of transition. As Korkut (2007) writes, the 2006 Hungarian election was broadly fought along this axis, with the MSZP arguing for faster convergence with the Maastricht criteria for Eurozone accession, while Fidesz argued for social solidarity and protectionism. This represents a paradox of Hungarian politics, that it is dominated by a former communist party which argues for privatisation, deregulation and competition, and a former liberal party that wants to defend citizens against 'rampant capitalism' (Korkut, 2007, p. 680).

Attitude Clusters. These two attitudinal axes, based around religiosity/social conservatism and economic security, do not reflect the divides in many western democracies, but they are coherent given Hungary's political history. I now use K-means cluster analysis to group voters into their broad attitudinal groups. K-means analysis groups observations (in this case respondents) into clusters, where each observation is grouped with the cluster with the closest mean. These clusters can help us take respondents who have diverse views across the attitude variables and group them by the views they are more likely to have in common. The purpose of clustering is to examine differences - demographic, attitudinal, and political - between the most coherent groups of respondents.

Firstly, I use average silhouette width to find the optimal number of clusters to group respondents into (Figure 2). Average silhouette width measures the average variation between

observations and the mean of their cluster. This shows the amount of cohesion there is within the cluster. In this case, two is the optimal number of clusters, with a higher average silhouette width meaning more coherence than any other number of clusters. With a limited number of variables and observations, there is a risk that this cluster analysis oversimplifies, but it shows the most coherent groups visible with the available data, helping us to chart the main dividing lines amongst Hungarians.

The clusters highlighted in Figure 3 show how the most coherent divide in attitudes is along the religiosity/social conservatism axis. I will refer to the cluster on the left, in light blue, as the secular/liberal cluster and the black cluster on the right as the religious/conservative cluster. To find the attitudinal differences between these clusters, I performed two-sample t-tests for each attitudinal variable. These tests show which attitudes vary significantly between respondents from each cluster and are driving the attitudinal divide. While eleven of the fourteen attitudes tested have significantly different results, in some cases the difference is small. To account for this, I include the difference in means standardized by dividing by the pooled standard deviation. These results are found in Table 2, sorted by absolute standardized difference in means.

The results show that the biggest attitudinal divides are towards homosexuality and abortion. There is then a drop-off in standardized difference in means, with attitudes towards politicians believing in God having a medium-sized difference. After that, there is a considerable drop, with attitudes towards competition and having a strong leader having the next largest differences. Attitudes towards homosexuality, abortion and secularism are the most coherent dividing line in the attitudes which I have included in the Principal Components Analysis.

Finally, I consider some of the demographic factors affecting cluster membership. These demographic variables can (in **Chapter 3**) be used to consider individual-level support for Fidesz and aggregate-level census data for individual electoral districts. Results of OLS

regression analysis are displayed in Table 3. As expected, Catholicism is positively correlated with the probability of belonging to the religious/conservative cluster, whilst having no religious denomination has a significant negative correlation. Age and education are also significantly correlated, with older people and those who left education earlier being more likely to hold conservative/religious views.

Figure 2 - Optimal number of clusters by average silhouette width.
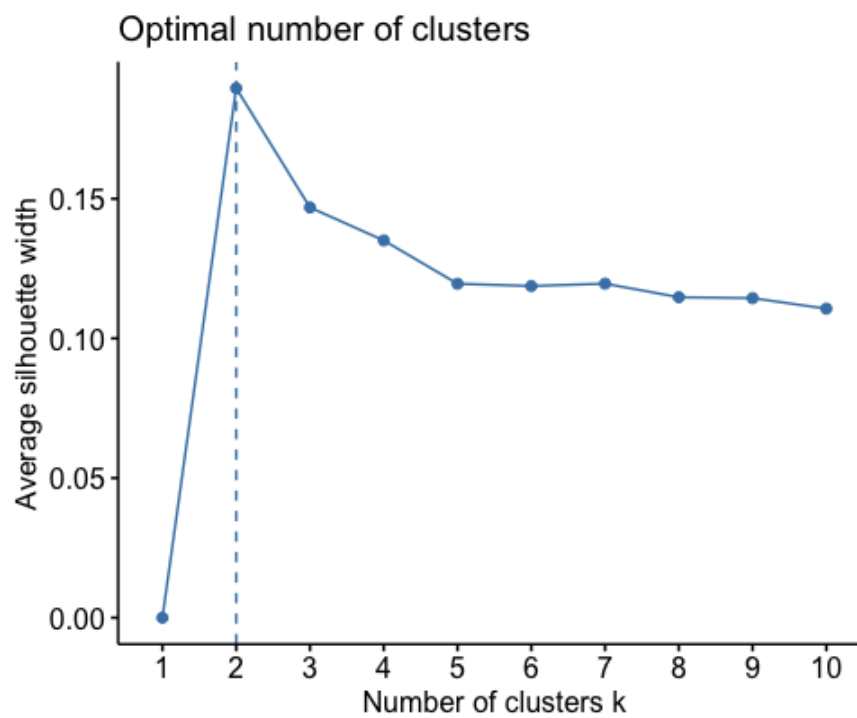
Figure 3 - Principal Components Analysis Biplot, N = 1990, with clusters marked
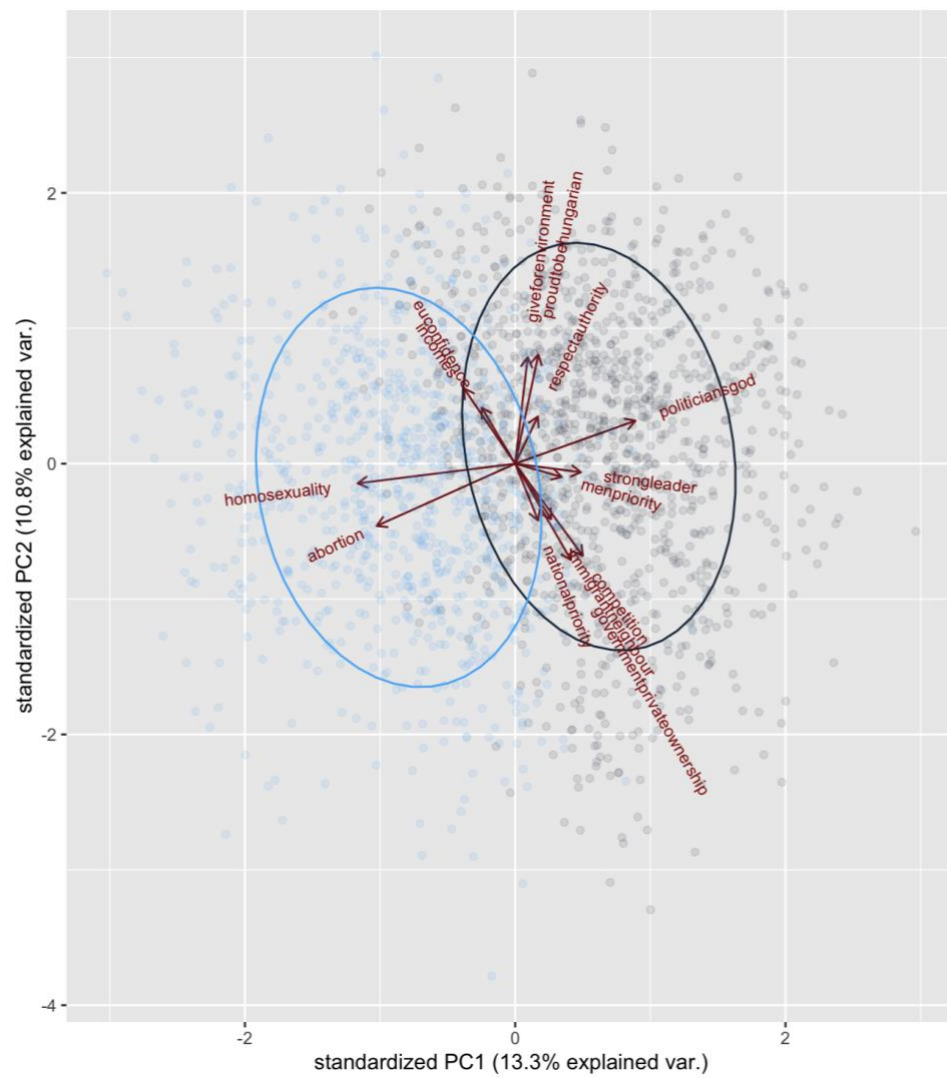
Table 2 – Variation in Attitudes Between Clusters, Independent Samples T-Test

Attitude variable	Religious/ Conservative Cluster Mean	Secular/Liberal Cluster Mean	T-Statistic	Standardized difference in means
Homosexuality	1.673575	6.396635	49.385***	1.570813
Abortion	3.177029	6.930288	37.336***	1.314608
Politicians should believe in god	-0.455095	-1.087740	-12.779***	-0.5412403
Competition	4.416235	3.894231	-5.3352***	-0.2357704
Strong leader who ignores parliament	-0.6303972	-0.9158654	-4.8262***	-0.2157123
Government versus private ownership	6.235751	5.757212	-4.3768***	-0.1961331
Incomes should be less equal	4.468912	4.991587	4.3277***	0.194621
Proud to be Hungarian	1.1640760	0.9663462	-4.1863***	-0.1908577
Confidence in the EU	-0.05440415	0.15985577	3.7956***	0.1710855
Immigrants as neighbours	-0.5932642	-0.6995192	-3.1032**	-0.1380816
Would give some income to protect environment	-0.07772021	-0.20552885	2.0726*	-0.09392699
Respect for authority	0.5526770	0.4903846	-1.9346	-0.08855957
Men should have priority for jobs	-0.6088083	-0.6706731	-1.9449	-0.08727495
Hungarians should have priority for jobs	0.7625216	0.7475962	-0.54619	-0.02496731
Observations	1158	832		

Significance levels: 0 '*' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 ' ' 1**

Table 3 - OLS Regression
**Dependent Variable = Membership of Religious/Conservative Cluster**

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Intercept	0.6461989*** (0.0522091)	0.7081085*** (0.0535048)	0.6196992*** (0.0525481)
Age	0.0042762*** (0.0006541)	0.0037732*** (0.0006589)	0.0040038*** (0.0006563)
Education	-0.0642879*** (0.0103087)	-0.0602747*** (0.0102862)	-0.0617305*** (0.0103004)
Female	-0.0373431 (0.0215253)	-0.0423177* (0.0214321)	-0.0407755 (0.0214788)
No Religious Denomination/Atheist		-0.1077777*** (0.0224872)	
Roman Catholic			0.0805063*** (0.0219997)
Unemployed	0.0999844* (0.0387982)	0.0955705* (0.0385960)	0.1018428** (0.0386809)
Roma	-0.0316868 (0.0518892)	-0.0279193 (0.0516101)	-0.0331233 (0.0517293)
Survey (WVS)	-0.0977654*** (0.0221426)	-0.1133360*** (0.0222593)	-0.1020579*** (0.0221048)
Observations	1,990	1,990	1,990
Adjusted R_2	0.05651	0.06685	0.06237

Significance levels: 0 '*' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 ' ' 1**

The Effect of Education on Attitudes. As we can see in Table 3, education has a strong, significant correlation with membership of attitudinal clusters along the religious/conservative versus secular/liberal axis. Evidence from the EVS and WVS data suggests education is one of the key demographic determinants of attitudes held by Hungarians. This is consistent with the large body of literature on the effect of education on political attitudes. To expand on this relationship, education groups can be considered, like clusters, in Principal Components Analysis (Figure 4). Broadly, those with the least education (No Secondary) are furthest to the right along the social/religious axis, whilst those who either went to grammar schools or university are furthest to the left. Meanwhile, along the globalist vs protectionist axis, having a university degree has the most marked effect. Whilst there is overlap between these clusters, the attitudinal impact is noticeable.

OLS regression of greater education levels on attitudes is considered in Table 4, controlling for other demographic variables. The table shows the coefficient of education for each attitude included in the Principal Components Analysis, which is statistically significant for 12 of the 14 attitudes. The table is sorted by absolute standardised coefficient (i.e. predicted standard deviations of change in attitude, per standard deviation increase in education) for comparability. Greater levels of education correlate with more liberal attitudes towards social issues such as homosexuality, abortion and secularism, as well as more individualistic values on issues such as income inequality, competition, and state intervention in the economy.

Figure 4 - Principal Components Analysis Biplot, N = 1990, with education groups marked
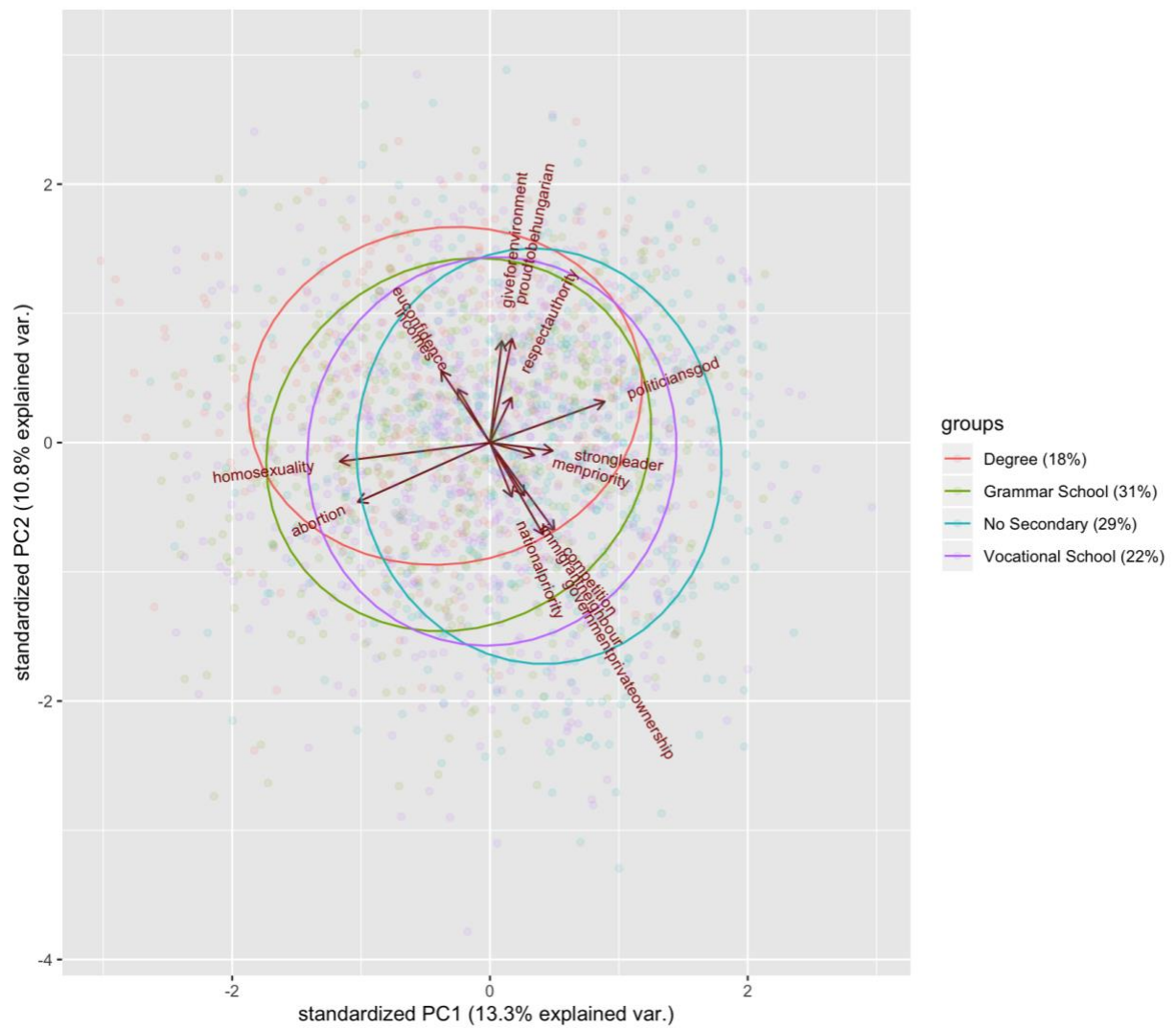
Table 4 - OLS Regression
Dependent variable = attitude variable
Independent variables = education, age, gender, Roma, Roman Catholic, atheist, county

Attitude Variable	Education Coefficient	Education Coefficient (Standardised)	
Incomes should be less equal	0.413563*** (0.051943)	0.168808965	Should be less equal
Strong leader who ignores parliament	-0.1740959*** (0.0252774)	-0.1474828551	More likely to disagree
Would give some income to protect environment	0.173844*** (0.026712)	0.140788385	More likely to agree
Competition	-0.279246*** (0.044768)	-0.1346135328	Less harmful
Men should have priority for jobs	-0.0792680*** (0.0137138)	-0.122544683	Less likely to agree
Homosexuality	0.302699*** (0.057136)	0.111369806	More justifiable
Politicians should believe in god	-0.090810*** (0.021872)	-0.086506666	More likely to disagree
Immigrants as neighbours	-0.0605228*** (0.0151470)	-0.086420083	Less likely to dislike immigrant neighbours
Abortion	0.197637*** (0.055837)	0.075816033	More justifiable
Confidence in the EU	0.072557** (0.024866)	0.063966489	More confident in the EU
Government versus private ownership	-0.137164** (0.048925)	-0.06152201	More private ownership
Proud to be Hungarian	0.044172* (0.020195)	0.0466841553	Prouder to be Hungarian
Respect for authority	-0.0180251 (0.0135253)	-0.02899632	Not significant
Hungarians should have priority for jobs	-0.0072706 (0.0115210)	-0.01368818	Not significant
Observations	2,520		

Significance levels: 0 '*' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 ' ' 1**

The Effects of Attitudes and Education on Fidesz Vote Preference. Given these attitudinal clusters and the significance of education on political attitudes, one would expect voting intentions to vary amongst these groups. This is not borne out by descriptive analysis. Table 5 summarises the voting intentions among attitudinal clusters and educational groups in the WVS and EVS surveys in 2008, once 'don't know' has been excluded. Voting intention appears to differ surprisingly little. Fidesz wins majority support across every group and the difference between Religious/Conservative voters and Secular/Liberal voters is just 8.2%. Among education groups, although Fidesz support falls with greater education, the difference is muted. Whilst the number voting for 'other' parties differs among education groups, this support is divided between multiple parties, primarily the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ), Jobbik and the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), none of which had more than 5% nationwide in the 2008/9 surveys.

Table 5 - Voting Intention Across Attitude Clusters and Education Groups

Group	Observations	Fidesz	MSZP	Other
Religious /Conservative Attitude Cluster	752	59.6%	23.3%	17.1%
Secular/Liberal Attitude Cluster	518	51.4%	27.6%	21.0%
No Secondary Education	375	59.5%	26.6%	13.9%
Vocational School	506	56.9%	24.1%	19.0%
Grammar School	325	54.2%	24.0%	21.8%
Degree	210	53.8%	23.8%	22.4%

Discussion. Using Principal Components Analysis, I have shown that the main attitudinal axes in Hungary are firstly along religious/social lines - relating to abortion, homosexuality and whether politicians should believe in God - and secondly along globalism/liberalism versus protectionism/statism - relating to the EU, competition and government intervention. The second axis reflects the politics of transition from communism to capitalism, and from reliance on the Soviet Union to membership of the EU. It is these limitations that dominated the 2006 election (Korkut, 2007) and led to centre-left parties arguing for greater privatisation, whilst the right adopted the language of social solidarity. As Berman and Snegovoya (2019, p. 14) argue, the left's acceptance of neoliberalism allowed the populist right to appeal to voters 'left behind' by economic change.

Despite not being a fundamental part of election campaigns in 2006 and 2010, cluster analysis and average silhouette width show that the religious/cultural axis causes the most coherent divide between respondents, with attitudes towards homosexuality, abortion and secularism providing the basis for two clusters (secular/liberal and religious/conservative). In the 2008/9 surveys, we can see the potential for these issues to divide Hungarians. As Lipset and Rokkan (1967, p. 26) argue: 'cleavages do not translate themselves into party oppositions as a matter of course.' Sartori (1990) goes further, to stress that the political system does not necessarily simply reflect social cleavages, but may play a role in repressing or activating them. In 2008/9, we can consider the religious/cultural attitudinal divide to be a nascent cleavage, ready to be activated or channelled by the operators of the Hungarian political system.

This emergent attitudinal divide is consistent with the expectations of Inglehart's *Silent Revolution* (1977). Inglehart theorised how western publics are moving from a greater emphasis on material wellbeing to an emphasis on quality of life, bringing a shift towards values of belonging, self-esteem and self-realization. In the West, this is caused by increasing economic security, absence of war and increasing education. Whilst Inglehart was focussed on western

countries, it is not hard to apply this theory to Hungary, with the struggles of communism giving way to values based around social issues.

Following Inglehart's argument would also be consistent with the large effect of education on secular/liberal and religious/conservative attitudinal clusters. Education is part of the societal shift towards more liberal values, but it also means uneven changes in individual-level attitudes. This effect of education is well-studied (Surridge, 2016; Stubager, 2008) and is broadly summarised as promoting more 'individualist' values (Weakliem, 2002, p. 141). This can be seen in the EVS and WVS data, with more educated respondents being more liberal on issues such as homosexuality, abortion and secularism, whilst also being more favourable towards competition, privatisation, the EU and unequal wages.

Despite the divides between attitude clusters and education groups, Fidesz in 2008 drew support from across the board. It had majority support from both attitude clusters and every education group, showing the dominance of its position in the run-up to the 2010 general election. By 2008, the MSZP had been discredited by its time in government and response to the financial crisis. As a result, Fidesz could draw both from more its natural religious/conservative base as well as more liberal 'valence' voters. Meanwhile, the MSZP held on to a small number of 'socialist conservatives', as identified by Enyedi and Todosijević (2003), explaining how its support was relatively evenly split between attitude clusters.

The 2008/9 EVS and WVS surveys show how although the 2010 election was fought over economic issues and government competency, an underlying divide in values over social issues was ready to come to the surface. While Fidesz drew from across educational and attitudinal groups to win in 2010, in government it would have to build a more sustainable and ideologically homogenous electoral coalition. It could do this by activating the nascent religious/cultural divide.

Chapter 3 - Fidesz's Approach

Once in power, Fidesz set about creating a more sustainable electoral base of support by changing the nature of party competition and repositioning to capture more socially conservative voters. This was made possible, in part, by electoral reform in 2011. Due to the importance of perceptions of democracy, Fidesz's gerrymandering options were limited, but in combination with a new electoral strategy, Fidesz exploited the reformed electoral system to dominate party competition. It did this by redrawing electoral boundaries, reducing the number of MPs and reforming the compensatory list, so Single Member Districts (SMDs) had greater importance in the electoral system. The new SMDs concentrated more educated voters into a small number of urban districts, meaning they are inefficiently distributed. Fidesz then tailored its policies and rhetoric to appeal to less educated, more conservative voters, who are overrepresented in the new system, increasing the salience of social/religious divides, rather than economic issues.

In this section, I will show how the Hungarian electoral system since 2011 has underrepresented more educated voters, I will then show how Fidesz has disproportionately increased its support among less educated voters, allowing it to build an electoral base which can win the required seats for the critical two-thirds majority. This electoral strategy has paid dividends for Fidesz because it allowed the party to minimize the electoral threat from left-liberal opposition parties whilst tacking to the right to undermine support for Jobbik.

2011 Electoral Reform. On election in 2010, Fidesz quickly announced plans to reform the electoral system. In principle, electoral reform was not a controversial proposal. All parties had supported reducing the number of deputies in the National Assembly and agreed district boundaries needed to be redrawn (Renwick, 2011). However, the government was broadly accused of gerrymandering by opposition parties. Reform was passed on an entirely partisan basis, with Fidesz pushing it through using the two-thirds supermajority. Jobbik voted against the reform, whilst the MSZP and LMP boycotted the vote to protest outside Parliament.

The opposition rejected the new electoral system as a sharp move in the majoritarian direction, to Fidesz's advantage. Through changing the formula and composition of the system's county and national tiers, Fidesz reduced the proportionality of the system and increased the likelihood of large majorities for parties elected with a plurality of votes. This raises the question of why Fidesz did not push to adopt a wholly majoritarian system. Fidesz was preoccupied with international perceptions of electoral reform. Being a member of the EU, overt infringements of democracy risked sanctions or isolation through the Article 7 process.

Csaky (2017) expands on this preoccupation with reference to media laws, describing how Fidesz used a 'two steps forward, one step back' approach, rolling back on the most contentious measures when faced with international outcry, but keeping key reforms in place. This was done whilst drawing on constant comparisons to West European examples. As Wilkin (2018) describes, the Orbán governments have grafted together the most illiberal aspects of existing legislation in European democracies, creating a uniquely illiberal system within the EU, based on examples from liberal democracies. This approach allowed Fidesz to test the willingness of European leaders to oppose them while gradually implementing illiberal and authoritarian measures. Whilst many EU leaders are now condemning Fidesz, incrementalism means that the constraints of EU membership are wearing off. As long as Fidesz has allies in

place in countries such as Poland, EU members will not find the unanimity to initiate Article 7 sanctions.

In the debate over electoral reform, Fidesz politicians frequently invoked international examples when justifying the reform (Renwick, 2011). Whilst many democracies use majoritarian systems, this is usually in the context of entrenched party systems where opposition parties win seats even in poor election years. In Hungary, where Fidesz recently won 98% of SMDs, a complete shift to majoritarianism would be too overt. Instead, Fidesz reformed the existing system to ensure that it was majoritarian in all but name.

The electoral system used in Hungary from 1990 to 2010 was a complicated mixed-member system. The first tier (SMD tier) was made up of 176 deputies elected from SMDs with a two-round system. The second tier (county tier) was elected from Hungary's 19 counties and Budapest, with a maximum of 152 deputies elected from party lists by the largest remainder method, with a requirement that a candidate had to have two-thirds of a remainder to be elected. Voters cast two ballots, one for the SMD tier and one for the county tier. Finally, a minimum of 58 deputies were elected from a national tier, based on the surplus votes from the SMD tier (those cast for losing candidates) and county tier (those not used to elect a deputy). This system was semi-proportional, with a majority of deputies elected from the county PR tier or national compensatory tier. Whilst the 2010 election was unusually disproportional - leading to a Fidesz supermajority - it was more proportional than a typical Westminster election (Gallagher, 2019).

The reformed system included several elements to bolster majoritarianism. Firstly, the reform removed the county tier entirely. Secondly, the new system changed the method of electing deputies from the national tier. Voters cast ballots in the SMD tier, as before, as well as for a 'national list'. Instead of being based on votes cast for losing candidates, the new system apportioned national tier deputies based on the 'wasted' votes in the SMD tier – including votes for winning candidates who received more votes than they needed to be elected, as well as losing

candidates – combined with the 'national list' votes. This effectively ended the compensatory element of the national tier, meaning a party could win a large majority of SMDs and go on to win many deputies from the national tier, with the wasted votes cast for their winning candidates and votes cast for their national list. Finally, the new system had a higher proportion of deputies elected from the SMD section (53% rather than 46%). The sum of these changes was a mixed electoral system which did not compensate for disproportionality in the SMD tier.

The new system was also subject to widespread accusations of gerrymandering. With a smaller number of deputies, the redrawn boundaries were bound to reduce the number of districts favourable to the opposition. Redrawing district boundaries necessitated combining liberal-left strongholds with right-leaning suburban and rural areas in larger districts. However, several further specific complaints were made against the new boundaries. With no transparency in the redistricting process, direct political gerrymandering is a possibility.

The constitution stipulated that districts must not vary in population size by more than 15% from the average, in line with the Venice Commission recommendations. Despite this requirement, districts in more pro-Fidesz areas are smaller than those in more pro-MSZP areas. In Figure 5, we can see district populations are larger in areas with high vote shares for Unity (the MSZP's joint electoral coalition with other left-liberal parties), and smaller in areas with high Fidesz vote shares.

Further, boundaries appeared to have been drawn to either concentrate opposition support into a smaller number of districts or split it between less favourable districts. Szigetvári, Tordai and Vető (2011) go as far as to say: 'the electoral system proposed…substantially limits the scope for any change of government' and conclude that it is 'not a democratic electoral system'. They use local elections to model the 2006 Hungarian election under the new electoral boundaries. Whilst in 2006 the MSZP won 107 districts (61%), Szigetvári et al found that under

the new system they would have won 47 (44%). Fidesz would go from 68 (39%) to 59 (56%).

Even in an election Fidesz lost by a clear margin, it could expect to win a majority of SMD seats.

Szigetvári, Tordai and Vető (2011) also take some specific examples to show the 'packing' (concentration) and 'cracking' (dividing) of opposition support in specific districts. The most obvious example of packing is Budapest's 7th district, where in 2014 and 2018 the MSZP won by large margins. Since opposition support has been so low in recent elections, other examples of packing are harder to identify, but in a balanced election nationwide, several districts would rack up large opposition majorities, meaning an inefficient distribution of votes. In terms of cracking, Szigetvári et al point to a number of left-leaning towns joined with rural conservative areas, including Várpalota, Gyöngyös and Szentes.

Using the 2014 election results, I show the effect of the new district boundaries using the seats-votes curve (Figure 6). In each district, a uniform swing is applied to show how a national vote share lead could transfer into SMD seats, for Unity and Fidesz. As we can see, for elections ranging between an approximately 12% Fidesz lead to a 12% Unity lead, Fidesz has a more efficient spread of votes. In an imagined 2014 election where Fidesz and Unity won the exact same number of votes in the SMD section, Fidesz would win 60 individual districts while Unity would win only 45. This is a disproportionate result that the national tier would fail to account for. As Szigetvári, Tordai and Vető (2011) write, the supposedly compensatory national tier is 'self-extinguishing'. If the party list vote were also tied, Fidesz would win a further 31 seats, whilst Unity would win 33, meaning virtually no compensation. Combined, a tied national election in 2014 would leave Fidesz with 91 seats (46%), Unity 78 (39%), Jobbik 24 (12%), LMP 6 (3%). This demonstrates how the national tier fails to compensate for disproportionality in the SMD tier, and Fidesz's advantage is embedded.

Given the lack of transparency with the redistricting process, it is hard to say what motivated the new boundaries. However, the current situation is exactly what a gerrymandered

system would look like, with the widest disparity in votes and seats appearing in an election where the two main parties are tied nationwide. Because Fidesz victories have been so crushing since 2010, we have not seen the full effect of new district boundaries, meaning many measures of gerrymandering are not fitting for Hungary. Despite this, there is clear evidence the new electoral boundaries are unfavourable for left-liberal opposition parties.

Figure 5 - District Size by Fidesz and Unity Vote Share 2014
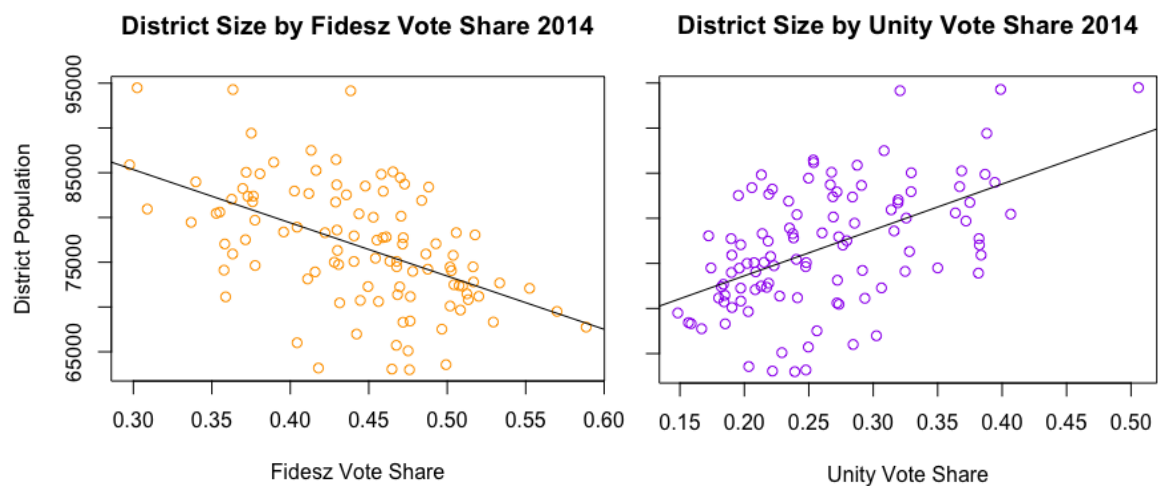
Figure 6 - Seats-Votes Curve Fidesz and Unity 2014 in the SMD Tier

(Fidesz = orange, Unity = purple)
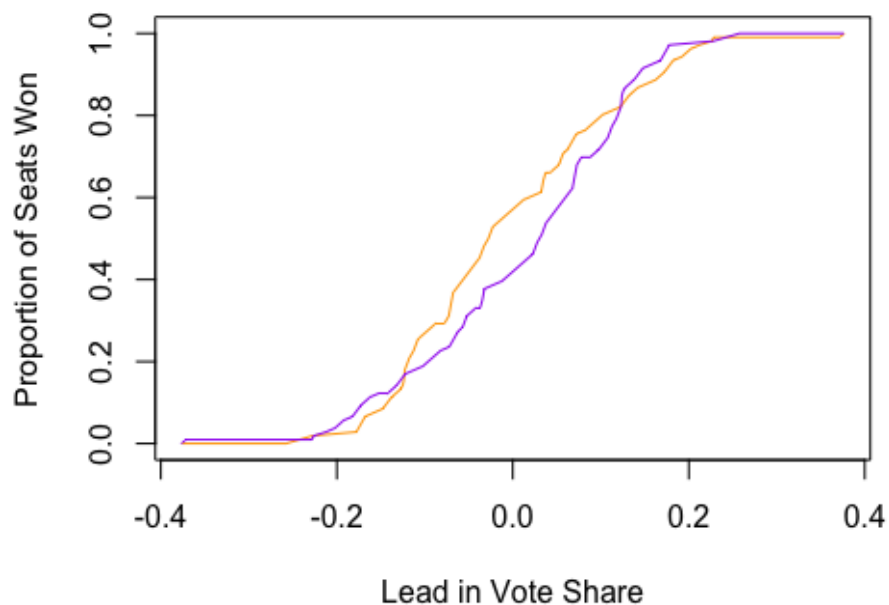
The new electoral system not only distorts voting preferences but also demographic

groups. With a national tier that no longer properly compensates for SMD tier disproportionality,

the geographical distribution of voters matters more. As we saw in **Chapter 2**, several

demographic factors correlate with attitudes. Of these, education is one of the most statistically

significant and varies substantially across electoral districts. The variation of education levels

between districts means attitudinal differences translate into varying district-level attitudes.

Figure 7 shows density plots of the proportion of each education group (highest education

achieved) in each district, based on the 2011 Census. There are large, statistically significant

skews in both university graduates and vocational school. With graduates inefficiently

concentrated in a small number of districts, the electoral system underrepresents university

graduates and overrepresents voters with vocational education. Table 6 shows this effect by

comparing the national percentage who are members of each education group with the mean and

median districts. The difference between the national percentage and mean district is explained

by malapportionment, whilst the difference between the mean and median is explained by the

skewed distribution within districts.

Figure 7 - Density Plots for Districts by Proportion Education Groups
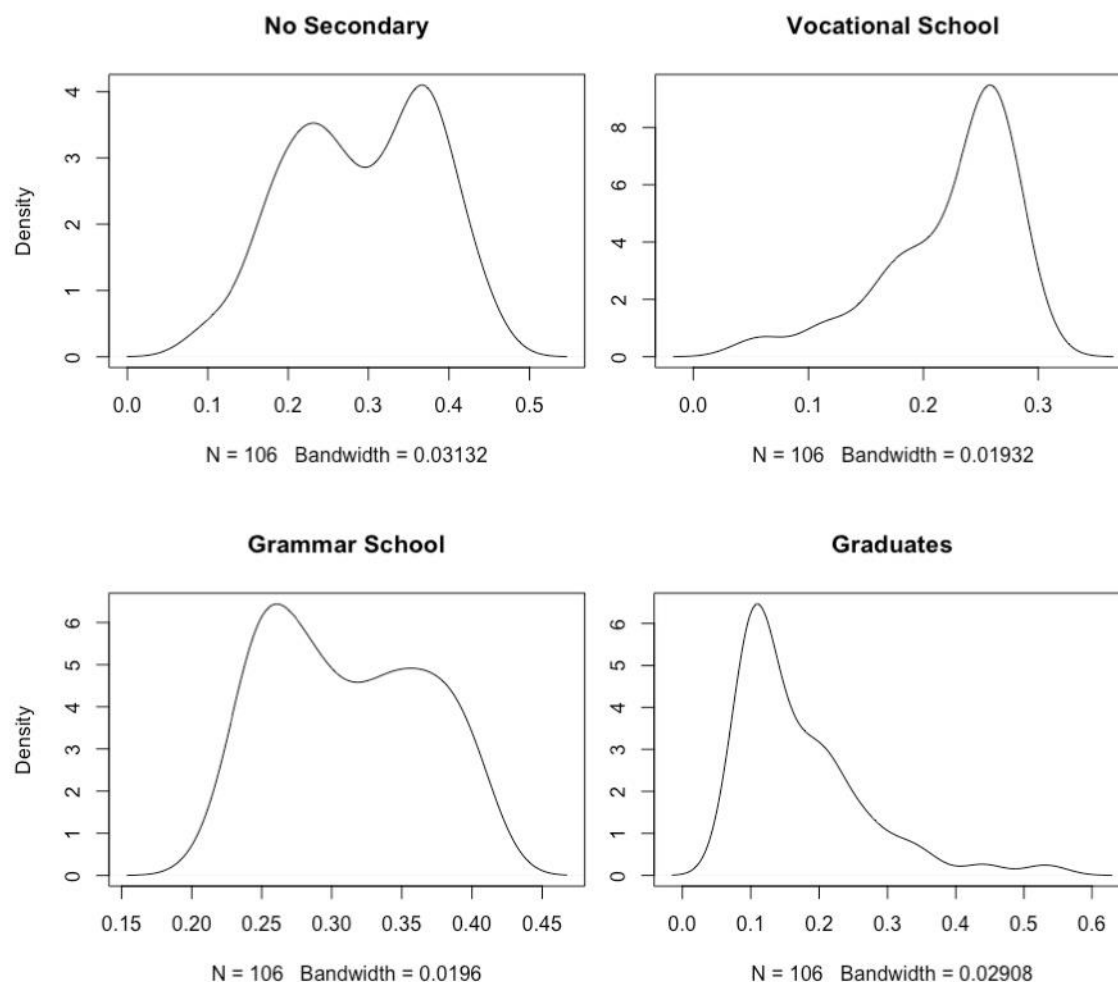
Table 6 - Percentage Highest Education Achieved Nationally and in Electoral Districts (2011 Census)

	National Percentage	Mean Electoral District	Median Electoral District	Difference
No Secondary	28.8%	29.2%	29.9%	+1.1%
Vocational School	22.2%	22.4%	24.6%	+2.4%
Grammar School	31.3%	31.1%	30.7%	-0.6%
University Graduate	17.7%	17.3%	13.5%	-4.2%

The Effect of the Electoral System. By adopting a new electoral system, in which SMDs took on greater importance, Fidesz altered the distribution of voters needed to win elections. This systematically distorts spatial competition between parties. Specifically, the SMD tier inefficiently groups the most educated voters in a small number of districts. As we have seen, education has a material effect on political attitudes, so this redistribution of voters has a major impact on the electoral arena.

Taking a Downsian approach, we can consider this in terms of the median voter. Assuming, as Downs does, that two-party competition happens along a scale of policy proposals, to win an election a party needs to win the median voter +1. Considering party competition in a similar way, but along demographic lines rather than policy, we would expect that to win an election a party needs to win the median education group. Given that 49% of Hungarians graduated grammar school or university, whilst 51% did not, there is a close competition between education groups nationwide. In a perfectly proportional system, these groups would be represented evenly. However, with the new system, which relies on competition in SMDs, this distribution is skewed. Grammar or university graduates make up a majority of voters in 41 districts (39%), meaning the median voter in 61% of districts did not complete grammar school or university.

Strategically, parties are incentivised to target these voters. On a national level, party leaders tailor their messaging and policies to win over key voters in swing districts - in this case less educated voters. On a local level too, National Assembly deputies will campaign and meet with their constituents, meaning they will likely mix with a less educated pool of voters than nationwide. After the 2014 election, for example, just 32% of Fidesz-won districts had a majority who completed grammar school or university. The average Fidesz district had 16.4% university graduates, whilst the average opposition district had 26.6%. In their districts, Fidesz deputies will

hear disproportionately from less educated voters, and feed these concerns or policy demands back to the party leadership.

Figure 8 - Representation of education and policy
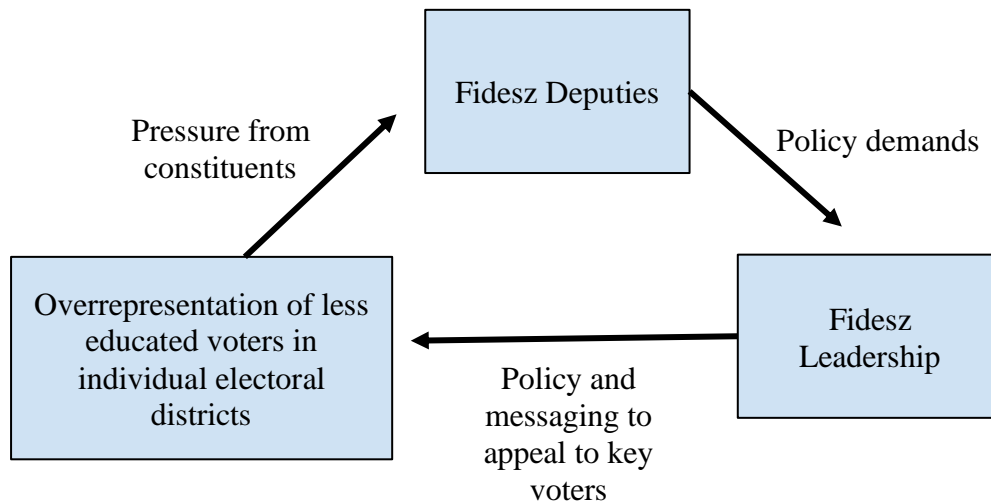
This grouping of the most educated voters into a small number of districts is not necessarily due to gerrymandering. As Rodden (2010) argues, people naturally group themselves in certain ways. More educated people tend to cluster in areas where more professional jobs are available. In Hungary, this is primarily happening in Budapest, and to a lesser extent in a few regional urban centres. Given that the attitudinal impact of education is likely, at least in part, due to socialisation (Stubager, 2008; Surridge, 2016), the clustering of more educated voters in a small number of cities means the effect is self-perpetuating. As the attitudinal gap between education groups grows, in line with Inglehart's (1977) theory, the geographical divides are also likely to grow. Even without considering district boundaries, the greater importance of SMDs in the new electoral system means this geographic divide will permeate Hungarian politics.

We saw this effect in the years following 2010. Left/liberal parties continued to perform well in Budapest, whilst Fidesz won huge numbers of more heterogeneous rural and suburban districts. Increasingly, liberal opposition parties struggled to win support outside of a small number of urban districts. Fidesz had altered the electoral arena in which parties competed, then

exploited it to its advantage and was free to shift its messaging to pursue Jobbik voters and secure its right flank.

Fidesz's New Messaging for a New Electoral Arena. The second strand of Fidesz's strategy, its remodelled political message post-2010, reflected the new political arena. As Wilkin (2018) argues, this amounted to creating a new political culture, one which placed Fidesz at the centre of party competition and created conflict over national identity and cultural issues - conflicts to which liberal parties have proved unable to adapt. Whilst in 2010 Fidesz represented a broad swathe of attitude clusters and education groups, the shift in direction after 2010 amounted to a swing to the right aimed at destroying Jobbik and dominating less liberal and less educated voters. This shift was particularly effective due to the new electoral system.

One important element of Fidesz's new electoral approach is symbolic overtures to socially conservative and religious voters. As demonstrated in **Chapter 3**, homosexuality, abortion and secularism are particularly important to placing voters along this axis. In a direct appeal to the religious/conservative cluster, Fidesz amended the constitution in 2011 to enshrine the protection of 'embryonic and foetal life…from the moment of conception', the institution of marriage as 'the union of a man and a woman', and to recognise the 'role of Christianity in preserving nationhood' (Constitute Project, 2019, pp. 3-8). Fidesz even included Jobbik's proposed references to Saint Stephen, Hungary's venerated 'founder', and the Holy Crown (Bíró-Nagy and Boros, 2016). These amendments did not change the law in any practical sense - abortion has remained legal, for example, and same-sex marriage was never recognised - so they can be considered purely as symbolic overtures to religious and socially conservative voters.

Fidesz has also adopted a policy approach which resonates with less educated voters. If we consider the attitudes which education has a statistically significant effect on (see Table 4 in section three), Fidesz appears to have opted for the position which most appeals to less educated voters in almost every category. On the issue of a 'strong leader who ignores parliament', for

example, 33.9% of respondents who had not completed secondary education thought this was 'fairly good' or 'very good', whilst only 22% of university graduates thought the same. Viktor Orbán meanwhile declared that 'the state must obviously be supervised and lead by someone; by the leaders who have been duly elected and given a mandate to do so' (Hungarian Government, 2014) and has centralised power in the Prime Minister's Office.

Similarly, whilst 63.1% of university graduates said they had 'quite a lot' or 'a great deal' of confidence in the EU, only 45.5% of those without secondary education said the same. In government, Fidesz and Orbán have attacked the EU and become increasingly Eurosceptic. High profile disputes over legal issues, especially the migrant quota, have contributed to a sense that Orbán is fighting an overbearing EU. This is despite Fidesz supporting EU accession when in government from 1998 to 2002 and during the accession process in 2003 and 2004.

The appeal to its new base also exists in economic policy. When asked to place themselves on a scale from 1-10, with 1 being 'private ownership of business should be increased' and 10 being 'government ownership of business should be increased', 54% of university graduates gave an answer of 5 or lower, compared with 38% of respondents who did not complete secondary education. From 2010 to 2015, Fidesz expanded the value of assets owned by the Hungarian state 2.5-fold (Voszka, 2018). Voszka argues that whilst this expansion is consistent with a global response to the financial crisis, under Fidesz nationalisation was intended to change the shape of capitalism, rather than deal with short-term crises. While most western governments tried to conceal nationalisation, Fidesz wrapped it in the language of social solidarity and was met with public enthusiasm.

Many of these policies not only appeal to less liberal and less educated voters, but are also aimed squarely at Jobbik supporters. As Wilkin (2018, p. 26) argues, Fidesz viewed Jobbik as the major challenger on its right flank, and has adopted Jobbik policies to try and neutralize the threat. Wilkin points to Fidesz 'lowering taxes, nationalising utility companies, reducing the

pensions of former Communist Party cadres, [introducing] public works instead of welfare, and [recognising] the right of citizenship to Hungarians living in neighbouring countries' as examples of Jobbik policies poached by Fidesz.

The focus on undermining Jobbik can also be linked to Fidesz's rhetoric on immigration. In 2015, with the rise of the migrant crisis, the government announced it would build a physical barrier along Hungary's southern border with Serbia and Croatia. In 2016, the government declared a state of emergency to deal with the migration crisis. In 2017, Orbán celebrated the fact that Central Europe was Europe's last 'migrant-free zone' (Business Insider, 2017). The Fidesz government constantly discusses migration, and its threat to 'Christian Europe', despite relatively few migrants to Hungary in recent years. The party has exploited fears around immigration to solidify its support, raising the salience of immigration to move political debate to favourable territory.

The product of the Fidesz strategy is a radically overhauled electoral arena. Whilst in 2006 and 2010, elections were fought primarily over economic issues, Fidesz in government has stressed the divide in Hungary over cultural and social issues. This reflects a new electoral system which underrepresents more educated voters, and confines left-liberal support to a small number of urban and more educated districts. Having corralled left-wing and liberal voters into a small number of districts, Fidesz was free to go after Jobbik. This new electoral arena has proven to be very favourable for Fidesz.

The New Fidesz Voter. If Fidesz successfully built a new base of electoral support by appealing to less educated and less liberal voters, we would expect voting behaviour to change comprehensively. The new Fidesz voter would look a lot more like the religious/conservative cluster from section three: less educated, older, more religious. Whilst WVS data has not been released for 2017-2020, we do have preliminary results from the 2017 EVS which contributes some convincing evidence that this is the case.

Figure 9 shows a localised regression for support for Fidesz by year of birth in the 2008/9 EVS and WVS surveys (red), compared with the 2017 EVS survey (blue). For both surveys, the average probability of supporting Fidesz was 0.563. As we can see, the transformation is stark, with Fidesz support in 2008 primarily drawn from young and middle-aged respondents (born from the mid-1950s onwards) whilst in the 2017 EVS survey, support for Fidesz drops for those born in the late 1970s onwards. Fidesz reversed its fortunes among age cohorts, rather than solely losing support from new voters. Whilst Fidesz performs below average amongst respondents who turned 18 since 2008, it has offset this by winning over Hungarians born before 1955.

Similarly, OLS regression in Table 7 shows Fidesz support has fallen amongst those who do not belong to a religious denomination. The coefficient shown in Table 7 suggests we can expect support for Fidesz to be over 22% lower amongst respondents with no religious denomination, when controlling for other demographic factors. This is a huge fall versus 2008/9, and speaks to Fidesz's focus on religious symbolism as well as policies targeted at more religious voters.

Finally, Figure 10 shows a growing educational divide in voting intentions. Whilst in 2008 there is a small gap in Fidesz support between those without secondary education and those who have completed vocational education, grammar school, or university (59%, 57%, 54% and 53%, respectively), the gap in 2017 is much larger (71%, 61%, 52%, 49%). Whilst its topline

support is the same in 2008 and 2017, Fidesz increased its share of those with no secondary education, or vocational education, but fell behind with respondents who completed grammar school or university. This supports the theory that Fidesz has built a new electoral coalition based on those with more conservative/religious social views, with the attitudinal divide among education groups manifesting itself in voting intentions.

Figure 9 - Localised Regression of Probability of Supporting Fidesz by Year of Birth, 2008/9 and 2017

Support for Fidesz by Year of Birth

Year of Birth
Red = 2008/2009, Blue = 2017
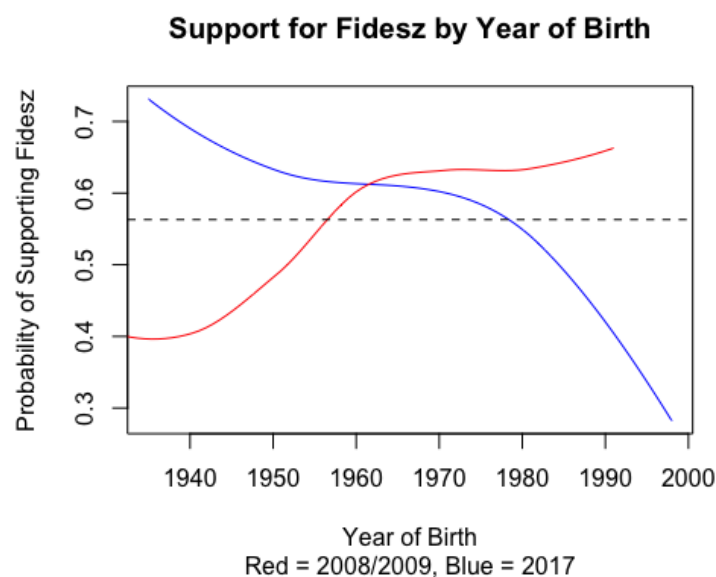
Figure 10 - Support for Fidesz by Education Group, 2008/9 and 2017

Support for Fidesz by Education Group

Education Group
Red = 2008/9, Blue = 2017
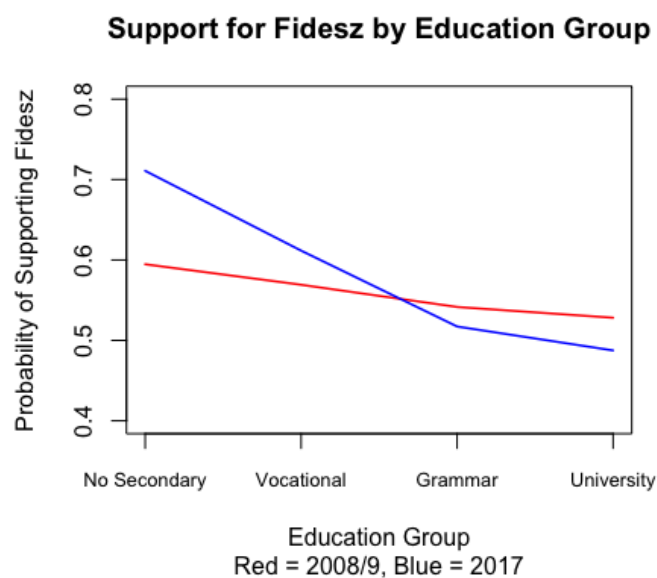
Table 7 - OLS Regression
Dependent Variable = Support for Fidesz (don't know excluded)

	2008/9	2017
Intercept	0.8767589***	0.6688529***
	(0.0628956)	(0.0823984)
Age	-0.0049799***	0.0038515***
	(0.0007849)	(0.0008215)
Female	0.0243215	0.0149053
	(0.0257641)	(0.0300303)
Education	-0.0240167*	-0.0520858***
	(0.0120274)	(0.0150456)
No Religious Denomination /Atheist	-0.0394669	-0.2212781***
	(0.0274092)	(0.0302380)
Unemployed	0.1285876**	-0.0031118
	(0.0455400)	(0.0108243)
Survey (WVS)	-0.0482382	
	(0.0262584)	
Observations	1,437	1,028
Adjusted R2	0.037	0.1029

Significance levels: 0 '*' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 ' ' 1**

This new electoral coalition is also reflected in district-level election results from 2014

and 2018. Table 8 shows OLS regression for Fidesz vote share, by district, in both 2014 and

2018, as well as for the change in Fidesz vote share across the two elections. Although

comparable data from the 2010 election is not available, we can see the effects of Fidesz's

changing coalition from 2014 to 2018. Specifically, the coefficient of the number of grammar

school or university graduates in a district increased by 0.126. This is consistent with party

competition realigning along social/religious lines. The effect of the number of grammar school

and university graduates can be seen in Figure 11. Whilst Fidesz's vote share rose nationwide, it

fell in many districts with a high proportion of more educated voters. In Budapest's 1st, 2nd, 3rd

and 4th Districts, for example, Fidesz had previously performed well despite high numbers of

more educated people. In 2018, these districts became less favourable. In Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén's 3rd district, by contrast, where only 32% completed grammar school or university, the Fidesz vote went up by 10% and the left-liberal vote collapsed.

Table 8 - OLS Regression
Vote share by district

Dependent variable	Fidesz 2014	Fidesz 2018	Change in Fidesz vote share
Intercept	0.545715***	0.709550***	0.163835***
	(0.066026)	(0.062486)	(0.045976)
Completed Grammar School or University	-0.428692***	-0.554627***	-0.125936***
	(0.052582)	(0.049763)	(0.036615)
Atheist/no religion	-0.210851***	-0.268033***	-0.057182
	(0.052507)	(0.049692)	(0.036563)
Unemployed	-1.219673	-2.170440*	-0.950767
	(0.993504)	(0.940237)	(0.691810)
Aged <40	0.065861	0.217473	0.151612
	(0.160646)	(0.152033)	(0.111863)
Roma (log)	-0.038746***	-0.018389*	0.020356**
	(0.009754)	(0.009231)	(0.006792)
Observations	106	106	106
Adjusted R^2	0.5649	0.7375	0.4878

Significance levels: 0 '*' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 ' ' 1**

Figure 11 - Fidesz District Vote Share by Proportion Grammar School or University Graduates, 2014 and 2018

Fidesz District Vote Share by Proportion Grammar School or University Graduates

Proportion Grammar School or University Graduates
Red = 2014, Green = 2018
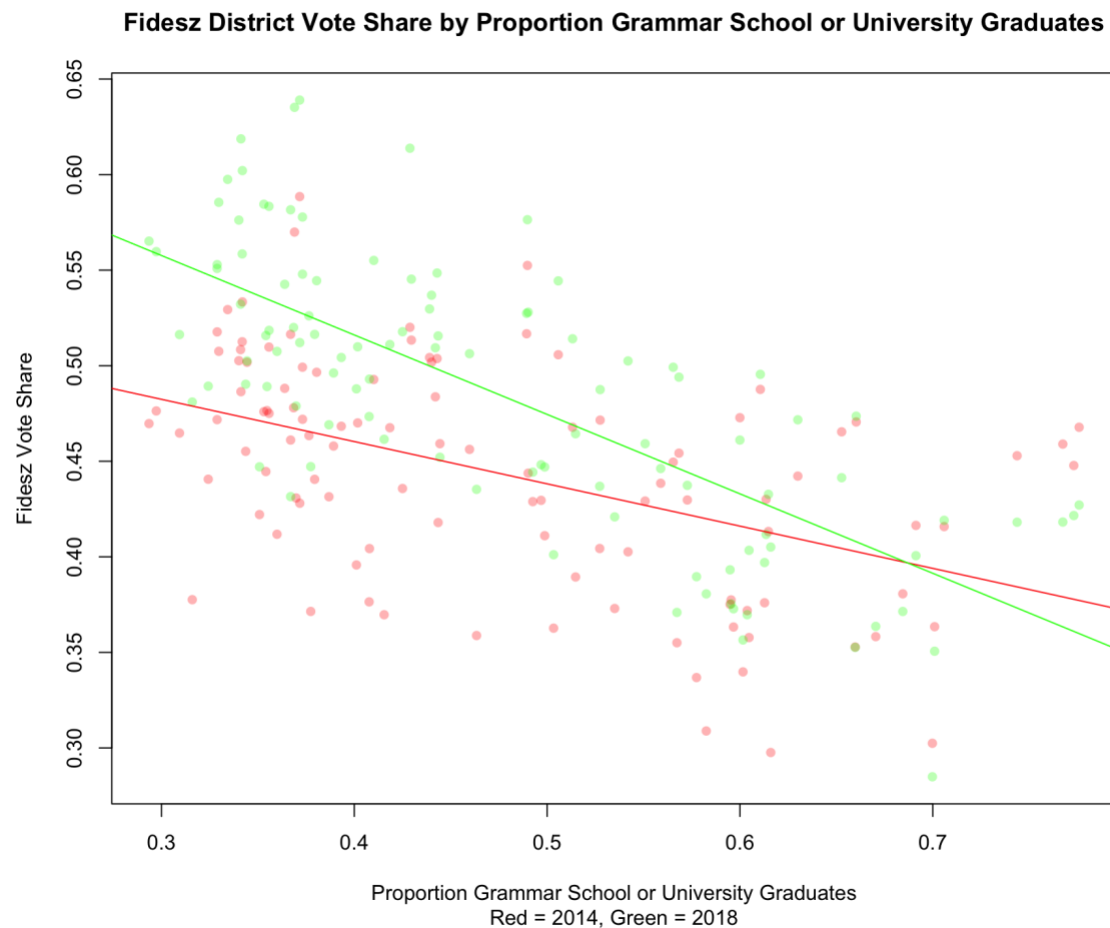
Discussion. Fidesz used a two-pronged approach to electoral competition to place debates over social/religious issues at the centre of Hungary's politics. Firstly, through electoral reform, Fidesz minimized more educated voters and supporters of the MSZP. Secondly, through its own messaging, it swung to the right to tackle Jobbik, and constructed a new base of electoral support.

Electoral reform in 2011 moved Hungary towards majoritarianism, expanding the importance of the SMD tier whilst diminishing the compensation provided by the national tier. This inevitably decreased proportionality and increased the 'winner's bonus' for Fidesz, but it also raised the importance of political geography, as SMDs became central to election victories. With new district boundaries, drawn by Fidesz without transparency, the system was widely

accused of gerrymandering. Whether deliberate or not, new district boundaries distort the distribution of education groups, underrepresenting those who graduated from grammar school or university, whilst overrepresenting those who did not complete secondary education or completed vocational courses. This changed the distribution of voters needed to win elections, and changed the incentives for party competition.

In the new state of party competition, Fidesz sought to centre issues which divided the country along cultural lines. This is the 'culture wars' approach to politics, focussing on symbolic, values-based issues such as abortion, homosexuality and religion. Fidesz used gestures on these issues to appeal to more socially conservative and religious voters. Fidesz also stressed its protectionist credentials, taking an interventionist approach to the economy and embracing the rhetoric of social solidarity. On all of these issues, Fidesz placed itself on the side of less educated voters.

This process resulted in a very different electoral coalition for Fidesz in 2018 than in 2010. The party's support base is now older, more religious and less educated. Whilst data is not currently available to test this against attitudes, the demographic shifts suggest Fidesz's support is also more socially conservative. By stressing its cultural conservatism and social solidarity, Fidesz managed to win over many of the socially conservative voters who held some nostalgia for the stability of communism, who may have previously voted for the MSZP. As Berman and Snegovoya (2019, p. 14) argue, the MSZP's embrace of neoliberalism in government created the opportunity for Fidesz to appeal to 'left behind' voters. It has also taken electoral competition onto Jobbik's home turf, tackling many of the same issues and appealing to Jobbik supporters.

The effect of this strategy is that Fidesz lost some ground amongst the most educated voters, but made large gains amongst the least educated. Looking at Figure 11, we can see why this is an appealing strategy. Although there are districts along the full range of education groups, there are a large number of districts where between 30 and 50% of people graduated

from grammar school or university. In these districts, Fidesz has performed well since 2010. While Fidesz performance is more mixed in the most educated districts, this is a small price to pay. Fidesz pulled the rug out from liberal opposition parties, leaving them confined to a small number of urban, educated districts, whilst staying on top of the Jobbik challenge in less educated areas. With the two-thirds majority of seats retained in 2014 and 2018, the Fidesz strategy has been a resounding success. In the next section, I will discuss the implications of this strategy.

Chapter 4 - Implications

By changing the electoral arena, altering the salience of issues, and targeting voters selectively, Fidesz has dominated Hungarian party competition. This has decimated the Hungarian left and liberals, confining their support to a small number of geographically concentrated areas, whilst weakening Jobbik to the right. It allowed Fidesz to retain its two-thirds supermajority in 2014 and 2018, even with fewer votes than in 2010 and minority electoral support. The two-thirds majority granted Fidesz constitution-changing powers, which allowed it to sidestep rulings of the Constitutional Court and continue along an authoritarian route. It also granted Fidesz greater legitimacy, forging alliances with populists across the world who hail Orbán's popularity, as well as giving it greater clout in disputes with the EU.

From being a major governing party, the MSZP has seen its support crumble. This is partly due to the residual effect of the *Őszöd* Speech and financial crisis, as well as accusations of corruption, but it is also an inability to fight on the new terrain of Hungarian politics. With cultural issues at the fore, the MSZP struggled to make inroads with its message of European integration and economic modernisation. The new political scene broke the MSZP's previous electoral coalition - liberal, urban, educated voters and older, socially conservative voters nostalgic for communism. With the loss of more culturally conservative aspects of the MSZP coalition, the party's fortunes turned in areas such as Heves, rural Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg in eastern Hungary. The MSZP won every district in Heves in 2006, for example, but in 2014 won only 22-25% of the vote - below its nationwide 27%.

Meanwhile, the left also suffered from division and conflict. Many of these divisions result from the splintering of the MSZP coalition, with conflict between what Berman and Snegovaya (2019, p. 16) term the 'old left' and 'new left'. Whilst the 'old left' prioritises left-wing economic policies, the 'new left' is more rooted in cultural and environmental issues, and are better able to appeal to highly educated liberal voters.

LMP, Hungary's green party, won parliamentary representation for the first time in 2010, winning over 7% of the vote in the list tier. Attitudes on environmental policy have a strong educational split. In the 2008 data, 61% of university graduates agreed they would be willing to give some of their income to tackle environmental pollution, compared with 48% of grammar school graduates, 45% of vocational school graduates, and 39% of those with no secondary education. LMP were better able to appeal to more environmentally conscious voters, who may otherwise have been more favourable to the MSZP or the joint Unity platform (2014).

Accordingly, LMP performed well in more educated areas, particularly Budapest, squeezing the MSZP among the most educated voters. As Scheppele (2014) shows, had LMP joined the Unity coalition in 2014 and transferred its votes perfectly, Unity would have more than doubled its number of individual districts from 10 to 21. Unity and LMP voters outnumbered Fidesz in Budapest districts 1, 2, 4, 6, 12, 13, 15, 18; Baranya districts 1 and 2; and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg district 1 (Scheppele, 2014). These districts all have above average numbers of grammar school and university graduates, mostly by large margins.

After 2010, the MSZP also suffered from fragmentation as factions broke away from its own ranks. Two former MSZP Prime Ministers - Gordon Bajnai and Ferenc Gyurcsány - formed parties of their own to contest the 2014 elections. Both felt they could provide a starker contrast to Orbán than the MSZP, arguing the latter had failed to renew itself. Gyurcsány's Democratic Coalition (DK) in particular criticised the MSZP for its corruption and for being out of touch. DK won almost 10% of the vote in the 2014 European Elections and whilst it only scraped over the 5% threshold in the 2018 Parliamentary Elections, DK went on to be the second-placed party in the 2019 European elections. Despite left-opposition parties managing to field a joint list of candidates in 2014, divisions on the left have undoubtedly helped Fidesz re-election.

This is not to say left-liberal opposition has experienced total decline since 2010. Left-liberal parties have experienced success in large cities and the most educated areas. As they fell

nationwide in 2018, opposition parties managed to win four more seats in Budapest, taking a majority of seats in the capital for the first time since 2006. In Baranya's 1st district - covering most of central Pécs, another highly educated city - an opposition-backed independent managed to eke out a victory. In 2019, the joint opposition candidate Gergely Karácsony defeated the incumbent Fidesz Mayor of Budapest, to international praise. However, these victories in major cities are in the context of heavy defeats elsewhere. Whilst the opposition won Budapest in 2019, Fidesz swept the board in other county assemblies, increasing its share of mandates from 2014 (Political Capital, 2019).

Fidesz's strategy also had implications for Jobbik, on the right. Whilst liberal/left parties struggled to compete over cultural issues, this competition seems well suited to Jobbik. With the salience of nationalism and Hungarian culture rising, the party increased its share of support to over 20% in 2014. However, Jobbik faces its own problems, and never seriously competed with Fidesz for control of the country.

Firstly, Jobbik faced the dilemma that many of the radical elements which propelled the party to prominence alienated it from mainstream voters. For example, Jobbik's paramilitary wing (*Magyar Gárda*) was an innovation that set the party apart from previous Hungarian radical-right initiatives, but was seen to echo the techniques of the Nazi brownshirts and Hungarian Arrow Cross fascists. Many Jobbik politicians faced accusations of antisemitism, racism and xenophobia. Secondly, as Fidesz took a turn towards social/cultural issues, it undermined Jobbik's traditional support base, poaching policies and rhetoric. Jobbik's response to these issues, directed by leader Gabor Vona, was a swing towards the centre, announced in 2013 (Csaky, 2016).

Poor results in the 2014 European Elections inspired further reform, with Vona pushing out more radical deputies and putting a new leadership team in place. The party dropped its commitment to leaving the EU and moved its emphasis towards opposition to the Orbán

government. This process was a change in both style and substance, with the party aiming to become a People's Party (*Néppártosodást*) in the style of many European national-conservative parties (Bíró-Nagy and Boros, 2016). In November 2019, Jobbik's sole Member of the European Parliament, Márton Gyöngyösi, even went as far as to suggest Jobbik could seek to join the European People's Party if Fidesz were to leave (Daily News Hungary, 2019).

By restructuring electoral politics around cultural issues, Fidesz initially created an opportunity for Jobbik. However, once Fidesz had corralled left-liberals into a limited number of districts, it could turn to secure its right flank. By adopting Jobbik policies and targeting more culturally conservative voters, Fidesz undermined Jobbik, forcing it to change direction. Initially, the party appeared to moderate while remaining on the radical right, but since defeat in the 2018 election Jobbik has continued to move to the centre, aligning more closely with left-opposition parties. In 2019, Jobbik called for a joint opposition candidate for Prime Minister in the 2022 election. It is unclear what the party's future will be, but given its fifth-place finish in the 2019 European Elections, Fidesz's approach fundamentally - and possibly fatally - undermined Jobbik.

With the MSZP and Jobbik crippled, Fidesz has profited from huge electoral victories. In 2014, despite losing almost 8% of its vote, the new electoral system gifted Fidesz another supermajority. With waning popularity and a left-wing opposition which put aside its differences to stand on a united platform, Fidesz won all but 10 of the 106 SMDs, and 123 more deputies from the national list. The more majoritarian electoral system succeeded in boosting the Fidesz seat share, whilst the party's strategy succeeded in containing Unity in a small number of urban districts (in Budapest, Szeged and Miskolc) and prevented Jobbik from winning any SMD seats. Fidesz won another supermajority in 2018, this time with a slightly higher proportion of votes. Left-liberal parties won 14 SMD districts (gaining four in Budapest, losing one in Miskolc, and gaining one in Pécs), and Jobbik won one SMD seat. Whilst the opposition gained seats in

Budapest, Fidesz increased its margin of victory across much of the rest of the country. Current polling suggests opposition parties pose no real threat to Fidesz going into the 2022 parliamentary elections.

With this dominant electoral position, Fidesz is free to pursue authoritarianism. Since 2010, this has been characterised by 'state capture' (Àgh, 2016, pp. 278-80), with Fidesz installing supporters in key civil service and judiciary positions. In 2012, Fidesz lowered the retirement age for judges by 8 years, effectively ending the terms of hundreds of judges appointed when Fidesz was out of power, meaning Fidesz could pack the judiciary with allies. Similarly, Fidesz appointed a new chief of the Prosecution Service who has failed to investigate scandals involving Fidesz politicians whilst bringing the full force of the law against opposition politicians (Kornai, 2015). Even in offices as seemingly mundane as the Central Statistical Office, Fidesz ensured positions are filled by Fidesz supporters.

With the civil service infiltrated, there is great overlap between state and party resources. State advertising, for example, is exclusively allocated to media organisations favourable to Fidesz, causing many critical media outlets to collapse. Government 'information' campaigns frequently overlap with Fidesz campaigns. During the 2014 election campaign, for example, the government wrote to voters informing them of the savings brought by the decrease in public utility prices – a key feature of the Fidesz campaign (OSCE, 2014). The Fidesz-run government is not afraid to put its thumb on the scale when it comes to elections.

Alongside state institutions, Orbán's Fidesz has constructed an intricate web of supporters in all areas of Hungarian society and the economy. EU subsidies and public procurement are used to reward Fidesz-supporting oligarchs, who toe the line and support the government. This is particularly important for media independence, with Fidesz supporters acquiring media organisations and turning them into government mouthpieces. Coupled with restrictive media laws and fines handed out for 'misinformation', there has been an overhaul of

media market. This warped media environment ensures Fidesz campaign messages are constantly broadcast to voters while opposition parties are effectively no-platformed.

Given the move towards electoral authoritarianism after the 2010 election, it is reasonable to ask why Fidesz's electoral strategy – and overwhelming victories – are so important in a political environment which is already hostile to opposition. Firstly, electoral domination has been essential for the retention of the two-thirds supermajority, allowing Fidesz to pass revisions to the constitution. This allows Fidesz to alter Hungarian politics in ways that will be hard to dismantle even if Fidesz loses power. As Bíró-Nagy (2016) argues, in the absence of a supermajority, any future government will essentially have to govern along the same path as Fidesz. It has also allowed Fidesz to sidestep decisions of the Constitutional Court, simply changing the constitution when challenged, or intimidating opponents with the threat of constitutional amendment.

Most recently, in March 2020, the supermajority allowed Fidesz to pass a bill granting Viktor Orbán state of emergency powers without a time limit. The bill suspended parliament, granted the government power to rule by decree, delayed all elections and introduced harsh penalties for 'misinformation'. This enabling act was in response to the Covid-19 global pandemic, but at the time of writing the state of emergency remains in place. It is not clear when (or if) the government intends to end the state of emergency, having rejected opposition 'sunset clause' proposals. The bill passed with the support of 137 deputies, four more than the required two-thirds majority. Whilst EU leaders have broadly condemned the bill, its passage suggests that the constraints of EU membership are now wearing off. Having tested the EU's resolve through the 2010s, Fidesz found they could implement authoritarianism with impunity and exploited the Covid-19 crisis to do so.

Secondly, electoral dominance turned the legislature – the National Assembly – into a 'law factory' (Kornai, 2015, p. 35). With Fidesz holding such a large majority of seats, there is

effectively no chance of defeating ordinary legislation in the National Assembly. As a result, there is little scrutiny from deputies. Bills are pushed through rapidly with little time for preparatory work. This removes opportunities for opposition or backbench scrutiny and grants the executive greater power over legislation. When legislation is revised, it is more often because of international or civil society pressure than legislative scrutiny.

Finally, landslide electoral victories have given Orbán's government increased legitimacy, both internationally and domestically. In his first International Press conference after the 2018 elections, for example, Orbán declared:

> From the election result I can conclude with absolute certainty that the Hungarian people have stated that they alone may decide on who they wish to live alongside in Hungary… From the election I can also conclude that the Hungarian people stood up for Hungarian sovereignty – meaning that we are a European nation which wants a strong Europe, comprising strong Member States. In my view the electorate also decided that the Hungarian government must stand up for a Europe of nations, and not a United States of Europe.

It is in the context of landslide election victories that Orbán has sought to be voice of anti-globalism and anti-migrant forces within the EU. After 2014 and 2018, congratulatory messages poured in from right-wing leaders across Europe. Closer to home, Orbán uses his landslide victories to build a narrative of Central European revolt against West European multiculturalism.

Fidesz's election victories have also contributed to a narrative which discredits all opposition as foreign or anti-Hungary. With the opposition concentrated in the most educated urban centres, Fidesz can paint opposition as elites who are not representative of Hungary. After the 2019 municipal elections, for example, Orbán emphasised how Fidesz was the strongest party across Hungary aside from Budapest, and Fidesz statements blamed opposition success on the number of foreigners living in the capital (Political Capital, 2019). Fidesz also draws on

antisemitic tropes to cast the opposition as puppets of George Soros, the billionaire Jewish philanthropist who has funded many liberal causes in Hungary and globally. In 2017, the Fidesz government launched a nationwide billboard and television advertising campaign against Soros, supposedly because of his views on migration. Large election victories do not cause xenophobia and antisemitism, but in Hungary they have contributed to a narrative of collective political will which Fidesz can exploit.

As many scholars have argued, notably Magaloni (2006), elections are a key tool for electoral authoritarians, especially for creating or maintaining a façade of democracy. This is particularly true in the constrained setting of Hungary, where EU membership necessitated a convincing democratic façade. Large election victories in 2014 and 2018 granted legitimacy, prevented defections and weakened the opposition. Fidesz's electoral strategies are central to regime survival and the nature of Hungary's slide towards authoritarianism.

Conclusion

After its landslide victory in 2010, Fidesz created an electoral coalition which has dominated Hungarian elections. The Fidesz approach is based on electoral reform, used to minimise left-liberal opposition, combined with an electoral strategy which magnifies cultural and social divides. Building a coalition of the least educated voters, Fidesz won two landslide victories on the trot. It then used its coveted two-thirds supermajority to reform the constitution, making it almost impossible for opposition parties to change Hungary's direction, even if they were to win an election. On the back of electoral domination, the damage done to Hungarian democracy may be insurmountable.

Hungary's case shows how important party competition can be to electoral authoritarianism. Whilst Fidesz benefitted from biased media, an emasculated judiciary, and dominance of socio-economic sectors, it would not have been able to implement authoritarianism without a stable electoral coalition. Election victories have granted Fidesz constitutional powers as well as domestic and international legitimacy. In a global setting where electoral authoritarianism is increasingly the product of democratic erosion, rather than failed transitions, we must be aware of authoritarians' electoral strategies.

Hungary also shows how electoral systems can inform party competition. Fidesz exploited electoral reform to minimize left-wing rivals, so it could tackle Jobbik. The new Hungarian electoral system also distorted the representation of certain demographic groups, changing the nature of party competition. In a context of rising authoritarianism, we should be aware of the effects of electoral systems or electoral reform, whether it is prohibitive thresholds, as in Turkey, attempted moves towards majoritarianism, as in Poland, or gerrymandering as in Singapore (Tan, 2013).

And, as a final striking finding from the EVS/WVS 2008/9 data, Hungary shows the cracks that are appearing in theories of democratic consolidation. Respondents were asked

whether they thought 'having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections' was a very good, fairly good, fairly bad or very bad way to govern the country. 70% said fairly bad, or very bad, including a majority of young, old, more educated, less educated, Roman Catholic, atheist, Fidesz-supporting, and MSZP-supporting respondents. Despite this strong normative support for democracy, Hungary under Orbán has slid towards authoritarianism.

This democratic erosion is, at least in part, due to the rise in 'culture wars' style politics, where rather than competing over economic or technocratic issues, party competition serves as a proxy for deeply ingrained cultural divides. In Hungary, Fidesz has successfully exploited these divides to form a sustainable electoral coalition, proclaiming to defend 'Christian Europe'. Around the world, would-be authoritarians also stand to gain from these divides. Whilst many so-called consolidated democracies have strong democratic norms, voters are more open to violating these norms when they feel their identity or culture are on the line. As Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018, p. 11) put it: 'the weakening of our democratic norms is rooted in extreme partisan polarisation - one that extends beyond policy differences into an existential conflict over race and culture.'

Hungary may not have had a perfect democracy in the aftermath of communism, but the ways Fidesz exploited cultural divides to dominate politics could be replicated. To understand the global slide towards authoritarianism, we must learn the lessons of Fidesz's electoral strategy.

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