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ORBAN'S HUNGARY - LACK OF FREEDOMS BECOMING THE MOTIVATION FOR  
HUNGARIAN EMIGRATION

by

FANNI SAMPSON

A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in International Migration Studies in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New

York

2021

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Fanni Sampson

This manuscript has been read and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in International Migration Studies in satisfaction of the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Date

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Victoria Sanford

Thesis Advisor

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Date

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Richard E. Ocejo

Executive Officer

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

## ABSTRACT

Orban's Hungary - Lack of Freedoms becoming a Motivation for Hungarian

Emigration

by

Fanni Sampson

Advisor: Victoria Sanford, PhD

In the past 10 years Hungary has gone through some major systematic changes since the Orban administration took office. The implementations of the Orban government serve the benefits and power of his party and aim to limit the freedom of Hungarian citizens. Orban, throughout these changes, emphasizes the importance of preserving the Hungarian national identity, which he defines as far-right conservative christian values and takes control over everything that does not fit under this definition. This thesis argues that the Hungarian government is becoming increasingly dictatorial under the Orban administration which not only challenges the life of Hungarian citizens but also encourages many of them to leave and find a home outside of the borders of their home country.

## PREFACE

On June 16th, 1989, thousands of citizens congregated on Heroes' Square in Budapest and millions were watching at home. All eyes were on 26-year-old Orban Viktor, the leader of "the Federation of Young Democrats or Hungarian Civic Alliance," (FIDESZ) as he delivered a forceful speech calling for Soviet troops to leave Hungary. No surrounding countries had any leader of the populace who had been brave enough to stand up against the Soviet Union's presence in their respective country (Janke, 2015). This was Orban's first time being seen as a national leader, who appeared as the only hope of the nation to lead them out of Soviet oppression. From this moment onward, Orban increasingly gained power and thus became the Prime Minister of Hungary in 1998 and would also for the second time in 2010.

Hungary is a small landlocked country of fewer than 10 million people in the heart of Central Europe. Despite the size of the country, Hungary provides a home for many World Heritage Sites such as the largest thermal lake in the world or the largest natural grassland in Europe. Its capital, Budapest, as well as most major cities of the country, are well known for its architectural landmarks of medieval castles, historical bridges, and neoclassical buildings.

Despite the country's beauty and natural riches, hardships can be found in every inch of the land. This hardship not only comes from the present authoritarian regime but carries the burden of history. Therefore, it is very important to note that for centuries, Hungary has suffered oppression and devastating tragedies from being under the domination of the Nazis and the Soviets, which sets the tone for understanding and seeing the social and political problems today.

However, the long practice of blaming the past needs to go and the Orban administration needs to take responsibility for the current problems instead of capitalizing on the nation's sorrow. The goal of this study is to bring attention to the Orban administration's actions. I would not only

like to present this to the international public but also to let my fellow Hungarians understand that life in Hungary does not need to feel so heavy.

I was born and raised in a small town of Hungary which is an incredibly insular society. Growing up there, I did not know much about the world or about other societies due to language barriers. Two years after Orban's election for his second term, in 2012 my single mother decided to cross the ocean with me out of fear. Fear of nothing in particular but everything as a whole, labelled as Hungarian future. Fear of being muted, oppressed, denied and told what you can believe in. The fear of starting over, building everything up on an unknown land without knowing anyone was less than the fear of facing our future in Hungary under the administration of FIDESZ.

I feel very fortunate that I acquired the views I have, which had been shaped by my experience growing up in Hungary and understood by my education in the United States. I want to be able to utilize the fact that I am able to see the current social and political problems from the perspective of an insider as well as from the perspective of a foreign outsider.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Hungary has gone through some major systematic changes since the Orban administration took office. Most of the implementations of his office serve the benefits and power of his party and aim to limit the freedom of Hungarian citizens. Orban, throughout these changes, emphasizes the importance of preserving Hungarian national values and explicitly and vehemently opposing everything that is not ultra-conservative, far-right ideology (Hungarian Spectrum, 2020).

Orban's authoritarian regime is the driving force of emigration from Hungary today. Orban's regime was built upon the devastating tragedies of the past centuries where the country lost the majority of its land and people, which gave birth to the acceptance of widespread conservative political ideology and the idea of victimization and mistreatment by the international community. As "*A Century of Hungarian Emigration*" by Janos Kosa shows, Hungary has experienced a major growth of political emigration during times of social and political difficulties in its history.

According to numerous studies, emigration is a natural response to social and political problems. As research published by the European Parliament in 2019 shows, migration is motivated by push and pull factors which come from both the receiving country and the country of origin. This study further states that people most often migrate to a state with a more liberal approach than the country of their origin. Therefore, if a country's liberal approach is seen as a pull factor, then another country's conservative views must be seen as a push factor.

Hungary is described as a parliamentary democratic republic. However, this thesis provides an insight to areas of everyday life where the Orban administration has been implementing changes that do not fit under the definition of democratic republic but rather a dictatorship like nondemocratic system. According to James N. Danzinger, the political science textbook definition of a dictator "might be a ruler with absolute power and authority" as well as "the absence of a

limited mandate”(James N. Danziger, 2015). Danziger further states, “that is, if the citizens have no regular and realistic opportunity to replace the political leadership, then the political system is a dictatorship”(pp.185). As this study aims to prove, Viktor Orban is a ruler with absolute power and authority as well as the citizens have no opportunity to replace Orban’s party, FIDESZ, therefore, Hungary is a form of dictatorship by definition.

Being under Orban’s administration for over a decade, the freedom of information is steadily declining while the number of emigrating citizens incline. In other words, as the freedom and access of citizens to information declines, social problems arise. According to a recent Freedom House survey, Hungary scored very low on the ‘Functioning of Government’ particularly on the ‘government operation with transparency’, which can be directly connected to the ‘lack of limited mandate’ of dictatorship. This thesis argues that the Hungarian government is becoming increasingly dictatorial under the Orban administration which not only challenges the life of Hungarian citizens but also encourages many of them to leave and find a home outside of the borders of their home country.

Furthermore, this thesis examines the changes and implementations of Orban in the past decade in an attempt to understand its multilevel influences of the emigration of Hungarian citizens. It will provide an overview of the Orban government’s control in areas from constitutional article changes, monopoly over the media, revision of the educational curriculum, embedding strong conservative views and encouraging discriminatory actions against minorities, as well as inhibiting gender equality. All of these areas have become means to deepen the roots of the Orban administration’s power and allow them to further leverage their authority. It will also be discussed how these new implementations in Hungary are causing an incline in emigration in the country.

Due to the limited information and clarity available about everything that the government does, there is a lack of studies available about the current political climate and actions by the

Hungarian government. The Orban administration restricts the freedom of citizens and access to information by taking control over the majority of media outlets and creating propaganda, which largely impacted the level of difficulty of uncovering information that is not generally available. Large portions of information provided in this paper were sourced from an independent outlet that is supported by scholars living outside of the border of Hungary who still own the power of freedom of speech. However, most of these sources focus on one particular issue such as the reform of educational curriculum, rather than looking at and discussing how all of these parts of everyday life add to the bigger plan that Orban has been orchestrating.

This study aims to bring attention to the issues of the Orban regime which have remained hidden from the international public, as well as an attempt at making these issues more visible for Hungarian citizens. Historically, as well as at the present, much of the information provided in this study has not been presented as it is to the general public of Hungary, due to the lack of transparency of the government.

### Literature Review

To really understand some of the issues that might be affecting the phenomenon of emigration from Hungary, I separated the review into several categories. First, I took a look at its history and their political ideology and how they have changed the political system for their benefit and then I narrowed it down more to Orban and the political party that he is a part of, FIDESZ. Then I looked at several aspects of Hungarian life that could be a cause for emigration, all of which were in some way being controlled and influenced by Orban and his administration. I researched press freedoms, the education sector, and discriminatory policies towards minorities. I also analyzed the constitution and did research on what changes had been made continuously to it for the purposes of manipulation and benefit of the government. I also used sources such as the

Freedom House and Reporters without border and such for their analysis on certain issues, because there were not a lot of trustworthy sources from within the country. I focused on issues of political culture, history of emigration, and the country's dynamic within the European Union (EU) to gain a better understanding of the context, external actor's influence as well as the influence of the past. I conducted a paper-by-paper analysis and looked at various sources such as peer-reviewed articles, newspapers, and websites with data to support certain claims. I needed information to study the previous history and causes of political movements and I also needed some articles specifically from those years while Orban was in office.

There are many reasons behind emigration. The general literature in the field of migration suggests that the main drivers of emigration are economic and financial purposes. There is literature which focuses on social problems as the motivator of emigration but the key issues behind those social problems point towards economic and financial reasons. Throughout my literature review, I was unable to find authoritarianism included in the main drivers of emigration today. In this study, I make a case that authoritarianism is a driver of migration that is overlooked in general and I am going to use the case of Hungary to illustrate this.

Therefore, through this study I argue that the more precise cause of emigration in the case of Hungary is the current administration and its new implementations, specifically the country's shift towards dictatorship. Due to this, the most challenging part of this project is the lack of information available on this topic because of the freedom of writing and lack of transparency on this issue. Through extensive research and analyzation methods I was able to find the necessary information, despite the impenetrable wall of absence of information online.

Besides the difficulties I faced due to the lack of information available about Hungary's recent history and politics, I was also challenged by the fact that much of the materials available

are biased with a sense of ‘nationalism.’ I also took note of the limitations of some materials that are included and of why I decided to research those. Information that is fabricated by a media outlet controlled directly by the Orban administration and the ruling party publishes extremely biased and oftentimes ‘fake’ news. Some examples were included in this study to examine them and to gain a deeper understanding of how the publication of those could benefit the Hungarian government. However, when I refer to one of these sources I make a note of the source’s origin and potential bias.

The limitations and lack of information available on the causes of migration from Hungary during the time of the Orban administration can largely impact the outcome of the research. In a piece by Julianna Puskás, *Hungarian Migration Patterns: New Research in Hungary*, she discusses how there is a plethora of information and data available on the topic of emigration, and research data from 1880 up to 1914 is available (Puskás, 1983). However, she argues that these sources “can yield no picture of the complexity of emigration as a social phenomenon, and can give no indication of its development or its component factors” (Puskás,1983). Through her research of not only sources but also oral groundwork and meeting with the diaspora communities she found that one of the main reasons that people emigrated was for financial reasons. One of the limitations in this study is that she mainly focuses on emigration from Hungary to the United States. She mentions how many Hungarians only wanted to emigrate for a short period of time, not settle in the United States. Through her research, she found that about 50% of those that did emigrate came back after 3 or 5 years. Another issue that might impose limitations on this study is that it is not during the administration of Orban and FIDESZ. Therefore, these Hungarians at the time had a Hungary which they wanted to come back to and settle in and were not being manipulated and controlled by an authoritarian government. She also talks about comparative studies and how they show that Hungary was “among the European countries most severely affected by

emigration,”(pp.268) which is a claim that can still be made today. This study shows some very interesting and great observations about emigration from Hungary, but due to the limited data of the causes of migration from Hungary since Orban took power I am unable to utilize this research further in my study.

Social problems are great motivators of emigrating citizens. Another older paper written by John Kosa, titled *A Century of Hungarian Emigration, 1850-1950*. He begins his discussion by stating that “Grave social problems determined those ultimate motives which prompted large masses to leave behind the well-known boundaries of their native land” (Kosa, 1956). He discusses much of the history behind immigration and emigration in the country. He talks about issues such as lack of social mobility and feudalism which plagued the country. Even during the 1850s the absolutist government was controlling emigration from the country. They even introduced emigration permits, and they only increased their control due to illegal emigration. However, they did easily give permits to those who had previously tried to organize the poor class to stand up against the government, because they believed them to be a “good riddance.” They also gave certain minorities and other ethnic groups permits easily because they wanted to “lessen the rate of national minorities in the total population of the country” (Kosa, 1956). Through this and other means the government's aim was to “safeguard the powers and privileges of the ruling class”(Kosa, 1956). Although the tactics are different today, the aim of the ‘new’ Orban administration is the same as will be seen later in this paper. Therefore, many others, mainly from the poor class, had to resort to illegal methods to leave the country, for which there is no proof available. Similar trends would continue under the various governments and issues such as discrimination against minority groups would also. Kosa argues that the emigration trends in the country throughout history are “connected rather with such factors as general social problems and with political events” and “these are factors which must be considered important in appraising emigration from

many European countries.” Although he mentioned social problems as being a major reason for emigration he does not discuss many of them except the main ones which are socio-economic statuses and minorities. As mentioned before, the limitation of this study as the limitation of much literature in this field is that, it connects social problems directly to economic issues as well as focusing on major political events rather than the system of government as the driving force of emigration. Kosa also does not discuss whether or how the lack of freedoms or control that the governments had over certain aspects of society increased the desires of the people to leave.

Including a study that was conducted at a time after Orban’s first term brings light to a different set of limitations that might all studies in this field face. In an extensive research paper by Boróka Bodacz-Nagy, Irén Gödri and Béla Soltész titled *Immigration or emigration country? Migration trends and their socio-economic background in Hungary: A longer-term historical perspective* they offer both qualitative and quantitative research into this area. They mention that “a more serious problem is the lack of reliable national data about the emigration of Hungarian citizens: neither their various characteristics nor their exact number is known. Changes in emigration trends and the number and characteristics of Hungarians living abroad will therefore be presented mostly on the basis of the mirror statistics”(Bodacz-Nagy et al., 2014). Therefore, although there is data showing that there are an increasing number of Hungarians emigrating, those numbers might be inaccurate due to transparency issues, and generally the number is underestimated. Another aspect they discussed was the fact that “Outward migration started to rise in 2007–2008 and the issue of emigration has gradually become a key topic in Hungarian public discourse. It is widely believed that current out-migrants are younger and more skilled than the Hungarian average. Outward migration is particularly high among doctors and healthcare professionals, engineers, technical workers and students.”(Bodacz-Nagy et al., 2014) This period of time was a bit after Orban’s first term and a little before his second term. Their quantitative

research shows that there is a “growing trend of emigration of the past few years that is clearly also reflected in the Hungarian data.” However, they were mainly examining the trends in emigration and migration, they were not really looking deeply into the reasons behind emigration as this paper. Therefore, in my paper I hope to take all this information and consolidate as much as possible. Furthermore, the high rates of emigrating young professionals also indicates systematic problems in the political sphere and a strong connection to authoritarian regimes (Bodacz-Nagy et al., 2014).

## CHAPTER 2: HISTORY OF HUNGARIAN MIGRATION

It is particularly important to provide a brief overview of history to understand the culture and the society’s past experiences around migration. By learning about Hungary’s experience and history of migration we can better understand how and why the Hungarian people react to social and political problem This study I argue that the Orban administration’s implementations shifting the Hungarian democracy to a dictatorial system which not only challenges the life of Hungarian citizens but also encourages many of them to leave and find a home outside of the borders. Throughout this chapter, we see how the country has been exploited, oppressed and divided for centuries imbedding resistance in the society towards anything that is new or foreign and how the current government uses this to increase their power which makes Hungary become more of a dictatorship.

According to Andras L. Pap, (Research Chair and Head of Department for the Study of Constitutionalism and the Rule of Law, Hungarian Academy of Sciences Centre for Social Sciences), it is very important to note that the conservative political ideology continues to center around 1920 when Hungary lost two-thirds of its territory. The Treaty of Trianon, at the time when

the country lost the majority of its land and people, remains a symbol of Hungarians' victimization and mistreatment by the international community (Pap 2018). Hungary and especially the Orban administration has been built on the narratives of victimhood, which allows for the culture of frustration and to blame others for failures and lack of success.

Hungary went through devastating tragedies long before the Treaty of Trianon. The lengthy wars with the Turks and the great devastation inflicted by the Turkish rule depleted the Hungarian population (Kosa, 1956). In the 1700s the area was largely underpopulated and many old villages had disappeared, even Buda and Pest had been destroyed. Due to there being a large area of uncultivated land, immigrants began to flow into Hungary, mainly from Germany. Over the next century, Hungary was on the list of top countries to immigrate to. However, by the 1850s the immigrants subsided and a social movement started, especially after the abolition of serfdom (Kosa, 1956). From 1848 to 1849 the Hungarian Civic Revolution and the War of Independence became cornerstones in the history of Hungary and were a major part of forming the Hungarian national identity that we continue to see today. As a result of the revolution, the first wave of large political emigration had started.

The second wave of political emigration from Hungary came with another revolution following the mass emigration of Hungarian Jews between 1880 and 1910 (Prepuk 1995). In 1956 another Hungarian uprising began, but this time against the Hungarian People's Republic and its Soviet-imposed policies. Rebels won the first phase of the revolution when Imre Nagy became the Prime Minister. Nagy was a committed communist and he agreed to establish a multiparty system. Within a few weeks of the outbreak of the revolution, he declared Hungarian neutrality and reached out to western powers, as well as to the United Nations for support (Rainer, 2008). Three days later the Soviet Union invaded Hungary, stopped the revolution and executed Imre Nagy for treason.

The mass emigration of 1956 was nothing like the current one in size, even though in 1956 approximately 230,000 people left the country (Hungarian Spectrum, 2020). The Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) published its yearly publication “International Migration Outlook 2018”, which was also summarized on ‘Portfolio.hu’, where the approximate number of Hungarian emigrants were shown. It is hard to estimate, first, because Hungary is part of the European Union and second, because of the lack of data on returning citizens. “Specifically, in 2019, almost 200,000 Hungarians resided in Germany, another 83,000 in Austria, and 78,000 in the United Kingdom” (Statista, 2020). However, according to the numbers in the International Migration Outlook, about 600,000 Hungarian citizens were working abroad in the European Union, which does not include emigrants outside of the European Union. It is almost 3 times the number of Hungarian citizens who emigrated than in 1956. According to the United Nations, the country is on the list of the world’s “fastest-declining populations, is facing a demographic crisis” and “projects there will be at least 15 percent fewer people in the country by 2050” (United Nations, 2020).

While emigration is on an incline curve, the population of Hungary continues to decrease. The public rightfully experiences the growth of available jobs, however, it is not because there are more jobs created, but rather because of the decrease of the workforce to do the already existing jobs. Laszlo Parragh, the president of the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and an extremely influential advisor to Orban (Hungarian Spectrum, 2020) made a report where he stated that there are not enough “White Christian” workers who could be enticed to settle in Hungary. It is not a secret that the Orban administration is strongly against allowing immigrants and refugees from Middle Eastern countries to settle in Hungary due to the lack of their Christian values and

their race. Therefore, the country continues to struggle with a decrease in the workforce due to emigration and also low birth rates in the country (Hopkins, 2019).

Orban has been using various tactics to not only get what he wants but also garner people's support, from increasing spending on family support programs and decreasing requirements on students for employment. For the citizens who are not following politics and the actions of the Orban administration, the support of family programs and decreased requirements for employment might seem appealing, however, for those who understand the current economic situation of the country, this very same action of Orban might appear problematic for the present and the future.

Finding sources of history about Hungary's oppression or devastating times has been the least challenging part of this study. The country has been emphasizing its loss and difficulties to the extent that many times it appears as the Hungarians are blaming their history for their present circumstances. Therefore, it is not rare to find sources where the history is discussed as the 'cause' rather than a fact.

Regardless of the ease that I experienced while researching the Hungarian history, it has been quite challenging to find sources that compare studies of the past with current actions of the leading political party. The comparatively ample information about the Hungarian emigration in the past lead to misconceptions about the causes of emigration in the present. Furthermore, there hasn't been any scholarly explorations into the causes of Hungarian emigration today and thus we are unable to discover the roots and motivators of migration, however, they are probably different from the past due to the different political system and values in place. Despite the uncertainty of the research, in this chapter we were able to gain a deeper understanding of how different waves of emigration passed through Hungary and how the current one should be taken as seriously if not more than the ones in the past.

## CHAPTER 3: SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS THAT INFLUENCE MIGRATION

To be able to understand how an authoritarian government challenges the life of its citizens and how these challenges influence them to leave their home country, we need to gain understanding of its political culture and their social and political problems that influence migration. This chapter is an attempt to offer an insight of how citizens view and value their political culture and political rights. Furthermore, it provides a brief explanation of the current state of Hungarian emigration.

Hungary is a closed, insular society that is frustrated with the European Union and the development of capitalism, however, it manages to have a high tolerance for corruption. According to the Hungarian Spectrum, Hungarians have especially low levels of trust in their politicians, bankers, and journalists, which might be the result of their past experiences with community leaders whose power had been associated with bankers and journalists. Therefore, many citizens would rather avoid crossing paths with any of them. In a study from 2015, 58% of Hungarians expressed little to no interest in politics and 41% reported no interest in solving social problems (Van Til, 2015). If this is the attitude and outlook of a large part of the society, it is understandable why Orbán's new regime resonates so well with the Hungarian public.

Prior to the pandemic, the Orbán administration deemed migrants and the European Union as the greatest external threats that the country faces (Hungarian Spectrum, 2021). Through Orbán's absolute control of the media, he was easily able to influence the Hungarian populace into believing that such threats were coming to destroy Hungarian values and national identity that Hungarians have fought so long for. Orbán's message resonates with the general public because he stands up for Hungarian nationalism and is seemingly protecting the nation from the external threats he created in the mind of the public in the form of migrants who are coming to destroy the

Hungarian culture including Christian values; and from the EU, which is trying to force Hungary to be open-minded and more democratic. Orban has emphasized these exacerbated external threats during his last election. Therefore, Orban actively stands up for keeping the country and its people isolated, thereby remaining insular, which is also reflected by Orban's party's motto: "If you are not with us, you're against us." Through such tactics, Orban is gaining massive support all while keeping the people figuratively blindfolded.

As an attempt to offer a historical perspective of political culture to understand the present one, we need to note that Hungary has suffered a long history of oppression from communist forces to socialist transitions. Emigration represents a natural response to many problems that have swept through the country throughout many centuries. "Grave social problems determined those ultimate motives which prompted large masses to leave behind the well-known boundaries of their native land to try their luck in a strange country" (Kosa, 1956). In other words, many people have left due to the seriousness of social and political problems suffered in Hungary.

As this chapter discusses race, religion, history of social problems and the lack of engagement and interest of citizens in political life indicates the social and political problems that are currently present in the country. The country's history is presented as a sad, oppressive, and demoralizing story that is emphasizing its loss and difficulties in every source I found to the extent that many times it appears as they are blaming their history for their present circumstances. Orban uses this opportunity and instead of taking responsibility for the current problems, he connects these problems to the past history. This fear of the past allows him to gain more power and control of his small country by implementing manipulative rhetoric. However, regardless of the pain of Hungarian ancestors, the discussion about race, religion and political and social issues are presented with enormous pride, confidence, and superiority towards other nations. Hungarian

society seems to retain this sense of superiority, especially towards nations of different races and religions.

## CHAPTER 4: POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS IN HUNGARY: SLIDING TOWARD AUTHORITARIANISM

In order to have a deeper understanding of social and political problems that influence migration out of Hungary, we not only need to learn about the political culture that is embedded in society and people's lives but also understand the engine of politics and how it works. In this situation, the engine is the FIDESZ.

FIDESZ, or the "Federation of Young Democrats or Hungarian Civic Alliance," is a center-right political party. The formation of this political party was inspired by communist forces in Hungary aiming to integrate with other European countries, promote market economy, and initiate separation from the Soviet Union. FIDESZ's success started in 1990 at the National Assembly, upon winning 22 seats. Seven years later, a Christian Democratic group joined FIDESZ, and together they formed the largest bloc, as a result of which, the following year FIDESZ managed to win 148 seats at the National Assembly. Forming a coalition government, Viktor Orban became Prime Minister for the first time. (Fidesz, 2020) However, in 2002 a socialist ruling took over for 8 years before Orban was able to capitalize on the collapse of the economy and be reelected.

Since 2010, FIDESZ has seen unprecedented success at being able to alter the electoral system in Hungary.(Richman, 2020) Presently, the country has a mixed electoral system, which comprises single-member district elections, and seats are given based on the percentage of votes each party receives. Thus, after "FIDESZ won a supermajority in 2010, it rewrote the constitution to increase the portion of seats in the Hungarian parliament that are won in single-member districts

and to eliminate two-round provisions for the single-member districts” (Richman, 2020). When FIDESZ won in 2010, they set themselves up to be in a position to be able to alter and rewrite constitutional amendments to protect and serve their self-interests, which were to remain in power. Due to this change in the constitution and the portion of seats in the parliament, FIDESZ no longer had to worry over upcoming elections. The opposition's votes remained divided between other parties, therefore, unless the opposition parties decide to unite, they would not be able to take power over the reigns from the FIDESZ. For instance, during the election in 2014, FIDESZ won 91% of single-member districts, but they only won 45% of the nationwide votes and the majority of that was in only 20 districts out of 106 (Richman, 2020). Therefore, Orban made it impossible for the citizens to vote his party out since his supporters were already embedded in the system, or in other words, Orban had built a system for his supporters. Not surprisingly, Orban won a majority in 2018 as well, thereby he was elected for his third term. During this term, the Hungarian democracy became increasingly authoritarian. However, Viktor Orban did not only win because of the changes he made in the parliament and the government system before his third term but also because he was convincing the citizens that he was the only person who could protect the Hungarian nation from the monsters that were coming to get them in the form of Muslim migrants, Hungarian-born billionaire George Soros and the EU bureaucrats (Druckerman, 2018).

FIDESZ is currently attempting to preserve its control over state institutions through a series of well-funded foundations to keep themselves in power for the 2022 election. Viktor Orban has done plenty to secure his power over the past 10 years, however, his latest plan is to set up a parallel state that would allow him and his allies to remain in control of most areas of Hungarian life even after they are no longer in office (Verseck, 2021). In January 2021, The National Assembly passed a bill to allow for the establishment of non-governmental agencies to manage public assets. Most foundations are interested in taking over state universities as well as hospitals.

However, other foundations are also interested in public life such as art, sports, environment and agriculture, and international relations. According to Andras Schiffer, who is a Hungarian lawyer and a former politician, every future cabinet would need to share power with a “parallel government run by Viktor Orban and embedded and hidden deeply in the administration” (Verseck, 2021). For instance, Mathias Corvinus Collegium is a very small insignificant organization that was set up by FIDESZ supporter Andras Tombor to educate and train people for leadership positions. In a very short time, Mathias Corvinus Collegium obtained 10% of the Hungarian Oil Giant, MOL, and Gedeon Richter, the pharmaceutical company which is estimated to be worth \$1.2 billion (Verseck, 2021). The Orban administration has designed these foundations to be independent and not be subject to state control. Furthermore, to ensure the smooth function of these foundations that are parallel run (Hungarian Spectrum, 2020), in December 2020, a constitutional amendment was passed by FIDESZ, which states that a two-thirds parliamentary vote is now needed for any changes to be made to how foundations operate in Hungary. As stated above, it is very unlikely that any other party will have a two-thirds majority in the near future. As Keno Verseck’s article says, “Boards of trustees will run the foundations, and members have already been appointed to indefinite terms. Successors will be appointed by the boards themselves. Ministers and secretaries of state, as well as many business people who are close to Orban, currently number among the known trustees.” The opposition parties are criticizing the idea of the privatization of state-owned entities. They say, it is going to be a transfer of public funds to private funds, which they labeled as “theft” as they believe that these foundations must be abolished and assets must be returned to the state thus to the public. However, the only way to go against this would require constitutional revolution (Verseck, 2021).

The Freedom House has rated Hungary’s “freedom” as 70 out of 100 in 2020. Hungary’s “freedom” index has been examined and calculated through various aspects, but they have been

divided into two major parts,” Political Rights” and “Civil Liberties.” Hungary scored 27 out of 40 on Political rights and 43 out of 60 when it came to Civil Liberties (Freedom House, 2020). In regards to “Political Pluralism and Participation,” a question being asked includes “Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections?” (Freedom House, 2020) Hungary has scored particularly low in this area as well. The opposition parties are facing increased obstacles and restrictions that hinder their ability to gain power. Such impediments “include unequal access to media, smear campaigns, politicized audits, and a campaign environment skewed by the ruling coalition’s mobilization of state resources” (Freedom House, 2020). In 2018, Orban was competing for his third term and while polls were generally well administered, opposition parties had still faced serious obstacles to compete against FIDESZ. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe stated that it recognized the “pervasive overlap between state and ruling party resources,” (OSCE, 2019) which in many instances was not distinguishable by ordinary citizens not brought to their attention. In other words, government advertising and FIDESZ campaigns walked hand in hand. OSCE’s media monitoring mission had also highlighted that the ruling party, FIDESZ, has made Hungary’s public broadcaster propagate and distribute its message and political campaign propaganda, which they called, “clear patterns of political bias” (OSCE). Furthermore, the Freedom House also indicated that the Orban government had effective control over the State Audit Office. This office monitors and sets rules for campaign activities in the nation, which are controlled by a former FIDESZ member, therefore, it was no shock as to why opposition parties were left without many resources (Freedom House).

As this chapter discussed the operation and unprecedented success of FIDESZ, we were able to have a better understanding of how it would influence migration out of Hungary. The Orban administration made it nearly impossible for the citizens to vote out FIDESZ by making sure that FIDESZ’s supporters are embedded in the system. Furthermore, they are currently attempting not

only to preserve but to gain even further control by taking over and privatizing state institutions. As it has already appeared for the international public, the freedom of Hungarian citizens is steadily declining and there is nothing that the international community or in this case, the European Union can do due to the large support of Orban from the citizens of Hungary. However, in this chapter I wanted to draw attention to the acts of Orban administration and making it more visible. Furthermore, emphasizing that these actions are not only upsetting and unfair, but creating social and political problems that are push factors of citizens who are considering migration.

## CHAPTER 5: PRESS FREEDOM

The Hungarian press freedoms and rights have been continuously dwindling since Orban returned to power in 2010. As the previous chapters in this study provided different kinds of background information and discussed how those are key players of Hungarian emigration. In this and the following chapters this study is going to analyze specific areas in what I see as the Orban administration affecting Hungarian lives in such a way that drives people out of the country.

According to Reporters Without Borders's research from 2019, it has been confirmed that there has been a dramatic decline in press freedom in Hungary. Using physical violence to remove unwanted journalists is a very common practice in autocratic regimes, however, Viktor Orban has chosen a different strategy. This strategy is to silence the press through manipulation of the media market which provides information to the citizens that are not approved by the Orban administration. By reconstructing the media into a pro-government media platform, Orban has created an extremely powerful propaganda tool to promote his administration and aspects which

are beneficial to them by controlling the provided information to the majority of the public and maintain FIDESZ's power.

The conclusion of the research conducted by Reporters Without Borders includes the following: "To silence media criticism, the government has used a range of well-oiled methods including acquisitions of media outlets, forced closures, controlling the management of independent media, and smear campaigns against outspoken reporters. As a result, much of the population, especially in rural areas, has been deprived of independently reported news and information" (RSF, 2019). The research strongly emphasizes the lack of pluralism in media and oligarchs who are tied to the government seizing the opportunity by buying independent media outlets. Businessmen close to Orban can buy the national media outlets and control the narrative that is being produced and disseminated. This becomes possible because the regulatory system of media is only controlled by the Orban administration. "All five members of the Media Council, which has repeatedly obstructed critical journalists, are appointed by FIDESZ" (RSF, 2019). This is especially problematic because the marginalization of independent media outlets is growing due to the growing majority of pro-government media. The report from RSF also explains that the hands of the European Union are tied when it comes to preventing a member state from flouting the freedom of the press within the country. Since the European Union is not able to stop Orban and his administration from selling independent media outlets to people who have close ties to the government, the Orban administration is enabled to corrupt more media outlets openly and freely.

The Hungarian Constitution's Article IX, paragraph two states, "Hungary shall recognize and protect the freedom and diversity of the press, and shall ensure the conditions for free dissemination of information necessary for the formation of democratic public opinion" (Hungarian Constitution). However, as Eva S. Balogh, (a professor of East European History at Yale, who has published several studies on Hungarian foreign policy and party politics between the two world

wars and editor of Hungarian Spectrum) said in a blog post on the Hungarian Spectrum, that this constitutional guarantee is not borne out in reality as it is known by anyone who follows Hungarian politics and watches the Hungarian media. In this climate, the ideological division in the media between pro-government and independent media has been replaced by left and right-wing supported media. In other words, the media outlet is either controlled by the government or smeared as political activists, traitors, or “haters of Hungary” (EFJ, 2020).

Magyar Televizio (Hungarian Television) is the oldest nationwide public television broadcaster and is managed by the Mediaszolgalatas-tamogato es Vagyonkezero Alap (Media Service Support and Asset Management Fund), which is a government organization formed in 2011. In other words, the Magyar Televizio is owned by the government and is being controlled by FIDESZ. The work and relationship dynamics within a media outlet completely owned and controlled by a political party can be complicated. One such outlet operating under these conditions is M1, the news channel of Magyar Televizio. Balazs Bende is a high-ranking editor at the Magyar Televizio and practically speaking, he is in charge of everything that has to do with M1’s foreign news coverage. At the beginning of the 2019 EU parliamentary election, the staff who was working on the foreign news reporting at M1 was called in for a meeting. Every staff member had to surrender their phones as they arrived at the meeting. It was Eva S. Balogh who transcribed and translated the available recording from the meeting:

As per Balazs Bende: *“All of you know that at the end of May, there will be European parliamentary elections, and I’m also sure that nobody will be surprised to hear that in this building we are not in the support of the opposition’s collaboration efforts. If that announcement comes as a surprise to anyone, he should go home right now. Those who are not surprised surely know whom this institution supports and that we have to work accordingly. No questions asked. In*

*the future, there will be no requests such as “I would like to cover certain topics” or “How should I write about this issue?” Those who don’t know how can also go home and stay there.*

*At the same time, we cannot expect to be left out when it comes to political issues. Especially on migration, Brussels, and the like. Whoever wants to hear whatever, I will have to disappoint, there will be no exception. Anyone who is on assignment may have to write the appropriate narrative with the appropriate methodology and directive. The lineup remains the same, and whoever doesn’t like it has to go to the boss, turn in his resignation, and leave. It is not mandatory for anyone to work here... It must be decided now, and I would like to receive clear answers from everybody, as to whether, in these circumstances, he will be willing to work here. If not, then we need to discuss how to proceed. Because I don’t have the energy to be a kindergarten teacher. I don’t consider anyone so foolish and stupid as not to realize where they work and what is expected of them. He who doesn’t understand where he works and what is expected of him is either stupid or lying. We don’t need either of those.” - Hungarian Spectrum’s translation.*

This is only a small portion of the hour and a half long meeting that was revealed, therefore, we can assume that there was a lot more mentioned during the meeting that was not heard in the recording. However, in this recording, Bende clearly stated that journalists and staff members are not allowed to express their opinions favoring other political parties other than FIDESZ. Bende was transparent and matter-of-factly stated that if any of the staff members had an issue with writing what was expected of them or to ask any questions, said staff member would automatically and immediately be fired. Bende’s position and the government's pressure are extremely problematic. Therefore, FIDESZ’s pressure on Bende, on Magyar Televizio (M1), or any public nation media outlet and journalist was unconstitutional. Channel M1 is a “national public television channel”, which, if any channel should have its rights to freedom of expression it should be this outlet.

However, in the same article of the Hungarian Constitution, paragraph six states, “The detailed rules relating to the freedom of the press and the organ supervising media services, press products, and the communications market shall be laid down in a Cardinal Act” (Hungarian Constitution). It is uncertain what the definition of “detailed rules” is and if these ‘detailed rules’ can override what is stated in paragraph two of the same article. However, to adopt the Cardinal Act, two-thirds of the votes of the members in attendance are required. This should not be an issue for FIDESZ, because they have a supermajority in the parliament, precisely, 133 of 199 seats are taken by FIDESZ (Hungarian Assembly).

The constitution has the power to protect free speech and freedom of the press. However, due to the media legislations enacted by the ruling party, the constitution does not guarantee the freedom of the press today. The Freedom House also examined Hungarian Freedom through the lens of “Civil Liberties”, particularly, freedom of expression and belief. The first question asked under this section was, if there “Are there free and independent media?” (Freedom House, 2020). As stated earlier, there are existing non-government owned or controlled, independent media outlets, but most of the national, regional, and local media is dominated and controlled and many times owned by the ruling party, FIDESZ, or their supporters which leaves very little or no opportunity for an opposition-aligned outlet to reach the general public.

The pressure on the independent news outlets has grown in the past 2 years when the owners of many of the major pro-government media outlets donated their companies to the government. “HirTV” and “Origo” have been the most popular media outlets in the nation, which according to Freedom House, had a combined value of 100 million US dollars, however, both outlets were donated to the government with no strings attached (Freedom House, 2020). Independent media outlets also struggle with constant legal battles with the government which takes time and money, which these organizations do not have enough of. They are forced to rely on

international grants, donations, and crowdfunding efforts. Even currently many others have been forced to lessen costs due to COVID-19 and lack of funding and resources to fulfill their duties as journalists. These independent outlets and even citizens are also being threatened by emergency legislation which includes a clause stating that anyone spreading “fake news” or distorting facts would face up to five years in jail.

In the United States as well as in Western Europe, social media has been playing a larger role in terms of public engagement and freedom. Facebook has protected the ability of major and reputable media outlets to advertise their content. The rest of Europe has not however been included, therefore, no news outlets can promote any content on the social media platform. (Eva Balogh, 2019) The institutions that Facebook relies on to police content in Western countries are not present in Hungary, furthermore, Facebook does not have a fact-checking partner in Hungary. The lack of checks means fake news can spread like wildfire, which can cause a nationwide disturbance especially when the world is facing a world crisis like COVID.

A video that was posted by the country’s largest news website, was investigated by HVG (formerly called *Heti Világgazdaság*), which is an independent magazine. This video shows an elderly woman being mugged in a church by two men, with a soundtrack of them shouting in Arabic. Across the screen, with a red highlight, it says, “Europe 2017 - Is this what you want?” This was broadcast at a time when many European countries, including Hungary, were in the middle of a migrant crisis. After the HVG’s investigation on the video post, it was brought to light that the video was actually recorded in 2015, in the United States, the men committing the attack were not migrants and the camera did not record sounds, therefore, it the recording had been edited into the video by Origo, which is a government-controlled media outlet. The video is still available for viewing on Facebook.

Facebook has not laid out any guidelines or plans on how to establish political neutrality or clean up the platform when the government or opposition produces fake news or hate speech (Guardian, Graham-Harrison, 2021). Facing increased scrutiny, in certain instances, news and content are removed by Facebook as more and more content is being reported. However, the government has tried to take advantage of this as well, by playing the victim and manipulating the narrative in their favor. There is a government-owned think tank, Szazadveg, which published a report complaining that more and more Hungarian politicians and public figures have become “victims of censorship,” when sharing posts linked to migrants or pro-government narratives (Guardian, Graham-Harrison, 2021). According to the Guardian’s post, this Hungarian think tank has commissioned a poll, according to which, nearly 80% of Hungarians found it unacceptable for Facebook to delete any content based on its ‘own’ political views. This poll or survey might not have been distributed proportionally amongst the population, however, the post reporting this data is still very powerful because it presents a large number of the population.

The government and its allies use Facebook as a platform to spread and promote propaganda as well as many other media outlets that are owned by the government. However, ironically when they face limitations, they decide to step up for their rights. In the report published by Szazadveg, a serious recommendation for the government was also included against those erasing and censoring government and government-owned media outlets’ content. The report asks for harsher legal steps against whoever wants to inhibit freedom of speech and freedom of opinion (Guardian, Graham-Harrison, 2021). In other words, the Hungarian government draws the ‘freedom of speech’ card for themselves when they are being questioned about spreading fake news or propaganda. When Facebook removes the government’s content it hurts them because they are using Facebook as an important tool in the campaign system, however, they are also benefiting from the opportunity to present themselves as victims when needed. Facebook does not approve of

political advertisement, but it does allow for paid advertisements with political content by the media outlets, which happen to be controlled by the Hungarian government. Therefore, pro-government media outlets can use this opportunity to stealthily post their content and have it materialize on the feeds of those individuals who are not necessarily following along political news and happenings.

HVG has also done studies where they have found a disturbing pattern of content being posted by major media outlets before, during, and after the 2018 election. For instance, at the Official Facebook page of Origo, which as mentioned above is a government-owned and controlled media outlet, only two videos were published until the night of March 12th, 2018 with 15,000 views. In the upcoming week, the Origo has published an additional 18 videos about African and Middle Eastern invasions as well as about members of the opposition party. By the day of the election, these videos were at 5.5 million views ( Marton, 2020). HVG has also presented an even more extreme example of political propaganda that is richly illustrated with photographs and shows the enormity of propaganda (Hungarian Spectrum, 2020). TV2 is a government-owned national television channel, where no videos were posted before the month of the election. However, during election month, the channel posted 122 videos on its Facebook page, which included 86 videos with the word “migrants” in the title. Furthermore, in one of these videos, reporters of TV2 and public figures openly stated who they are voting for. HVG’s article was so powerful that Emma Graham-Harrison and Shaun Walker of *The Guardian* devoted an article to Hungary, where they wrote about how “Facebook’s ability to police its network is being tested”(Guardian, Graham-Harrison, 2021).

The incline of political campaigning began a month before election day, which according to the Hungarian constitution, is lawful as it falls within the 50 days described in the laws. However, FIDESZ did not campaign using billboards and fliers. FIDESZ took advantage of being in office as

well as owning major media outlets across the nation. These media outlets are not necessarily seen as political entities and in many cases not even as news outlets. Therefore, FIDESZ was able to use the position of these media outlets to promote their campaigns and interests. One day these pages were posting about a dance or a music show, which attracted many followers on Facebook, who might have not followed a pure news outlet. But later this page started posting videos involving issues with opinions on major topics which are being debated in the upcoming election. According to the Hungarian Constitution, every tool that can influence or attempts to influence voters is considered a political campaign tool. In other words, national television channels, news websites, and other media outlets posting propaganda and fake news on social media platforms such as Facebook, clearly matches the definition of political campaign tool in the Orban administration's interpretation of the Hungarian constitution.

Since 2010, the oppressive climate of freedom of speech and freedom of information has been continuously declining. As presented in this chapter, the Orban administration doesn't only speak louder than the opposition but also uses every tool they have to mute everyone who does not belong to their team or doesn't serve their interest. In some cases they use physical violence to remove journalists or people who speak up, which is a very common practice in autocratic regimes. As Hungary shifts towards a dictatorship-like system, citizens experience barriers to access information through controlled media, changes in the constitution to further control people's knowledge, muting individual's voices and creating propaganda to treat citizens as puppets in order for the government to continue increasing its power. While the Orban administration has been working on such things in the parliament in the past 10 years, emigration is steadily inclining which must be affected by the decline of freedom.

## CHAPTER 6: EDUCATION REFORM

When it comes to the freedom of Hungarian citizens, the educational system plays a crucial role. As the Orban administration takes control over what can and cannot be included in the school curriculums, in other words academic freedom, the government makes an obvious shift away from democracy. Furthermore, he not only limits academic freedom, but also privatised state owned universities and controls staff members in these institutions. As much as this can serve Orban's party's immediate benefit, it also benefits them in the long run by shaping and forming the next generation. By raising this new generation with a strong sense of nationalism and embedding values that are closely associated with Fidesz's right-wing conservative ideology. Throughout this chapter, we can also gain a more clear understanding of how the Orban administration shifting democracy into a more authoritarian nation.

The Freedom House has also looked at educational freedom under "Civil Liberties" where they have examined the freedom of Hungarians. The third question under Freedom of Expression and Belief, asks "Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination?" ( Freedom House, 2020). Under this category, Hungary scored relatively low. This is because in many cases, Orban has been building strategies on how to silence the voices of his opposition by corrupting them or completely shutting down their organizations, however, he was not able to do this openly regarding the educational system. Therefore the government has created an exhaustive plan to revise the Hungarian school system and curriculum.(Balogh, 2019)

Just after Orban's first term, he adopted legislation in 2014, which allowed the government-appointed chancellors to make all financial decisions for public universities. When these chancellors were placed in the schools across the country by the government it caused universities to lose their rights to choose their rectors from their ranks. This was done to ensure FIDESZ's control of the universities. As time went by, the Orban administration further increased

control over the Hungarian higher education system. In February 2021, news outlets quickly shifted their focus to higher education in Hungary. As it appeared in the *Balkan Insight*, “with just 15 months before the next election, Hungary’s government has pressed ahead with its radical transformation of the country’s universities, putting half under the control of FIDESZ-controlled asset management foundations”(Inotai, 2021) The three largest universities in the country were given two weeks to decide if they were willing to join the “government push to privatize higher education” to be transformed from state-funded institutions to private foundations. This transformation comes with handing over \$2 million in starter capital, which could be in cash or “in-kind contributions” such as movable assets, real estate or intellectual property to operate as a non-profit in the future (Inotai, 2021). So far, 12 universities have been converted to private institutions, or in other words, asset management foundations. However, there has been one university, the University of Theatre and Film Arts, that has openly denied the government proposition and voiced its decision through a protest. Orban justified the new structure of universities by promising to spend \$5 billion on universities, which is over four times the amount these schools were previously spent on. This promise was made by Orban because Hungary received the European Union’s Recovery Fund (Inotai, 2021). Through this spending, the government hoped to quell any contention and also show the international community that they are investing in and trying to “improve” their education system.

While the transformation of higher education was very drastic and recent, the Orban administration has been working on redefining education at elementary, middle, and high school levels as well. At the beginning of 2020, the Orban government made the “National Basic Educational Plan” (NAT) public. According to Eva S. Balogh’s findings, “The overwhelming impression is that the mandated presentation of literary and historical material is anything but ideologically neutral. On the contrary, it is highly nationalistic with a definite tilt toward the

political right.” According to Orban’s plan, his insular administration’s focus on both history and literature pedagogies is through the lens of nationalism. For instance, the curriculum declares which Hungarian poems are required to be learned by heart and which only partially, which is indicative of Orban’s authoritarian tendencies and control of the nationalistic narrative by directly controlling the youth. (Balogh, 2020)

The most drastic change in the country’s literature curriculum was to include Ferenc Herczeg as one of the most influential Hungarian writers. Herczeg is a Hungarian playwright and author who promoted a conservative nationalist opinion, was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature three times. He is among those nationalistic writers whose writings are not only studied as individual pieces but also analyzed as such that high school students are required to immerse themselves and understand his life in relation to his art, as well as his ethical and moral values concerning society. However, among Herczeg’s writings, he also published an article called “The Duce” in 1936. In this piece, Herczeg uses every opportunity to express his admiration for Mussolini. As we know, Mussolini is very well known for his socialist and fascist ideology and how he gradually destroyed the institutions of democratic government to make himself a dictator. Herczeg’s work about his admiration of Mussolini has been made a core requirement for all high school students in Hungary today by the Orban administration.

The Orban government also ensured that the history curriculum is infused with some new and quite calculated information. Many history teachers of the state disagree with the national curriculum in the lower grades, which mandates that teachers exclusively teach about victorious battles during the period between 1000-1300 ( Balogh, 2020). In the history books, the term “deportation” appears multiple times, but only in terms of deportation during peacetime, about the Rakosi regime. However, the term ‘deportation’, is not used to describe the expulsion of Hungarian

Jews to concentration camps, and therefore their deportation and subsequent extermination are nonexistent in the history books edited by the Orban administration.

Both history and literature state curriculums were changed, driven by the motivation to ensure that these and future generations would be raised with a stronger sense of nationalism and love for their country. For instance, there was a picture included with a question in an 8th grader history book, which makes an indelible impression on children (Torok, 2020). This image depicts a sow suckling her piglets, however, the mother pig looks very bored and annoyed while wearing a hat with the German flag on it. Every piglet is then marked with a different flag representing the countries of the European Union, as they are being nourished by their mother. There was only one piglet who was not being fed, and of course, this particular piglet was the one emblazoned with the Hungarian flag and had a cynical face, showing distrust and pride. This is a suggestion about how Hungary is proud of not needing the support of the European Union's strongest member, Germany. The question above the illustration could be translated into: "Germany has the largest population and the strongest economy in the European Union. Therefore, Germany proportionally pays the most for shared goods in the European Union. Do you think everyone fairly benefits from this arrangement?" The Orban administration's message with this image in the textbook loudly says that Hungary was left out of the benefits of German support through the European Union, therefore, Hungary is alone. By embedding the idea that 'the European Union does not serve us', the Orban administration can easily have the citizen's support when the European Union questions constitutional changes and non-democratic actions.

The Orban government is systematically changing the society, culture, and national values in a way that has been unquestioningly accepted by the Hungarian citizenry. By using the media as a tool and as propaganda to paint a picture of these dangers, Orban is receiving the public's approval to create sweeping changes in the state by regulated media, education, culture, and

economy. By raising children with right-wing ideological views, teaching them only about victorious battles, and showing misguided allegiance to writers who admired Mussolini, Orban is raising a generation of youth who he will have absolute control over. Orban is methodically calculating this movement towards the isolation and exclusion of his country from Europe and the international community, which is beneficial to no one but his administration and political agenda. As Orban is gaining power the dictatorship-like system also increases in the country. Following Mussolini's example, Orban's control over the media, press freedom and education creates political and social problems which is driving many people to leave and look for a home behind the borders of Hungary.

## CHAPTER 7: ORBAN'S RIGHT WING PARTY AND DISCRIMINATION

As it was discussed in the previous chapters, the Orban administration has been working very hard on taking control over every aspect of life in Hungary. They have limited the freedom of speech by taking control of almost all media outlets, however, at the beginning of 2021 they made sure to limit every form of expression, which in this case was art. Orban is defining Hungarian nationalism through strong right-wing conservative christian values and embedding these into people's lives by limiting their exposure to other opinions and values, however, when their limitation isn't successful, they label the 'other' as the enemy. The government fuels hate and discrimination against everything that does not fit under their definition of Hungarian nationalism or in other words, does not share their values.

Since the marginalized populations were unable to speak up they were forced to express themselves through art. Throughout this chapter we discuss how the government exercises control through marginalised communities and why this drives emigration.

In early 2021, the Black Lives Matter movement reached Europe. Officials from Orban Viktor's right-wing party were outraged over the artwork that won a recent tender for public art exhibition and was being displayed in Budapest for two weeks (The Guardian - Walker, 2021). Krisztina Baranyi, the independent mayor of the ninth district of the capital, strongly supported the display of artwork throughout various parts of the city as well as the Black Lives Matter movement. She stated that "The BLM goals of opposing racism and police brutality are just as relevant in Hungary as anywhere else", which Baranyi has connected to Orban's relentless campaigns against Middle Eastern Migrants as well as the systematic racism and discrimination against the nation's Roma population.

The Orban- government's reaction to this sentiment of the mayor was to emphasize their stand on this issue. Orban's chief of staff, Gergely Gulyas stated that "Black Lives Matter is basically a racist movement. The racist is not the person who opposes a BLM statue, but the person who erects one" (Gergely Gulyas, 2021). As Gergely Gulyas explained the government's position on the BLM issue, he also explained on public television that the "BLM movement does not recognize equality between people of color and white people, therefore, this is against the norms of the twentieth century" (Gergely Gulyas, 2021). In other words through this statement, he sent a message to the public that not only vilified the Black Lives Matter movement but also made them an enemy and their movement into something that went against Hungarian national values, and people of color are only fighting to gain superiority.

Right before the parliamentary elections in 2022, the Orban government has been working on emphasizing their ultra-conservative position as well as their right-wing traditional values. Since

the majority of the media outlets are owned by the government, they quickly picked up on the message that the Orban- administration was trying to send to the public. The media thoroughly covered the display of the art in support of the BLM movement, as well as the meaning of the movement according to the government, however, they mostly left out the opposition's point of view on BLM and that these arts would be displayed only for 2 weeks. According to the ninth district's mayor, Baranyi, "This whole scandal is typical of the way pro-government media works in Hungary. Everyone is angry about this and nobody knows anything about it" (The Guardian - Walker, 2021). People became angry due to the lack of information they have received about the BLM, however, the only information they have received from most media outlets around them made it seem like it is strongly against the Hungarian core conservative values. Orban uses everything that doesn't fit under his right-wing conservative values and labels them as enemies.

Orban has been strongly pressing on implementing extremely conservative values at every part of society and pushing against the "loopy liberals" as he calls them (The Guardian - Walker, 2021). At the end of 2020, the Orban government amended the constitution to explicitly clarify that "the mother is a woman and the father is a man," and also added they will only allow heterosexual couples to adopt children. This came about 6 months after Parliament voted to end legal recognition of trans people. This "new law defines gender as based on chromosomes at birth, meaning previous provisions whereby trans people could alter their gender and name on official documents will no longer be available" (The Guardian - Walker, 2021). In other words, even though a person decides to change their gender, their ID would still display their gender at birth. Furthermore, they would not be able to change their first name either to fit their identified gender because the Hungarian law requires first names to be chosen from a list that is sorted by gender. The Orban "government has increasingly used anti-LGBT rhetoric as part of a perceived culture war and has made "traditional family values" a mainstay of many of its policies. The speaker of

parliament, an Orbán ally, last year compared gay couples that adopt to pedophiles” (The Guardian - Walker, 2021). Pressing on these values, won’t necessarily change an individual's sexual and gender identity but rather displaced, wrong and unacceptable which might drive them to look for a home in another country.

As Shaun Walker writes in The Guardian, “Hungary protects children’s right to identify as the sex they were born with, and ensures their upbringing based on our national self-identification and Christian culture.” Therefore, Orban not only uses the LGBTQ community as the target but also builds on the fear he already established during the 2018 election, which is losing Christianity that is the building block of Hungarian national values. The government proposes this law “after one of FIDESZ's MEPs resigned from his post after being caught at a gay sex party in Brussels in breach of local coronavirus restrictions” (Deutsche Welle, 2021). Jozsef Szajer was caught climbing down from the roof of a house in possession of drugs by the local police of Brussels. He is a founding member of FIDESZ as well as “one of the architects of that country's controversial new ultra-conservative constitution”(Deutsche Welle, 2021), in particular LGBTQ rights or their lack of.

As we can see, the government does everything to limit the freedom of expression of those who do not fit under the definition of Hungarian nationalism or in other words, right-wing conservative Christians. Publicly and explicitly discriminating against the Black Lives Matter movement on public television, changing the constitution against gender equality and speaking up against LGBTQ rights, very strongly indicates Hungary’s position, which is far away from a democratic system. By pressing on these issues, the government is supplying hate and discrimination against those Hungarian citizens who are not able to fit Orban’s definition of Hungarian Nationalist, which creates major political social problems. These social and political

problems of human and gender rights can be a very strong motivators of emigration, especially when a ‘safety net’ provided by the European Union.

### Hungary’s role in the European Union.

In November 2020, the European Union voted for an agreement that limits payouts and funding for those countries that are illiberal and do not respect the rule of law. The EU has struggled to see democratic procedures in countries such as Hungary and Poland, therefore, the European Parliament and the Council of the EU have made a preliminary agreement to “cut capitals if they renege on rule of law commitments”(Bayer, 2021). Due to the changes brought by the pandemic in many countries, the EU wanted to “ensure the respect for democratic values in member countries” (Bayer, 2021). In other words, many larger Western countries that are making substantial contributions to the EU budget want certain conditions to be attached to the distribution of funds for recipients.

Budapest and Warsaw promised to mount a legal challenge to the EU’s new scheme. Hungary and Poland have both opposed the mechanism being proposed by the EU and have argued that they are being targeted by these new measures. Multiple institutions of the EU have accused Hungary and Poland of having governments that are “backsliding on democracy standards and the rule of law” (Bayer, 2021). Furthermore, The Freedom House accuses both Hungary and Poland of spreading anti-democratic practices, they state that they “stand out for their unparalleled democratic deterioration over the past decade” (Stojanovic, 2021). The report also states that the ruling parties in both countries “have moved from attacking the liberal principles that underpin democracy to setting new norms themselves and openly spreading anti-democratic practices” (Stojanovic, 2021). Many of Orban’s policies breach EU values, in Article 2 of the Treaty on

European Union states that “The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity, and equality between women and men prevail” (Fundamental Laws of the European Union). However, using COVID as a justification Orbán has disempowered the Parliament altogether and given himself the right to govern by decree (Schmidt, 2021). This could lead to repercussions from the EU, however, this is only a likelihood because Hungary does have supporters including Poland who could help block any major actions.

## CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

Viktor Orbán has actively been securing his power over the past 10 years. Many agree that under his influence, and through the utilization of control of and support from FIDESZ, the Hungarian government became increasingly authoritarian. Orbán continues to take advantage of the long history of oppression and devastating tragedies Hungarians have gone through to deepen the roots of his power and gain support for his narrative through constitutional article changes, monopoly over the media, revision of the educational curriculum, embedding strong conservative views and encouraging discriminatory actions against minorities, as well as inhibiting gender equality. Orbán’s latest plan is to set up a parallel state that would allow him and his allies to remain in control of most areas of Hungarian life even after they are no longer in office.

As the Freedom House writes in 2020, corruption remains a problem in Hungary, and in many cases, there is no proper investigation. Many “Prosecutors have also been reluctant to investigate long-standing allegations of the public misuse of development funds disbursed by the

EU, despite the severity of the problem; in September 2019, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) warned that Hungary was the worst-performing member state regarding the misappropriation of EU funds” (Freedom House, 2020). The country has a high tolerance for corruption in the hope of preserving its national values. Orbán’s administration emphasizes the importance of preserving Hungarian national values and opposing everything that is not a far-right ideology to keep the nation a detached, insular society that is frustrated by outsiders, such as the European Union and its attempts to develop capitalism. Fear and lack of freedoms are rampant in the country as reporters and journalists are often self-censoring, citizens believe the propaganda and manipulative narratives being disseminated by the government, causing increase discrimination, and education is being used as a locomotive to promote nationalism.

However, Orbán is not supported by everyone, and many are beginning to see through the manipulation which makes this case study possible. As presented in this study, oppositions do not have many opportunities to have their voices be heard, which causes frustration. The lack of opportunities, freedoms, and inability to fight against the society the Orbán government has created is forcing many to emigrate to countries that do offer them those basic rights. Emigration is a natural response to the social, economic, and political issues that have plagued the country throughout many centuries, which the country still suffers from and which are being exacerbated by Orbán’s administration. As Hungary’s population continues to be a rapidly decreasing population, it is time for the government to acknowledge that the tactics they have been using have not all worked to their advantage. Realizing this, and also fiercely opposing immigration, the Orbán administration has offered free in-vitro-fertilization to increase the population of Hungary. "If we want Hungarian children instead of immigrants and if the Hungarian economy can generate the necessary funding, then the only solution is to spend as much of the funds as possible on supporting families and raising children," the prime minister said (Kennedy, Merrit, 2020). While

the government is opposing incoming migration, if they want to stop the decline of the population, they need to worry about emigration. Therefore, the roots of the decreasing population are not only because fewer children are being born, but also because one in every seven Hungarian children is born in a foreign country (Portfolio,2020).

Although there is a lack of quantitative data available linking the lack of freedoms and oppression in the country to emigration, it is an area that must be further explored. First, connections need to be identified between lack of freedom and oppression, and emigration. Connecting the gaps between those findings would allow precise pinpoint areas where further research needs to be done. This could be problematic because there is not much data and research available, most likely due to censorship and the lack of freedom and fear of those who are unable to publish their work on anything that criticizes the government. Then there are those that are able to but lack resources and geographical proximity make it difficult to reach their desired audience, which is Hungarians. Although there is some research on corruption, decreasing democracy, and infringement of the people's constitutional rights, and lack of economic opportunities, however, much of this work is being done through short articles by journalists or reports by international organizations. It would also be beneficial for this study to interview the diaspora community and conduct research on reasons behind leaving and/or not wanting to move back to Hungary. More in-depth research is needed in this field in both qualitative and quantitative as well as researchers needs to be supported to be able to write, access, and publish their work on related topics. Many are worried regarding the trajectory that Hungary is going in. Through this study, we hope to show the connection, consolidate some of the information available and encourage more research and force people and organizations like the EU to act and take measures. Without any future actions Orban and the FIDESZ will continue to increase their power, further decline the quality of lives of

Hungarians, successfully further his authoritarian regime, and potentially cause a domino effect for others who want to follow his lead.

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