

Populism in Hungary

A study of the Fidesz- KDNP government of Hungary

in the period between 2010 and 2019

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Abstract

Populism is on the rise in the European Union and as a consequence, populism became a central topic of the media and academics in the region. However, the definition of populism is not as simple and media outlets tend to label leaders, parties, ideologies or even only speeches as populist with rather different character. The paper examines what populism is exactly through the example of Fidesz- KDNP government of Hungary led by Viktor Orbán as the Prime Minister between 2010 and 2019. Viktor Orbán has been called a populist leader many times and has been criticized for his populist actions by the media, however, it is rarely defined what is meant by populist governance. The paper examines how the leadership of Viktor Orbán and the Fidesz- KDNP confirm the academic aspects of populism. The paper researches the question if the current Hungarian government is a populist government and if so, how it is realized in its politics. The paper identifies the type of Hungarian populism as political, conservative right wing populism. The paper also examines the different characteristics of populism, which all could be detected in the case of the Hungarian government: the government claims to challenge the elite, it does not have a clear political agenda, it uses propaganda in its political messages, it argues for the maintenance of a Christian Hungary, it has a charismatic leader in the person of Viktor Orbán and lastly, it strongly criticizes the European Union. Also, the paper identifies all techniques populists use to maintain their power in the case of the Hungarian government. The government interferes in matters that should be independent from the state such as education and jurisdiction; it uses mass clientelism to reward its supporters and threatens its critiques and it also criticizes NGOs. When looking at the origins of popularity of Fidesz, the paper identifies, that Hungarian government is popular due to a complex set of issues, which include the loss of trust in left- wing politics, the creation of a central issue against which the government proposes resolution and creation from a perception of professionalism. The paper concludes that the current Hungarian government fits all aspects of populism with their actions, which include the occupation of state mechanism, the limitation of political and civil rights, clientelism and the usage of propaganda and conspiracy theories.

Key words: *populism, Hungary, Viktor Orbán, Fidesz, propaganda*

Table of Contents

Abstract	2
1. Introduction	5
2. Theories of populism	6
2.1. Definition of populism	6
2.2. Typologies of populism	8
2.3. Characteristics of populism	9
2.4. Techniques of populists in power	11
2.5. Media and populism	16
3. Methodology	17
3.1. Research design	17
3.2. Data Collection and analysis	18
4. Analysis	19
4.1. The nature and type of Hungarian populism	19
4.2. The populist characteristics of Fidesz	21
4.2.1. Challenging the 'elite'	21
4.2.2. The missing agenda	23
4.2.3. The usage of propaganda	26
4.2.4. Radicalism	26
4.2.5. Charismatic leadership	27
4.2.6. Criticism of the European Union	28
4.3. Techniques of populism of the Hungarian government	29
4.3.1. Changes in the state apparatus	29
4.3.2. Mass clientelism	32
4.3.3. Criticism of the opposition and NGOs	34
4.4. The status of media in Hungary	35
4.4.1. Centralization of the media	35
4.4.2. Communication, immigration and propaganda	38
4.5. Popularity behind populism in Hungary	43
5. Conclusion	46
Bibliography	49

1. Introduction

During the past couple of years, there has been a strong discussion on the spreading of populism in Europe and its impact on the status of democracy in European states and also its impact on the European Union (EU). However, there has been less discussion on why and how populism has reemerged in recent years. Moreover, the term populism is used in different contexts and understandings. Politicians with completely different profiles and agendas were called populist by academics and the media (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012, p. 26).

Also, populism manifests differently in different states, but it became increasingly strong in Eastern- Europe in the post- communist states. One of the states, in which populism became strong is Hungary, where populism earned a central role with the Orbán governments.

Until 1989, Hungary was functioning under strong communist leadership as part of the communist block of Eastern- Europe with strong ties to Russia. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, communist power also collapsed in the Eastern European states, including Hungary, where in 1989 a new, democratic government was elected.

After the regime changes in Eastern- Europe, the newly formed democracies began to adapt the European values and started to get closer to the EU. Hungary joined the EU in 2004. Recently, the Hungarian populism of the Orbán governments began to challenge European values. With the financial crisis of 2008, the nationalist rhetoric of the currently ruling Fidesz-KDNP emerged and has been strengthening ever since (Korkut, 2012). This grew to the extent, that the Orbán government openly goes against EU norms and criticizes the EU for harming the sovereignty of Hungary.

The ‘immigration crisis’ of 2015 was a remarkable event in the relationship between the EU and Hungary. While the EU was attempting to approach the crisis from a humanitarian angle, the Hungarian government built a fence on the southern border of the country to increase its defence against illegal migration. Also, this was the time the first billboards appeared all over Hungary, claiming the plan of the EU is to let migration flows to Hungary and to use the country to resolve the issues of Western European states caused by immigration (Georgiou & Zaborowski, 2017).

The Hungarian government has been criticized for being anti-Semitic, going against European values and deconstructing democracy in Hungary. However, from the Hungarian side, these criticisms are rejected and the Hungarian government claims these are all part of the system of 'illiberal democracy', that is being established in the country.

The system of 'illiberal democracy' was labelled as populist by the media and by European politicians, but it has been rarely discussed in what sense the Hungarian government is a populist government. The thesis contributes to this discussion.

The thesis makes an attempt to explain why the Hungarian populism is so successful. It does so by examining the different characteristics and techniques of populism. To explore the topic closely, the paper examines the following research question:

Is the current Hungarian government is a populist government and if so how it is realized in its politics?

To answer the research question, first of all, a literature review is conducted on the theoretical background of the paper. The literature review presents the already existing literature on populism and the different theories of populism to see why and how populism became popular today. It includes the description of populism, the characteristics of populism, the reasons behind the emergence of populism and the relationship between populism and the media.

The second part of the paper conducts the analysis on the nature of populism in Hungary with the focus on the Orbán governments between 2010 and 2019. First, in this section, the paper identifies how the different characteristics of populism appear in Hungary. Secondly, the paper examines what kind of populist tools the Orbán government uses to maintain its popularity. And last but not least, the paper examines the messages the Hungarian government is using in the media to maintain its popularity.

2. Theories of populism

2.1. Definition of populism

In order to discuss populism and identify the elements of populism in Hungary, first of all populism itself should be defined. However, it is difficult to clearly define populism for several reasons. First of all, the term populism is used by the media, academics and politicians differently and even in the same circles the term populism is used differently (Mudde &

Kaltwasser, 2012, p. 17). Also, even within academics there are different views on what populism is, which is well- illustrated with the attempt made by academics in 1976, who gathered in the London School of Economics to define and describe populism but did not manage to create a universal definition (Müller, 2016).

Secondly, the concept of populism is rather vague. As Peri (2008) argued, the term is understood and defined in many ways “*as an ideology, a doctrine, a mentality, a system of ideas and a political style, also a rhetoric, demagoguery, and discourse, or as a number of concrete historical movements*” (p. 626).

Consequently, it cannot be clearly stated, that populism is only a political idea or a political style, as populism can be understood in many ways. Arter (2010) highlights that populism is not something static, it is context dependent and it is continuously changing in time. Even if there was a fixed definition of populism, it would need constant revision due to its ever changing nature (p. 493). Moreover, populism is not only changing throughout time, but also it can be understood differently based in different regions. Müller (2016) explains, that for instance populism in the United States and in Europe has a different meaning. While in the United States, modern populist groups are understood to be fighting for the direct election of all governmental bodies, in Europe, the historical connotation is always considered and populist groups emphasize more that their main goal is to fight for the people.

Sawyer and Laycock (2009) also argue that populism, especially in Europe, is highly dependent on the national and regional context. (p. 133). Their study carried out a cross-cultural analysis on different populist groups and found that the content and ideology of populist group have common grounds but significantly vary in each country, based on the national causes (p. 148). It also cannot be said, that populism is connected to a certain political idea. As Gidron and Bonikowski (2013) explain the main political ideology behind populism can also differ. For instance in Europe, populism is closely linked to right- wing ideology; moreover, in the past it was closely connected to radical right- wing ideology, fascism and racism. Opposed to this, populism in Latin- America is not about exclusion, but inclusion and bringing together all marginalized groups to be part of the whole society. As Conniff (1999) explained, in Latin America, populist groups promote the idea of equality and justice for the whole society, which includes all ethnic groups and social classes, who were marginalized before (p. 6). Therefore, social justice for instance is a fundamental element of

Latin- American populism. In the United States, populism has a strong economic foundation and populist groups gather those, which promise economic justice for all (Gidron and Bonikowski, 2013).

Based on the above, it can be stated, that it is difficult to provide a general definition of populism. On the one hand, the term is understood in many ways and on the other hand, its content is also changing. Therefore, it is not possible to define populism with a sentence, but it is possible to sort of define populism through descriptive typologies (Canovan, 2006, p. 544).

2.2. Typologies of populism

Mudde (2000) originally distinguished between three types of populism: agrarian, economic and political. Agrarian populism is the type of populism that connects the agrarian society, but not exclusively, against the elites, to protect their land, the values of agricultural life and the well- being of the family against capitalism and urbanism.

Economic populism collects populist groups, which try to combine socialism and economic competition in a way, that they promise the distribution of wealth among all. The difference between economic populism and communism is that while communism offers the redistribution of wealth through the state, economic populism promises to reach well- being through the participation of all in the economy.

Political populism, according to Mudde (2000), promises to represent the people in politics and to work for the well- being of the people. Political populism is not exclusive to populist groups, several not populist political groups reached out to use the techniques of political populism.

Lang (2007) argued that the typologies created by Mudde (2000) were not extensive enough and due to the complexity of populism, based on the same idea, more typologies have to be created. Lang (2007) defined five categories to describe populist movements: centrist, social populist, national conservatives, agrarian populists, nationalists and radical left populists.

The typologies of Mudde (2000) and Lang (2007) describe populism from a historical perspective that categorizes populism based on the source of the movement and the main ideology behind the movement.

2.3. Characteristics of populism

The typologies created for the different types of populisms approached populism at its source and highlighted the differences between different movements. However, it is also important to see the similarities between the different types of populisms in order to gain an understanding on what populism is exactly.

Beyme (2017) argues that there is a set of assumptions about populists, which describe them. First and foremost populists identify themselves as a political group, which challenges the leadership of the elite. Populist leaders and groups identify as the power, which aims to act according to the will of the people and govern, as the people want. According to the populist narratives, populists act morally, for the good of the people (Peri, 2008, p. 626).

This ideology behind populism is well- reflected on the historical emergence of populist parties. In Africa, Asia and the Middle East, populist groups emerged during colonial times, when populists positioned themselves opposite to the colonial rulers and emphasized the importance of local rules, which is also the reason why after gaining independence, in several countries of these regions, populist governments were elected (de la Torre, 2019, p. 3).

The second assumption about populist groups is that these groups do not have an elaborated agenda, as most of these groups are established on one fundamental issue, which is usually related to some kind of marginalization (Beyme, 2017). For instance, in 19th century Russia, the Narodniks movement was formed by socially marginalized people who rioted against tsarism (Mudde, 2000, p. 35). This assumption is closely connected to the way Mudde (2000) and Lang (2007) addresses the typologies of populism.

The third assumption is that populist groups use propaganda to spread their ideology (Beyme, 2017). Bergmann (2018) goes even further regarding this assumption and explains, that populist groups not only tend to engage in propaganda but also like to use conspiracy theories to position themselves.

Popular conspiracy theories, which are based on the main idea of the elite creating situations for their own benefit and on the expense of the poor, are used by populist groups. While using such theories, populist groups can position themselves as the ones who reveal the truth about the elite and who represent the everyday people (Bergmann, 2018).

The last assumption of Beyme (2017) about populist groups is that these groups also hold radical ideas, especially right- wing populists, who are usually closely linked to right- wing radicalism. However, Barr (2019) highlighted that populists are not necessary connected to radicalism and from a historical perspective, actually it can be observed that populism and radical right- wing ideology is getting further from each other.

While after the Second World War, populist also hold fascist ideologies, today, populist are more the critics of capitalism and globalism. Müller (2016) also argues that populists today are not fascist or racist and, for instance, do not reject completely immigration but strongly emphasize assimilation. Over the basic assumptions about populism described by Beyme (2017), de la Torre (2019) argued that there is one more important characteristic, that is common in populist groups, which is the importance of a strong, leading character. As de la Torre (2019) claims, populist groups usually have a leader, who is praised to be the challenger of the elite leadership and who is personally fighting against the elite, for the greater good of the public.

The popularity of populist groups in Eastern and Western Europe is on the rise. Another common factor among these populist groups is that in their ideologies, there is a strong opposition and criticism towards the European Union and its institutions (Hayward, 1999, p. 12). This does not mean that these groups completely reject the European Union and the idea of cooperation of European states, but populist groups use a nationalistic narrative and claim, that the European Union only represents the elite of Europe, not the people of Europe. These groups also claim that the European Union is inhumane and such cooperation cannot be democratic in a sense, that common European citizens are not represented properly (Lane, 1996, p. 55).

As it was mentioned before, populism is on the rise in Europe and represented by more and more parties. In France, the party Front National is a strong power, while the UKIP party in the United Kingdom has a significant contribution to Brexit and also the Law and Justice party in Poland is becoming stronger. The following chapter presents the different techniques populist parties and leaders use to gain votes and maintain their popularity among the people.

2.4. Techniques of populists in power

The previous chapters described what populism is. This chapter examines the theoretical aspects on why populist groups can be popular among people and what kind of techniques populists use to gain and maintain their power in the government.

Just as populism incorporates different ideologies and can be used to describe different political acts, the root causes of the emergence of populism can also differ from country to country. Based on the main idea behind populism, which places the political elites against the people, according to Andeweg (1996) the popularity of populist parties began to increase, when the gap between citizens and political leaders began to increase, which Andeweg calls the separation of the ‘agent’ and the ‘principal’ (p. 144.). The success of populist parties lies within their capability, to create a feeling in the citizens, that populist parties are capable to close the gap and it also allows them to act with greater political freedom when in power, than other parties (Andeweg, 1996, p. 147.).

This separation of the two entities is formulated mostly to unaddressed issues or issues that the current or previous political leaders could not provide an answer that would satisfy society (p. 143.). These issues can include immigration, poverty, famine, ethnic tension or any other social issues, which are strongly present in any society.

Andeweg (1996) identified three factors that can tighten or increase the gap between citizens and representatives:

- “1. The more political leaders are perceived as in possession of superior wisdom and expertise, a greater freedom is allowed for; if a relative equality of capacities is seen, less freedom is granted to the politician.*
- 2. The more political problems are seen as having an objectively determinable solution, the greater the freedom for the politician; the more political issues are seen as having value-laden solutions, the less freedom is allowed.*
- 3. The more one believes in a ‘common good’ or ‘national interest’, the more freedom is given to leaders; the more one perceives a need for defending particular interests against a threatening central power, the less one is inclined to give freedom to one's representatives.” (p. 144).*

Along the above three factors, the gap between the citizens and governments can vary. After the economic crisis of 2008, Mastropaolo (2008) measured the gap and concluded that the economic crisis led to the lack of trust in traditional political powers, on national as well as on European level (p. 33.).

Inglehart and Norris (2016) also connected the decline of the economy to the emergence of populist powers, especially to the strengthening of right-wing populism. As their study explains voters associate strict financial management with right-wing governments and also, populist parties claim to have solutions for these issues, by arguing for the redistribution of wealth, from the elite to the citizens (p. 9.). But not only economic crisis can contribute to the widening of the gap between people and governments. Identity or social crisis of a nation can also fuel radical ideas, including right-wing populism. The attempt to create a common European identity is one of the root causes of identity crisis in Europe.

The European Union was founded on the basis of the common European identity of European nations and it advocates for this idea based on shared European values, such as democracy, the respect of human rights, and based on other factors such as common history and collaboration among nations. But this idea of common European identity also challenged the national identities and triggered the increase of nationalist ideology among member states, especially in the case of the post-communist states, where national identity is still a fragile concept (Zappettini, 2017, p. 17.). Right-wing populism offers a resolution to this identity crisis, as it applies a strong, nationalist rhetoric in most cases, which can be attractive for those nations, whose identity is threatened by the European integration process. This fear is the strongest in post-communist countries, which are still considered being young democracies and where political and -in many cases- national identity has been oppressed (Zappettini, 2017, p. 19.).

While Andeweg (1996) explains the popularity of populist parties with the increasing gap between governments and citizens and while others explain it from the perspective of crisis situations, Pauwels (2014) examined it from the perspective of different voting models and concluded, that populist parties can gain success because they can incorporate several voting models and make themselves attractive for voters from several perspectives.

The *economic model* of voting is closely connected to the idea of Andeweg. According to this model, the objective of the citizens is to maximize their utility income and will associate with the party, which provide the most suitable policy options to do it so. However, this decision is not objective and is based on the information the voters gather about the best way to maximize their utility income, therefore, the role of the parties is to provide suitable information for the voters (Van der Brug, 2004).

As it was already mentioned, economic crisis always creates a good environment for the emergence of radical and populist views. From the understanding of the voting model, it is because populist parties usually promise strict economic policies and the protection of jobs, which for most provides the feeling of security and also means the maximization of their utility income (Pauwels, 2014, p. 58.). Populist governments are also strong in attracting voters, who vote based on *issue voting* model. In this case, citizens vote for the party, which provides the most suitable solution to resolve a certain policy issue and is considered to have the highest expertise to face a certain challenge (Van der Brug, 2004, p. 209.).

The third voting model that is highlighted by Pauwels (2014) considers candidates, leaders and campaigning methods. According to Pauwels, personalities, who are considered trustworthy and as experts, which picture is created during the campaigns about political leaders, attract more voters (Van der Brug, 2004, p. 211.).

Based on the different voting models, there is a supply and demand side, where political parties cover the supply side through their policies and the demand side, which includes the issues, which citizens are the most concerned about. The closer a political party can be to fulfil the requirements of the demand side, the more likely that this party will be able to gain political power.

The above theories identified the environment in which populist parties are likely to gain popularity and also the causes of origins why these parties can be popular. Müller (2016) differentiated between three major techniques that populists use in order to become popular among voters and to maintain this popularity. These techniques are true for those populist groups who managed to be in power and these techniques concern the ways populists govern but also the way populists, even when not in power, keep their popularity and power.

The first technique populists use to remain in power is to, as Müller (2016) said, occupy the state. This means that populists try to expand their power to be able to control all aspects of governance. As a consequence, populists in governance tend to change the state infrastructure and began to centralize power as much as possible. The populist leaders of Latin America are strong examples of this. Juan Domingo Perón of Argentina or Hugo Chávez of Venezuela both reshaped the state after coming to power. Both presidents centralized power as much as they could in the name of social justice and justified their actions through the will of the people (Conniff, 1999, p. 19).

Populists claim to be democratic, however, have a different concept of democracy than it currently exists. Today, democracy is based on the election of representatives by the citizens and the separation of powers, which ensures that control is not focused in the hand of one branch. However, populist groups claim that the current system of democracy is not actually democratic and representatives of all institutions should be elected by the representatives of the people (Prendergast, 2019, p. 246). Therefore, the rulings of independent judges and other representatives of the judicial branch are often criticized for not representing the people. Moreover, in some cases, populist governments even tend to claim that these bodies represent the interest of the elite, the certain populist group is fighting against (Prendergast, 2019, p. 249). As a consequence as well, when populists become the governing body of a state, their attempt to take control over the jurisdiction of the country is justified through giving back the power into the hands of the people (Prendergast, 2019, p. 245).

The second technique identified by Müller (2016) is the so-called mass clientelism. Müller (2016) defined mass clientelism as „*the exchange of material or immaterial favors by elites for mass political groups*” (p. 46). Populists in power try to earn the vote of the citizens through providing them support or reward their supporters through financial or physical presents, political promises or possibilities to grow. On the one hand, this mass clientelism appears on the level of promises and actions, which indirectly target the voters. For instance in Greece, those with low levels of education and household income are more likely to adopt populist views and support a populist government as these governments make them promises that their actions would benefit them directly and specifically direct voters with low income with their messages (Tsatsanis, 2018, p. 429). On the other hand, it can appear as directly as well, such as in the case of Austria. The Austrian politician Jörg Haider gave hundred euro

bills to his supporters in Carinthia, in order to reward them for their support. But it is also common that populist leaders provide holidays, spa treatments and other entertainment activities for their supporters, who, according to them, deserve to be entertained due to their hard work (Jansen, 2011, p. 78). These direct and indirect techniques are essential, not just for populists in power but for those populist groups who try to increase their popularity. Through promising such support, populists can motivate their voters to participate in the elections and can mobilize them to take action, as without the direct support of the party, these benefits would not be available for them (Jansen, 2011, p. 75). It has to be highlighted that in the case of those populist groups, who are in power there is a very thin line between mass clientelism and corruption and in some cases, the two even overlap. As these governments do not only reward the voters, but also their financial supporters by allowing them easier access for state commissions (Tsatsanis, 2018, p. 434).

The third technique highlighted by Müller (2016) is the harsh treatment of all organizations, especially non- governmental organizations (NGOs) that criticize or do not support the populist government. As NGOs are created by people and not politicians, their criticism means for populist governments, that the people who they claim to represent, criticise them. Therefore, populist governments make attempts to completely control or regulate the work of NGOs but at least to have control over their financial flows. Populist government position NGOs usually as the tools of foreign governments that exist to weaken the country and work against national interest (Galasso, Feroci, Pfeipfer, & Walsh, 2017). Galasso et al. (2017) emphasize the dangers of populists in power making the work of NGOs difficult and vilify them as it makes the work of NGOs more difficult. NGOs address issues, which concerns vulnerable groups and by making their work difficult and controlling their financial flows, NGOs cannot provide efficient support to those groups, which would require the most, such as minorities, immigrants and people living in deep poverty.

For populist groups to be able to apply these techniques and to be able to gain the support of the majority, the usage of the media is essential, as it helps them forming their rhetoric and spreading it among their target groups. The following chapter presents why control of the media is important to populist groups and how populists use the media.

2.5. Media and populism

Populist groups have a two-faced relationship with the media, as populist groups approach differently those media sources, which are under their control and those, which oppose or criticize them. In case of those media sources, which do not support populist power, populist groups tend to regard these sources as untrustworthy (Otto & Köhler, 2018, p. 17).

Populists in Europe position themselves as the saviours of national identity and unity, who fight against international elites, who work for the erosion of national identity. Therefore, populists use the rhetoric that those media sources, which criticise them are against national interest and are founded by international groups (Lochocki, 2018, p. 3). Based on this, it can be said that populists try to attack the fundamental trust people have in journalism and media. A good example of this is the campaign of Donald Trump and his approach towards the media, as the Trump administration considers all criticism and opposition as *fake news*. In case of the media, that is under control of a certain populist group, populists use media sources as their political tools. As Manucci (2017) explains, the media became a political realm for populist groups and as positioning is especially in their case, populist group have a strong media presence (p. 468). As it was already mentioned before, the usage of propaganda is one of the characteristics of populist groups. In order to be able to use propaganda, populist groups have to have a strong basis of controlled media sources, that can present them in a positive and attractive way (Otto & Köhler, 2018, p. 4).

Lochocki (2018) explains that there are certain issues, which are particularly popular in populist groups and these are communicated through the populist control of the media. In recent years in Europe the most popular topic of discussion among populist groups was immigration and integration (p. 1). Especially during the 2015 ‘migration crisis’, populist groups used immigration as their central political issue and strongly addressed the topic in the media. During the ‘migration crisis’, and also ever since, populists have been using messages that strengthens their fundamental claim that they fight for national interest and against foreigners dictating politics in the country (Hameleers, 2018, p. 2171). Media in general is an important source of communication in politics, but for populist groups it is essential, as without propaganda, it is likely that their popularity would decrease.

The literature review described the different typologies, attributes and techniques of populism and populist groups and created a framework that shows what populism is and how it

becomes popular among voters. The following chapters discuss these findings through the examples of Hungary and the Orbán government.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

The research consists of two main segments, a literature review and an analysis based on the literature review. The main topic of analysis of the research is populism and more precisely, populism in Hungary. The paper examines the following research question:

Is the current Hungarian government is a populist government and if so how it is realized in its politics?

In order to fully answer the main research question, the paper establishes three more sub-questions:

What is the nature and character of Hungarian populism?

How populism is realized in Hungarian politics?

What is the role of media in populism maintaining its popularity in Hungary?

To answer the main and sub-questions, the research chooses to apply an interpretive-descriptive research design. Interpretive research allows the researcher to analyse data and drive a conclusion from the data analysed (Bhattacharjee, 2012, p. 37.). In the case of this study, interpretive research is the most beneficial as the paper focuses on one phenomenon, based on which it creates conclusions.

The descriptive approach helps to explore and understand situations based on data and provides a deeper understanding on a certain question (Barakso, Sabet, & Schaffner, 2014). As the research explores the topic on populism in Hungary, based on the events in Hungary and the behaviour of the governing party, this method can help to gain a deeper insight on the topic.

Within interpretive- descriptive research design, the paper uses mixed research approaches. It applies secondary data analysis, especially in the first part of the paper, where the paper constructs the theoretical framework of the study.

In the analysis part, the paper uses case study research as this research design provides the possibility to analyse a certain phenomenon or problem on a real life example (Bhattacharjee, 2012, p. 93.). In the case of this study, the phenomenon examined is populism, while the real life example is its realization in Hungary.

Within the case study method, the research applies a small-n observational approach. The small-n observational approach means that the researcher focuses on one example, or maximum two examples and compares those to answer the research question (Barakso, Sabet, & Schaffner, 2014). Although the wider topic of the research is populism, due to the several types of populism, the paper chooses to focus on only one example, which is Hungarian populism, as otherwise, the research could not remain consistent.

As it was mentioned before, the main topic of the paper is populism, with a focus on the Hungarian example. However, the paper does not examine populism, but chooses the sample of the Fidesz- KDNP government between 2010 and 2019. This period and government was chosen as the paper wishes to contribute to the literature on populism as a current phenomenon.

3.2. Data Collection and analysis

As it was already defined, the study is fundamentally a case research. In order to answer the main question and all sub- questions, the paper creates a framework of analysis through a literature review and carries out the analysis based on its findings. In the literature review, secondary data is collected, which includes mostly the work of researchers on the topic of populism. This data is collected, summarized and compared in the literature review. In order to ensure the validity of the data, the work of well- established academic authors is used. These resources could be easily accessed in the library and via online research engines; therefore, accessibility is not an issue.

The analysis part of the paper uses secondary and primary data as well. Primary data is accessed from different databases such as the Eurostat or the Pew Research Center. Primary data is summarized and compared and based on the raw data provided by databases, tendencies and conclusions are established. Primary data also includes the speeches of Hungarian politicians and the prime minister to support different statements.

Similarly to the literature part, secondary data includes the work of academics but the analysis part also examines newspaper articles as well, which examine the steps of the Hungarian government. To analyse data from speeches and articles the paper uses open coding to detect populist elements. Through the technique of open coding, it is possible to identify the elements of populism in texts and makes the concept of populism also detectable (Bhattacharjee, 2012, p. 113.). While examining newspaper articles, the paper also considers the political orientation of the different media sources.

The paper also uses visual elements in the form of billboards and government advertisements to detect populist techniques. As the billboards, which are analysed, are chosen to present examples of the application of propaganda and populist techniques, therefore, these billboards are chosen through structured capturing. Structured capturing means the usage of visual elements in a certain framework, which framework in this case is populism itself (Ferguson, 2013, p. 5).

4. Analysis

4.1. The nature and type of Hungarian populism

As it was mentioned in the theoretical part, it is hard to define populism as the term has several meanings and it is context, region and also time dependent. Therefore, it is more beneficial to identify the type of populism in Hungary based on the different typologies to gain a better understanding on the nature of populism in Hungary.

First of all, it has to be mentioned that the emergence of populism is a recent phenomena. When populism in Europe began to strengthen, Uitz (2008) examined populist tendencies in Hungary and concluded, that populism is weak in the country and the Hungarian parliament at the time was well- balanced and even if there were populist elements in the ideology of some parties, it was balanced by the opposition (p. 37-38.)

Since then, populism and right wing conservatism became the strongest forces in the country. In the 2010 elections, Fidesz became the strongest party in Hungary and even strengthened through time, gaining absolute majority in the 2014 Hungarian parliamentary elections, making populism a strong force in the country.

In order to be able to see what type of populism is present in Hungary, the main ideas between populism and the rhetoric of the government on the main issues -that the Hungarian

government claims to fight against- has to be seen. First of all, it can be clearly stated that based on the typologies of Mudde (2000), populism in Hungary is not agrarian, as it does not have any elements of agrarian populism. However, it is more difficult to clearly state if populism in Hungary is economic or political.

First of all, populism in Hungary fits to the description of Sawyer and Laycock (2009) as in the case of other European countries, in Hungary right wing populism emerged as well. Although when discussing populist parties in Hungary, one tend to focus on the currently governing party Fidesz, it has to be highlighted that Fidesz is not the only right wing populist party in the country. The party called Jobbik, which party was labelled far right and anti-Semitic in the past as well, is also and example of a right wing populist party in Hungary. Moreover, while Jobbik began after 2000 and used populist rhetoric even at its foundation, Fidesz only began to embrace populism after 2010 (Murer, 2015, p. 75).

Although both parties are nationalist, the ideology behind Jobbik and Fidesz differ. Jobbik has a strong base of voters in the Hungarian countryside, where poverty and unemployment rates are high and where there is strong ethnic tension between Hungarians and the Roma minority (Murer, 2015, p. 100). Jobbik positions itself as the party of the poor and nationalist Hungarians, who want to fight against the elite, who governs Hungary, who wants to fight corruption and give back from the stolen fortune to all Hungarians (Enyedi, 2015, p. 52). Based on this, it can be said that the populism of Jobbik can be considered as an economic type of populism. Opposed to this, the populism of Fidesz mostly fits to the typology of political populism. The ideology of Fidesz is also nationalistic but the party claims that the main goal of Fidesz is to protect national interest from foreign powers, which are making attempts to take control over Hungary and not to let foreign interests interfere with national interest through the policies of the European Union (Enyedi, 2015, p. 56).

One of the latest examples on the populist view of Fidesz and its nationalistic rhetoric towards the European Union can be seen in the speech of the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, which took place in the Hungarian parliament in May 2019 after the European Parliamentary elections. After Fidesz earned the most mandate to send delegates to the European Parliament, Viktor Orbán said that is was a sign that Hungarian people want that “*delegates represent the interest of the Hungarian people in Brussels and not the interest of Brussels in Hungary*” (Orbán, Orbán Viktor napirend előtti felszólalása, 2019, p. 1).

Although Fidesz is the governing party, Jobbik is also popular among the Hungarians, which can be seen in the data of the last Hungarian parliamentary elections and the European parliamentary elections.

Figure 1. Election results of Fidesz and Jobbik in 2018 and 2019.¹

	Hungarian Parliamentary Elections (2018)		European Parliamentary Elections (2019)	
	Percentage of votes	Number of seats	Percentage of votes	Number of seats
Fidesz	49,30%	133	52,14%	13
Jobbik	19,10%	26	6,33%	1

In the parliamentary elections in 2018, after Fidesz, Jobbik finished in second place. Fidesz received 49.3% of the votes, meaning 133 seats in the parliament with their coalition of KDNP, and Jobbik earning 19.1% of the votes, earning 26 seats in the parliament. In the 2019 European elections, Fidesz earned the 52.14% of the votes, showing that the popularity of the party is still strong, and gained 13 mandates. Jobbik received only 6.44 % and earned only 1 mandate, which shows that the popularity of the party is decreasing.

However, based on the results of the last two elections in Hungary, it can be said that both parties are popular in the country, therefore, when examining Hungarian populism, it cannot be said that the roots of Hungarian populism are exclusively economic or political. But when it comes to defining the type of populism Fidesz embraces, it can be said that it is political populism. When it comes to the typologies created by Lang (2007) it is easier to identify the populism of Fidesz and Jobbik and both can be mentioned under the same umbrella. Both parties are right wing parties and nationalist parties; moreover, the ideology of both Jobbik and Fidesz is strongly conservative. Therefore, according to the approach of Lang (2007) it can be argued that national conservatives are the populist force in Hungary.

4.2. The populist characteristics of Fidesz

4.2.1. Challenging the ‘elite’

The previous chapter established that populism in Hungary is clearly national conservative. However, it cannot be clearly stated that populism in Hungary is political or economic. But as the paper focuses on the measures and actions of the current Hungarian government, which

¹ Self edited based on the data of Politico (2019)

currently consists of the members of the Fidesz- KDNP, this chapter only examines the populist characteristics of Fidesz and examines the party as a political populist party. The chapter looks at how the basic assumptions on populism and the characteristics identified in the literature review are present in Hungary.

The first assumption of Beyme (2017) was that populists as a group challenge the elite, claim to represent the people and regard themselves as morally superior to other parties and others having different opinions. This is manifested in Hungary in several different ways and this attitude is deeply embedded in the political culture of the Fidesz today.

Fidesz began to embrace populism after the financial crisis of 2008 and began to use strongly populist rhetoric after 2010. The financial crisis provided an opportunity to the party to position itself as the saviour of the people, not just against the previously governing left wing parties but also against international forces, which were held responsible for the economic crisis in Hungary by Fidesz (Becker, 2010, p. 29). The economic crisis mostly impacted the middle and lower classes in the country, therefore, it was convenient to right-wing parties to embrace their cause and position themselves as the potential saviour of the people who suffer the consequences of the bad decisions of liberal governments and the elites (Becker, 2010, p. 38). It is important to observe, that during the 2010 elections, the political promises of Fidesz concentrated around bringing change to the country, correcting the mistakes of liberal governments and prioritize the interest of the Hungarian people over business and private interests. The program of Fidesz for the 2010 parliamentary elections was called the *Politics of National Issues* and it emphasized national interest, as Viktor Orbán wrote in the program:

„In the future, politics have to serve common goals and interests instead of private goals and interests. We need a government and governing which again turns towards the people and the problems of everyday life” (Orbán, 2010, p. 20)

But at the time, Fidesz only criticized the bad choices of the previous government and was encouraging strong relationship with the European Union and other Member States. This political approach drastically changed throughout the years and Fidesz began to position itself against the European Union. During the 2014-2015 period when the European Union made an attempt to create a common, centralized immigration policy, the Fidesz- KDNP government began to strongly criticise the European Union for wanting to force a central immigration policy on Hungary, in the name of the Hungarian People (Danaj, Lazányi, & Bilan, 2018, p.

245). During this period, in government friendly newspapers, in the communications of the government and in the speeches of his own, Viktor Orbán was presented as the representative of all Hungarian, the person whose role is to channel the opinion of all Hungarians to the European Union.

Therefore, on the one hand, it can be seen that Fidesz presents Viktor Orbán and the whole Hungarian government as the representation of the will of all Hungarians and the European Union can be identified as the elite, against which the Fidesz government is going. On the other hand, it has to be mentioned, that the incapable elite is not only identified internationally in the body of the European Union but also internally in the body of the left wing, liberal parties.

In 2010, the Fidesz government created the System of National Cooperation (Nemzeti Együttműködés Rendszere – NER). The NER is described as a system by the Fidesz-KDNP government, that works for the well- being of all Hungarians and rises above party politics. Viktor Orbán, when introduced the NER to the Hungarian parliament said:

“These corporations, which set free extremely strong powers, allows all Hungarians, may they be of any age, gender, religion, have any kind of political opinion or stay at any parts of the world, to be hopeful and after long centuries this provides the possibility for Hungarians to realize their own goals” (Orbán, A NemzetiEgyüttműködésről, 2010, p. 2).

As the NER is labelled as the cooperation for all Hungarians, all parties and individuals, who criticise the NER, are called anti- nationalistic and are told to be working against national interest. The Fidesz-KDNP government argues that the criticism of NER equals with the criticism of all Hungarians and the opposition parties are all controlled by foreign powers, who work again the success of Hungary (Hegedús & Bozóki, 2017, p. 7.)

4.2.2. The missing agenda

The second characteristics according to Beyme (2017) is that populist groups do not have a well- defined political program and that these groups are established on one single issue. This can be also seen in the case of Fidesz.

In the 2010 elections, Fidesz, as it was already mentioned before, introduced the program called *Politics of National Issues*. This program was a detailed political program, which

focused on areas such as the Hungarian economy, the stabilization of healthcare, the protection of democratic norms, social security and the maintenance of a strong and good relationship with the European Union. But as it was also mentioned before, Fidesz began to embrace populism and populist ideology after the elections of 2010. In the 2014 national elections, the party did not have an actual, detailed political program as in 2010, but Viktor Orbán only introduced 10 points according to the Fidesz wished to govern. These 10 points were

- 1) *“The involvement of more domestic sources into the financing of state debt*
- 2) *Reindustrialization*
- 3) *Finishing the placement of Hungary in the international system*
- 4) *Changing ownership rates in the bank sector*
- 5) *Changing the structure over land ownership*
- 6) *Foundation of innovation centres*
- 7) *Decreasing labour related taxes*
- 8) *Placing the whole Hungarian economy on demographic thinking*
- 9) *New energy system*
- 10) *Full employment”* (Portfolio, 2014).

These 10 points were introduced during a speech of the Prime Minister and although some case examples were given how the government imagines realizing these goals, these examples were mostly comparisons not actual political measures. For instance, for point 8, Viktor Orbán only mentioned to nurture a better relationship with Russia and India, however, there were no specifics regarding these relationships or what political measures this ‘international placement ‘ would mean for the country. Also, regarding *full employment* the Prime Minister did not discuss the ways this level could be reached, only highlighted that it is important to provide work for all Hungarians and it is necessary for the security of Hungarian companies. Four years later, in 2018, during the national elections Fidesz did not introduce a political program to the public at all. While in 2014 at least there was a basic political direction introduced by the speech of Viktor Orbán, in 2018 there was no speech or document on how Fidesz would govern the country in the next governing period. Instead, the election campaign of Fidesz was centralized around the slogan *‘For us Hungary is the first’* (Nekünk Magyarország az első) and on the principle that whoever criticized Fidesz is an enemy of the

country and of the Hungarian people (Santora, 2018). This approach is well illustrated on the below two billboards, which were part of the Fidesz campaign in 2018.

Figure 2. Fidesz campaign billboards from 2018 (Pándi, 2018)



The first billboard shows Viktor Orbán with the above-mentioned slogan 'For us Hungary is the first'. The second billboard presents the four leaders of the four major opposition parties and György Soros, who was labelled as the enemy of Fidesz, stating that these five people would demolish the border fence together. This statement has the meaning, that the five people on the billboard goes against the policy of the Fidesz regarding immigration and border security and want to cause insecurity, instability in Hungary and let foreign powers to take control.

The marginalization element of the campaigns of the Fidesz could be best observed during the same campaign, when another strong message from the government was 'Stop Brussels' (Állítsuk meg Brüsszelt), which message was also put on billboards all over the country. According to the government, this message was necessary, because the European Union wanted to impose its will on the Hungarian people without their consent and the government placed itself as the protector of national interest.

4.2.3. The usage of propaganda

Based on the third assumption of Beyme (2017), Fidesz should use propaganda, which assumption can be observed. The Fidesz is using propaganda for two main reasons. First is to discredit the opposition in the country. It is a common phenomenon in Hungary that degradation articles appear in government friendly newspapers and that government officials talk negatively and pejoratively about their political opponents (Enyedi & Krekó, 2018, p. 43). On the other hand, propaganda is used to explain the standpoint of the government regarding European issues, usually without the opinion of the European Union or the actual measures of the European Union. This has led to confusion in Hungarians regarding what the European Union can do and cannot do, as Fidesz tends to blame all negative events happening in Hungary on EU policies (Enyedi & Krekó, 2018, p. 39).

4.2.4. Radicalism

The next assumption of Beyme (2017) about populism was that populists hold radical ideas, but it was also highlighted that these radical ideas did not mean far-right ideas. In the case of the Hungarian government, a strong nationalism can be observed, however, this does not equal fascism. The nationalism of the Fidesz- KDNP can be best illustrated through their concept of immigration.

The nationalism of the Fidesz- KDNP has two main pillars. One of them is religion, more precisely Christianity and the other is Hungarian culture itself. Christianity and the protection of Christianity has become one of the main values Viktor Orbán emphasizes to protect and which, according to him and his advisory, provides fundamental values in Hungary (Halmai, 2018, n.p.). When immigration became a major point of discussion in the EU, Hungary tried to defend its anti-immigration viewpoint by arguing that anyone coming from different, non-European culture is a threat to the Christian identity and culture (Halmai, 2018, n.p.).

As mentioned, the second important element of the nationalism of Fidesz- KDNP is the Hungarian culture and Hungarian identity itself. The government created a picture about Hungarian being a small but powerful nation, which, due to the small size of the country, has to continuously fight against the oppression of foreign powers, which want to make the Hungarian identity vanish (Toomey, 2018, p. 87). The fear of foreign cultures and the government as the protector of the culture of the Hungarian nation is a very common rhetorical element of the speeches of Viktor Orbán and other representatives of the Hungarian

government (Toomey, 2018, p. 87). Moreover, the will of Viktor Orbán to protect the Hungarian culture and identity is not limited to the borders of the country.

Currently, about three million ethnic Hungarians live in the neighbouring countries, most of them in Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine. The status of these Hungarians is especially important to parties on the right side of the political states in Hungary and the preservation of their Hungarian identity, their acceptance to their land of origin and the support for these Hungarians to receive dual citizenship as easy as possible has been a central issue for governments ever since the regime change in 1989 (Waterbury, 2010, p. 4).

The government provides financial support to these Hungarians and the yearly meeting of the Fidesz- KDNP takes place in Tusnádfürdő or Baile Tusnad in Transilvania, Romania, not in Hungary, to show the appreciation of Hungarians in Transylvania by the government. One does not have to forget that due to the easy process of obtaining dual citizenship for ethnic Hungarians and regulations created by the Hungarian government in the past year, these ethnic Hungarians also participate in the elections and traditionally vote for the right.

4.2.5. Charismatic leadership

The fundamental characteristics of populism by Beyme (2017) were extended in the literature review with two more important elements that characterize populism and more precisely, populism in Europe. The first element was that populist groups have a charismatic leader, such as Nigel Farage of UKIP, Marine Le Pen of Front Nationale or Donald Trump who is currently the face of American populism. In case of Hungary, there is no difference. For Hungarians, Viktor Orbán became the protector of the nation, the person, who fights for national interest in the EU and against foreign oppression by himself. There is strong branding behind the Hungarian Prime Minister, which brand associates with the above- mentioned values and actions (Waller, 2016, n.p.). Viktor Orbán became the face of Hungarian populism. Orbán became the wise man of the nation for Hungarians, who redefined the role of Hungary in European politics and protected them from oppression, which Hungarians have a close memory from the communist era (Rajcsányi, 2018, p. 127). But the charisma of Viktor Orbán is not only in his representation, but also in his ability to see the different tension points in Hungarian society and to be aware of Hungarian history, more precisely the fear of Hungarians of past political events. Although communism ended more than 30 years ago in

Hungary, the fear of communism and the radical left is still alive in the society, even in those who did not live under the communist regime (Rajcsányi, 2018, p. 125).

As being part of the groups of young politicians, who significantly contributed to the regime change and began the political movements, which eventually brought democracy to the country, Viktor Orbán knows well the Hungarian society and the need of Hungarians for security. By playing on these emotions and offering protection for the Hungarians, Viktor Orbán became the populist leader, who has shaped European Politics as well (Waller, 2016, n.p.).

4.2.6. Criticism of the European Union

The last characteristic identified among European populists was the strong criticism towards the European Union. Viktor Orbán and the Hungarian government have been criticizing the European Union from many different angles and, as it was mentioned before, regards the European Union as the enemy.

First of all, the government and the Prime Minister criticized EU institutions several times, moreover, in some cases, questioned their legitimacy. The European Commission was criticized due to its supranational nature and the Hungarian government claimed several times, that this institution represents foreign interests (even though there is a Hungarian Commission member) (Danaj, Lazányi, & Bilan, 2018, p. 244.).

Due to several issues in the European Parliament the Sargentini report was created, which highlighted the different EU law violations the Hungarian government committed. After the Sargentini report was voted in the European Parliament, the Hungarian government claimed that the voting was not successful and claimed that the acceptance of the report was an electoral fraud (Political Capital, 2018, p. 1.). And on the other hand, the Hungarian government not only criticizes EU institutions but in many cases, it has also questioned European values. On the one hand, the government argues that some European values (such as democracy and the respect of the rule of law for example) can be understood in different ways, not just in the way the European Union and its institutions define it (Füredi, 2018, p. 13.).

Viktor Orbán named his system of ruling Hungary as ‘illiberal democracy’. In his point of view, ‘illiberal democracy’ is the democratic system in Hungary, which gives back the power

to the hand of the people and, which is criticized from the side of the European Union, as it does not comply with their values and perception of democracy (Buzogány, 2017, p. 1307.).

Based on the above analysis, it can be concluded, that all characteristics of populism are present in Hungary rather strongly, except radicalism, which is rather represented by a strong nationalism from the side of the government. Based on the findings, it can be established that the current Fidesz- KDNP government in Hungary is a populist government.

The following chapter examines how the different populist techniques identified in the literature review are realized in Hungary and what are those ruling techniques applied by the Fidesz- KDNP government, which characterize populist governments in general.

4.3. Techniques of populism of the Hungarian government

4.3.1. Changes in the state apparatus

The first technique populists use in power in order to maintain their status is to 'occupy the state' as Müller said (2016, p. 44). In case of the Fidesz- KDNP, several examples can be detected from the last nine years of their governance.

One of the first steps of the government after its election in 2010 was to create a new regulation of the civil servant law. The Act LVIII of 2010 on the Legal Status of Government Officials received criticism from the side of the Hungarian opposition and also from the European Union. On the one hand, the new civil servant law left several possibilities open for the employer, which is in this case is the government, to regularize overtime for civil servant and also for the supervisors to completely regulate the holidays of civil servants (Prugberger, Tóth, & Szöllős, 2018, p. 342.). On the other hand, the new legislation introduced the term 'loss of confidence' as a cause of dismissal in governmental institutions. This meant, that employment for civil servants became trust based and highly dependent on the supervisors. This provides the possibility for the government to place people into civil servant roles, or at least in higher positions, who are loyal to the government and who can supervise the suitable attitude of the civil servants on lower levels as well (Prugberger, Tóth, & Szöllős, 2018, p. 344.). Moreover, the government reorganized university education, which concerned civil service and melted the before independently working department of Corvinus University of Budapest into the the Mikós Zrínyi University of National Security and from this merge created the National University of Public Service (Nemzeti Közzolgálati Egyetem – NKE).

The NKE is run by officials close and some even appointed by the government as well as military officials (Kingsley, 2018, n.p.)

The civil service law was not the only legislation the Fidesz- KDNP government changed in his favor. A new constitution was voted by the Hungarian Parliament in 2012. The opposition criticized the Fidesz- KDNP government for several points of the new constitution and it claimed that the changes deconstruct democracy and pose limitations on the judiciary branch. Such point were the limitation of the power of the Constitutional Court, the decrease of the age limit of the judges, the limitation of election campaigns to the state media and constitutionalizing the concept of family (Grabenwater et al., 2011, p.4.). Through these changes, the constitution reflects the ideology of the government, which reduces civil rights (for instance in the above mentioned example of defining a family) and on the other hand, it also helps the government to expand its powers and limit the power of the judiciary branch.

Another way the government attempts to 'occupy the state' and maintain its power is by introducing changes to the electoral system. The electoral system went through a significant change before the 2014 elections, which were highly criticized. Through redefining the regulations and remapping the electoral districts, the new system allows the party receiving the most percentage of votes to earn more seats in the parliament than before. The new law also reduced the number of seats in the Hungarian parliament. The consequences of the changes in the electoral system were the most visible in the 2018 elections, which resulted in the Fidesz- KDNP earning 2/3 of the seats of the Hungarian parliament, despite receiving less votes in numbers and in percentage as well than in the previous years (Terry, 2018, n.p.).

As it was mentioned before, the new constitution limited the rights of the Constitutional Court and also decreased the retirement age limit of the judges. But this is not the only way the government tried to intervene in the judiciary branch. In 2018, the government released a plan regarding the reconstruction of municipality courts. According to the new plan, a parallel court system would have been established, which would have exclusively focused on matters regarding the state, such as elections, competition and procurement law, right to assemble or the infringements carried out by state institutions (Niedermüller, 2018, p.1.). In the new courts, half of the leadership and employees would have been made up out of civil servants (lawyers working at state institutions or even representatives of the government) and these people would have also had the right to decide on the employment of judges in such courts.

To simplify the above, it could be said that with the establishment of these courts, the representatives of the state would have decided if the state committed any infringements towards the public, which is highly problematic as it lacks the fundamental element, the separation of power, of democracy. The plan received strong criticism from the Hungarian opposition and several protests were organized all over the country against the creation of the new courts.

The European Parliament, the Association of European Administrative Judges and also the European Commission strongly criticized the plan and warned the Hungarian government that the introduction of the plan would seriously harm the rule of law in the country (Novak & Kingsley, 2018, p. 21.). As a consequence, the Fidesz- KDNP had to withdraw from the introduction of the plan to reorganize the court system due to political pressure.

Another highly problematic area is the restructuring of the education system, which is also a tool for the government to 'occupy the state'. Since 2010, the education, primary, secondary and tertiary as well, went through a serious structural change.

In 2012, the government created the Klebersberg Centre, which institution is responsible for the operation of all primary and secondary state education institutions in Hungary. This means, that state schools are financially dependent on the Klebersberg Centre and educational plans are also designed centrally (Nahalka, 2018, p. 6.). Moreover, it is also the responsibility to appoint the principals for the schools, which have been causing tension between the parents, students and the Klebersberg Centre. It happened in several cases, that principals, who had several years of experience and were supported by their colleagues, the parents and the students, were removed from their position and the Klebersberg Centre appointed new principals without experience (Nahalka, 2018, p. 8.). At the level of university education, a similar technique can be observed. The executive head of the universities is directly appointed by the Ministry of Education and also, the board members of the universities are appointed by the same institution and the Ministry of Human Resources. Moreover, in 2015 the government created the position of university chancellors, who were given extensive rights to govern the university, especially when it comes to financial management. The chancellor of each university is appointed by the Prime Minister.

The 2017 report of the European University Association (EUA) depicts a worrying picture about the autonomy of the universities in Hungary. The EUA examined for indicators relating

to independence: financial, organisational, staffing and academic. Within the EU countries, Hungary is the 28th in financial, 23rd in organisational, 22nd in staffing and 16th in academic independence (European University Association, 2017).

As it can be seen, Hungary is at the end of the European rankings in most of the indicators and also in the second half of the list regarding academic independence. The study also depicts that the tendency is worsening and Hungarian universities has lost a significant amount of their independence since Fidesz- KDNP began to govern.

To summarize the above written, it can be seen that the Fidesz- KDNP government began to occupy the state in several ways. Their measures impact the judiciary branch, the education system and civil servants.

4.3.2. Mass clientelism

Müller (2016) identified mass clientelism as the second technique that populists use when in power. Clientelism is present in today's Hungary in many different ways. First of all, to understand the nature of clientelism in Hungary, its context has to be understood.

Since the 2010 elections of the Fidesz- KDNP, the government and Viktor Orbán attempted to redefine the values of the Hungarian society and the values according to him Hungarians have to comply with. These values are based on his perception of a Christian Hungary. In the value set family, religion and devotion towards the nation are the primary values, which all Hungarians have to comply with. The government made it clear that those who do not wish to follow these values and criticize the government are not part of the real nation and can be criticised harshly (Müller, 2016, p. 48). The government has expressed several times, that those who support these values and support the government, can enjoy the protection of the law to the maximum extent, however, those who do not, cannot expect protection. This approach appears in two ways in reality.

The first one, which type of mass clientelism Müller (2016) is discussing, that appears in the form of presents. With such presents, the government mostly targets two groups. The first group is businessmen, journalists, artists and other influential personalities, who can help forming the opinion of the people or who can financially support the government. Businessmen are targeted through state orders, which can be highly beneficial. The Hungarian government has created a close circle of businessman, who became wealthy during the past

years and in favour also support the party. This type of clientelism increased corruption in Hungary, making it as a considerably corrupt country based on the most recent report of Transparency International (Transparency International, 2018, n.p.).

When it comes to art, the government also made it clear that state funds are only reverted to those theaters or artists, which are willing to support the government or at least are not critical towards it. The government provides the most support for those artists who are willing to address the above mentioned values with their art and their art can confirm with Christian ideology (Fábián, 2018).

Presents are also targeted at the population, especially at those groups, where the popularity of Fidesz is high, in order to encourage people to participate in the election. Before the elections, the government usually provides financial presents to pensioners and also increases the funds that support ethnic Hungarians outside the border. Moreover, during the 2014 elections, the government provided buses for voters to transport them to the urns and used other practices as well, which triggered the suspicion of electoral fraud (Mares & Young, 2019, p. 451.).

The second way mass clientelism appears in Hungary is not in the form of presents, but in the form of threats. First of all, as it was already mentioned before, the Hungarian government made it clear several times that it is not willing to support anyone who does not comply with the notion of Christian Hungary, perceived by the government. This resulted in the marginalization of minorities, such as the LGBTQ community or ethnic minorities (Lugosi, 2018, p. 214.). Secondly, the government also made it clear for the voters, that those cities and villages who would elect the representatives of the opposition would have difficulties in the future to receive state funding. Gergely Gulyás, who is the Minister of the Prime Minister's Office, announced that in case Budapest elects any other candidate than the current major István Tarlós as the major of Budapest in the next elections, the capital would lose 3,3 billion euro financial support from the government.

To conclude, it can be said that mass clientelism is present in Hungary in two forms. On the one hand, presents are given out by the government in exchange for loyalty and on the other hand, those who are not willing to comply are threatened.

4.3.3. Criticism of the opposition and NGOs

The third action by populist governments, according to Müller (2016) is the harsh criticism of NGOs and making the work of NGOs, who target areas, which are not values by the government or consider the issues as not national.

In Hungary, the ideology behind the criticism of NGOs is also based on the already discussed 'Christian Hungary' perception of the government. This has two major consequences. On the one hand, the government directly attacks NGOs, which focus on issues that are deemed to be un-national by the government, such as immigration or LGBT rights. In 2018, Fidesz handed in the plan that directly targets NGOs working with immigrants. According to the planned legislation, all NGOs, which carry out any sort of activity that is related to immigration has to apply for approval directly at the Ministry of Interior Affairs (Than, 2018, n.p.)

In the perception of the government, all NGOs whose activities are related to migration are posing a threat to national security, therefore, their operations must be permitted by the Ministry of Interior Affairs. The new legislation plan received strong criticism, not just from the opposition and Hungarian NGOs, but also from the side of the European Union.

The second consequence is, that all NGOs, which receive international support are also targeted by the government, as the Fidesz- KDNP considers the operations of such NGOs as the intervention of foreign interest in the country. The first big scandal of the government regarding foreign funds for social improvement took place in 2014.

The Norway Grants, which is a fund from the Norwegian government to support the operation of the NGOs, suspended its funds to Hungary because the Hungarian government changed the distribution of the funds unilaterally and merged it under the control of the government. According to Fidesz this was necessary, as the previous independent distributor of the funds, the organization called Ökotárs Alapítvány, was not distributing the funds equally and provided financial aid to NGOs, which had political activities and supported the opposition. The case of the Norway Grants caused an international diplomatic scandal. The government of Viktor Orbán received criticism from the European Union and Norway, but also the United States criticized this step of the government, as all perceived this step of the government as abusing the independence of NGOs and also that the government was trying to take control over the finances of NGOs (Helsinki Committee, 2017, p. 2.).

It was the first but not the last attack of the Hungarian government against NGOs receiving international funding. In 2017, the government obliged NGOs with international financial support to register and created a list of such NGOs. According to the communication of the government, this was necessary as that these NGOs are working in Hungary, they have national security implications (Helsinki Committee, 2017, p. 4.).

In June 2018, representatives of the Fidesz- KDNP in the parliament and activists of Fidelitas, the youth organization of Fidesz, began to leave stickers on the doors of NGOs, which, according to them, work against the Hungarian government and Hungarian national interest and want to contribute to the so called Soros- plan. According to the Hungarian government, the Soros plan is the plan of Hungarian- American businessman György Soros to flood Hungary and whole Europe with immigrants from the Middle- East and Africa in order to weaken Europe and Hungary.² The government claims that NGOs, which receive foreign funding are part of this plan and that is the reason why the government has to step up against them (Cabinet Office of the Prime Minister, 2017, n.p.).

The above mentioned law proposal also impacts NGOs, which receive international funds as it imposes a 25% tax on all foreign funds (Than, 2018, n.p.). This will make NGOs lose a significant amount of their income, which will also put limitations on their activities.

Overall, it can be argued that all three techniques used by populists in power to maintain their power according to Müller (2016) is strongly present in Hungary in many different ways. For all techniques, several examples could be given, supporting the idea that the current government of Hungary is operating according to the patterns of populism.

4.4. The status of media in Hungary

4.4.1. Centralization of the media

As it was mentioned in the literature review of the paper, the relationship between the media and populist groups are strong but two-faced. At the beginning of the ruling of Viktor Orbán and the Fidesz- KDNP government, this two-faced relationship could be observed, however, by 2018 the government has completely changed the media scene of Hungary, providing worrying tendencies regarding the freedom of the press.

² The Soros plan and its connection to the migration policy of the Hungarian government is elaborated in the next chapter

In 2010, the relationship between the government and the media reflected this two-faced relationship. Critical and left wing newspapers were labelled as untrustworthy by the government and non nationalistic as well in several occasions. On the one hand, the aim of the government was to undermine the trust of voters in liberal newspapers and also to mark those, government friendly newspapers, which voters should read and trust (Bajomi-Lázár, 2013, p. 69.). Through this technique, called media colonization, the party could strengthen the loyalty of its voters as the news of the government friendly tabloids strongly reflect the opinion of the government and channel the news from the perspective of the same ideology (Bajomi-Lázár, 2013, p. 74.). To summarize, it can be said that Fidesz embraces the government friendly media while regards any other sources as illegitimate.

The approach of Fidesz strongly changed after 2014. While in the first 4 years term of the government there was only criticism towards non- government friendly media, from 2014 government friendly business men began to purchase newspapers and tv channels and either reorganizing them or simply closing them down. For instance, one of the biggest public channels, TV2 was purchased by Andrew Vajna in 2016, who was the Government Commissioner responsible for the Hungarian film making industry. Ever since the channel is creating government friendly materials. A similar change went through at the second biggest online newportal, called Origo. In 2014 the management of Origo was changed and government friendly businessmen began to control the newspaper, which resulted in the resignation of most of the journalists and editors, who claimed that their independent work was made impossible and no criticism of the government was allowed at the newspaper anymore (Barry, 2019, n.p.).

For the other technique, the example of the newspaper, called Népszabadság, can be mentioned. Until 2016, Népszabadség was the most read Hungarian newspaper. The paper tried to maintain a moderate approach but it was considered as a liberal newspaper. In 2016, a series of investigative articles were published in the newspaper about the members of the government, Fidesz and businessmen close to the government. Just two weeks after the articles were published, the newspaper was shut down. The owner claimed it was due to financial reasons, however, the journalists and workers of the newspaper claimed that they were not aware of any financial issues and the newspaper was most likely to shut down due to the criticism of the government (Druckerman, 2018, n.p.).

Another major change in the structure of the media happened in November 2018, which was strongly criticized by European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF), the European Union and also several other EU member states. Gábor Liszkay, who is a close friend of Viktor Orbán and the government, founded the Central European Press and Media Foundation. On the 28th of November, 2018 the owners and boards of all government friendly, right wing newspapers decided to donate their media sources to the Central European Press and Media Foundation (the above mentioned Origo also went under the leadership of the foundation). This donation meant, that all government friendly newspapers, radio channels and tabloids were centralized in the hand of one foundation, that is led by businessmen close to Fidesz (Gorondi, 2018, n.p.).

The changes in the structure of the media in Hungary and the growing influence of the government over the Hungarian media can be also seen on the ranking of Hungary on different reports of organizations, which are focused on the freedom of the press.

Figure 3. Freedom of the press in Hungary³

		2010	2018
Freedom in the world	Status	Free	Partially Free
	Freedom (1-7)	1	3
	Political Rights (1-7)	1	3
	Civil Liberties (1-7)	1	3
Freedom of the press	Legal Environment (0-30)	7	12
	Political Environment (0-40)	9	17
	Economic Environment (0-30)	7	15

The above table presents the scores of Hungary in the ranking of Freedom House, and organization examining the level of political, legal freedom and the freedom of the press worldwide. In terms of political and civil rights and liberties, in 2010 Hungary reached the best score but by 2018 the country lost two points. Regarding the freedom of the press, a considerable decline can be observed as well, especially in terms of the political and legal environment. Due to the measures introduced by the government since 2010, Hungary went from free status to only partially free by 2018. The ranking of Hungary not only declined according to the Freedom House. The organization Reporters Without Borders created the

³ Self edited based on the data of Freedom House (2018)

Press Freedom Index based on slightly different indicators and the indicators of Freedom House. On the Press Freedom Index, compared to the first year of the Fidesz- KDNP government in 2010, Hungary fell back 50 places in the ranking. Only the last year, currently lost 14 places, which happened mostly due to the centralization of the media. In 2019, Hungary ranked 87th out of the examined 180 countries with the score of 30.44, which places Hungary into the 'problematic' category.

Based on the above it can be argued that the Hungarian government also occupies the state through the media. This means, that the Fidesz has a huge influence on the political messages most of the public consumes and can easily form the opinion of the public. The following chapter examines the political messages of the Hungarian government and the way these messages fit into the populist ideology.

4.4.2. Communication, immigration and propaganda

By centralizing the media, Fidesz could ensure that the same messages have been circulating in the past years. The government began to build a strong communication strategy in 2015, which is still in place today, that combines propaganda, conspiracy theory, nationalism and anti- immigration.

When the number of immigrant arrivals began to increase through the Balkan in 2015, the Hungarian government began to focus on spreading nationalistic and anti- immigration messages all over Hungary. This communication strategy has three major elements: the first one was the establishment of billboards all over the country with anti- immigration messages. The second was a national consultation questionnaire sent to all Hungarians who are eligible to vote, asking question, which were strongly nationalistic and deceptive. The third was the creation of a conspiracy regarding migration, which, according to Fidesz, justified the anti- immigration measures of the government (Bocskor, 2018, p. 551.).

It was already mentioned, that the Hungarian government tends to communicate with the voters on billboards (see the example of the election campaign of 2018). Communication through billboards allows the government to send simple messages to the voters and as the billboards could be found all over Hungary, it also allowed to government, to communicate with those who, on the one hand, are not interested in politics and those, on the other hand, who does not have access to other media sources (e.g. television, newspapers). In 2015, the

government spent close to € 1 million on the campaign to spread messages as shown in the below examples (Németh, 2015, n.p.).

Figure 4. Anti- immigration billboard of the government in 2015 (Németh, 2015, n.p.)



If you come to Hungary, you can not take the work of Hungarians!



If you come to Hungary, you must respect our culture!



If you come to Hungary, you must respect our laws!

In their text, the messages were targeted at the immigrants, however, it is clear that in reality, the messages were created for Hungarians, to understand the possible threat the arrival of immigrants to the country can cause. These billboards were strongly linked to the questions of the second element of the strategy, which was the questionnaire of the national consultations. Ever since the government came into power in 2010, national consultation through questionnaires were held six times. In all cases, the wording of the questions were deceptive and misleading and the questions were put in a way that the answers would be in favor of the government (Bocskor, 2018, p. 554.).

The third element of the communication technique of the government was the creation of a conspiracy theory, which is closely connected to immigration. The conspiracy theory was named by the government as the Soros Plan and its central actor is György Soros. Based on the theory of the government, György Soros provides financial support to organizations, who in favor support his agenda, which is to allow mass migration to Europe. Through allowing immigrants, according to Fidesz and Viktor Orbán, Soros wants to create chaos and instability in Europe, however, the government has never defined why would this benefit Soros or what his objectives would be. György Soros became an evil figure and also, when the European Union or civil organizations criticise the measures of the government, the government usually claims that all critics are the people of György Soros. In 2017, Viktor Orbán went so far, that he claimed the legislations the European Union implements and all EU policies related to migration are the implementation of the Soros plan (Office of the Prime Minister, 2017, n.p.).

One of the political consultants of Fidesz was George Brinbaum at the time, who explained the logic behind creating the Soros plan and putting one single person responsible for issues a country has to face and to create a single 'evil' entity. Brinbaum called it the Finkelstein method, and explained that topics have to be addressed which create fear among the society and link the source of fear to the opposite political side and it is even better if it comes from one single source (Kovács, 2019, n.p.).

The above mentioned fear campaign was built on immigration and the fear of unknown cultures and religions. As a result, based on the 2018 survey of the European Commission, anti semitism is on the rise in Hungary and the number of attacks based on anti semitic motives also increased (European Commission, 2018, n. p.).

Based on the above three elements, it can be seen, that the Hungarian government built its rhetoric and political communication fundamentally around one issue, which, as mentioned, is immigration and the challenges of the European Union to regulate migration flows. The rhetoric of Fidesz placed immigration and refugee issues into the centre of each election since 2014 and even today, when immigration does not have the same focus in the European Union as in 2015, the Hungarian government still uses immigration to create fear and insecurity. The massive influx of refugees and immigrants reached its peak in Hungary in 2015. As most of the people arrived from the MENA region, the focus on the maintenance and protection of the already mentioned, ideal, Christian Hungary and Europe began to strengthen in the communication of the government. This rhetoric of the government was also anti-semitic at the same time and linked the arriving masses to terrorism, increasing crime rates and chaos (Fekete, 2016, p. 39.). This approach also helped the Hungarian government to justify its political actions. In 2015, the Hungarian government increased border protection on the southern borders of Hungary by building a fence to regulate migration flows arriving from Serbia. The government called this necessary, as it argued that national security cannot be protected against irregular migration any other ways. But also, it was part of the rhetoric of the Fidesz government through which it depoliticized the causes that trigger migration from the MENA regions.

This act of depoliticization meant, that the Hungarian government emphasized in many ways why it is not responsible to find a solution to the massive influx of immigrants but only responsible for keeping these flows outside of Hungary as people arrive to the country illegally. The Fidesz government emphasized that Hungary is not responsible for poverty, war and political instability in the sending countries and marked it as a far, non-European problem, which is not a global but a regional issue (Kallius, Monterescu, & Rajaram, 2016, p. 27.). Moreover, the Hungarian government emphasized several times, that the arrivals are not coming from the MENA region directly, but from Serbia. This was an important point for the government from two perspectives. Firstly, in its rhetorics, the Fidesz government communicated that Serbia is considered as a safe country, where there is no imminent threat to the life of those who stay there. As a consequence, the government argued that none of the asylum applications handed in at the Hungarian border are reasonable, as people are not

facing direct threat to their lives and therefore, do not fulfill the requirement to be granted refugee status in Hungary.

A study created by the Helsinki Committee, and NGO focusing on the protection of human rights, refuted this statement based on their study of 2011, which concluded that for immigrants and refugees there is only limited protection available in Serbia (Bakonyi, Iván, Matevžič, & Roşu, 2011, p.1.). The Hungarian left- wing opposition, the EU and also NGOs, all criticized the government for the harsh treatment of migrants at the borders and for sending back applicants immediately to Serbia. The government responded to these critics in two ways. First of all, it argued that national and international criticism is due to the above mentioned Soros plan and secondly, the government also connected criticism to the criticism of the Christian Hungarian identity (Fekete, 2016, p. 44.).

Identifying Serbia as a safe country and connecting migration flows directly to Serbia also allowed the Hungarian government to highlight that the acceptance of immigrants and refugees is not the responsibility of the country as people arriving from Serbia are likely to have entered the European Union already. Based on the Dublin agreements, asylum applications in the European Union have to be handed in the member state where the person first arrives. The Hungarian government used this rule to legitimize closing the borders and turn away asylum applicants (Kallius, Monterescu, & Rajaram, 2016, p. 25.).

It is also important to mention the way the government and the government friendly media narrated the events and presented the government. First of all, it has to be highlighted that right- wing media reported on immigration and refugee issues in an aggressive way and used hostility and even hate speech in their reportings (Georgiou & Zaborowski, 2017, p. 4.).

Moreover, from 2015, right- wing media began to use rethorics, which blamed the European Union for its inability to regulate immigration flows and began to use György Soros as the evil figure to blame for immigration related problems.

Overall, it can be said that the government built a strong communication on nationalism and antisemitism, which communication is based on the fears of the population. The increased number of arrivals in 2015 helped the government to, on the one hand, build a strong rhetoric against the European Union and, on the other hand, to present itself as the protector of the nation.

4.5. Popularity behind populism in Hungary

The previous chapters explored the populist ideology behind the Hungarian government and the ways populism impacts the actions of the Hungarian government. It was argued in the paper, that the different actions of the Fidesz- KDNP government go against democratic norms and are also harmful on social equality and minority rights. Therefore, the question arises why citizens would vote for a party that openly deconstructs the democratic functioning of the state.

To explain the popularity of Fidesz from the perspective of Andeweg (1996) one must look back to the period between 2002 and 2010, when left- wing, social democratic governments lead the country, especially to the period after 2006, when the gap between left- wing parties and citizens began to deepen.

In May 2006, a voice recording of a speech of Ferenc Gyurcsány, who was the prime minister of Hungary at the time, surfaced, where Gyurcsány claimed that the politicians of the government lied in the previous years and did not introduce political reforms to further develop the Hungarian economy. The speech triggered protests against the government all over Hungary and led to the impeachment of Ferenc Gyurcsány (Kiss & Mihályffi, 2009, p. 146.). As the liberal leadership lost the trust of the voters, through harsh criticism Fidesz and Viktor Orbán could launch a strong campaign, which emphasized the incapability of the social democrats in governing the country and highlighted the successes of the first term of Viktor Orbán. Through communication Fidesz began to create the picture of a wise leader in the person of Viktor Orbán and also began to link successes directly to this person.

From 2008, one of the major concerns of the Hungarian society were the consequences of the global economic crisis, which lead to a loan crisis in Hungary. The social democrat government although made attempts to provide support for the households which fell into a debt spiral, the Fidesz claimed that the government tried to save financial institutions lead by elites instead of saving and supporting the people. The economic crisis, therefore, also deepened the gap between citizens and left- wing parties and pushed voters in the direction of Fidesz, who could convince the voters by using populist rhetoric, that it could provide policy solutions, that would protect citizens in case of another economic crisis.

Throughout the paper, it was mentioned already that nationalism is an important element of the ideology behind Fidesz and its political strategy is closely linked to communicating how

much the party prioritizes national interest in its politics. The populist ideology of Fidesz is based on the tension between Hungary as a nation and foreign powers, which try to pressure the country to act along foreign interests.

Based on the above, it can be seen that in the past years, Fidesz managed to position itself in a way that citizens allow the government the freedom to govern as the government wants, as citizens perceive government officials as experts, consider them capable to resolve major issues and also believe that the government acts along national interest. It has to be emphasized that it is not only due to the successful communication of Fidesz, but also because of the lack of trust in left-wing parties and the strong division between the opposition.

Pauwels (2014) looked at different voting models and claimed, that populist parties can attract many voters because these parties can combine different voting schemes and make themselves attractive among different groups. In case of Fidesz, this can be seen as well.

It was already described above, that the financial crisis of 2008 also contributed to the loss of trust in left wing parties, especially in social democrats in Hungary and gave space to Fidesz to rise. The party used a strong marketing between the beginning of the economic crisis and the 2010 election, which strongly criticized how the social democrat leadership was handling the crisis. Fidesz claimed that the financial assistance received from the European Union and the IMF was not necessary and also argued that the crisis happened due to the irresponsible fiscal and monetary policies of the Gyurcsány government (Bogár & Mészáros, 2008, n. p.).

The economic crisis under the social democrat government largely contributed to the success of Fidesz among voters, who focus on maximizing their utility income. On the one hand, the government is perceived to be acting according to the economic interest of the country and on the other hand, voters expect financial security from the Orbán government.

When looking at the model of *issue voting* it can be seen that the Hungarian government has a great success in attracting voters. The citizens vote for the Orbán government due to a certain issue, against the issue, they, the citizens hoped protection from. On the one hand, the government itself created an environment, where immigration and the interference of foreign powers (the European Union, György Soros) is perceived as a source of insecurity. On the other hand, the government not only created this environment of fear but it also proposes a resolution and positions itself as the protector of the nation.

Figure 5. Trends in the popularity of Hungarian parties during the 'refugee crisis' (Győri, 2016, p. 25.).

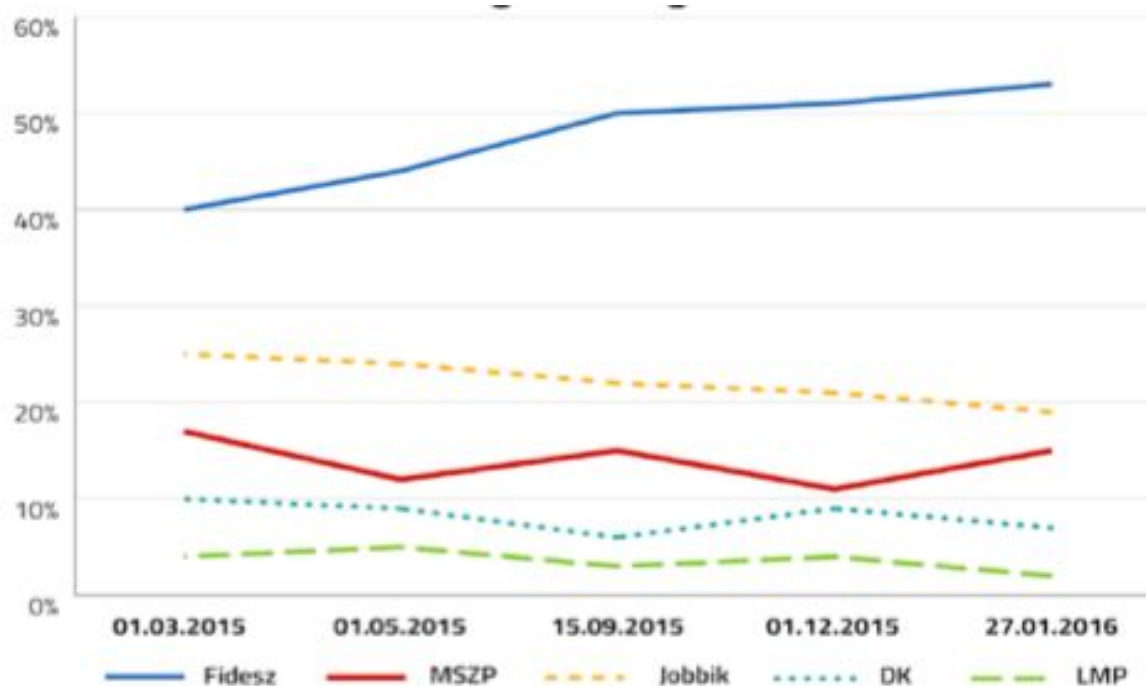


Figure 5 presents the tendencies measured in the popularity of different Hungarian parties during the so called 'refugee crisis'. At this period the Hungarian government used strong and hostile language regarding foreigners arriving to Hungary and also began to formulate the so called Soros plan (Georgiou & Zaborowski, 2017, p. 19.). It can be seen, that the popularity of the government was continuously rising, as it successfully linked the resolution of the issue of immigration to the governance of Fidesz (Győri, 2016, p. 19).

Campaign methods and the personal cult which was created around the personality of Viktor Orbán was already discussed before. His character is perceived as trusted by Hungarian citizens as in its rhetorics, Fidesz linked security and the protection of national interest to the Prime Minister. It was also mentioned already, that Fidesz uses strong propaganda to spread its agenda, which can easily happen due to the centralization of the media.

Overall, it can be said that the popularity of Fidesz is a complex phenomena. The government is allowed to act freely and even to destruct democratic norms, because Fidesz is perceived as a group of experts, who can provide security for Hungary in all matters. The division between left wing parties and the loss of trust in social democrat governance also help Fidesz to attract

voters and last but not least, due to the centralization of the media, Fidesz has an advantage in spreading propaganda and strengthen its support among Hungarian citizens.

5. Conclusion

Populism has been becoming an increasing phenomenon all over Europe. As the popularity of populist groups are increasing, academics also pay more attention on the different aspects of populism. There are several studies, which examine the different types of populism, the reasons behind the formation of populist groups and the root causes of the popularity of populist parties and ideology. This study attempts to contribute to the literature on populism, by examining one country, Hungary, and providing a deeper analysis on the realization of populism in Hungary.

In the recent past, the Fidesz- KDNP government became known as a populist government; however, the exact definition of populism is quite ambiguous and it is rarely discussed exactly what ways the Hungarian government is considered to be a populist government. To elaborate on the topic, the paper chose as the main research question to investigate if the *current Hungarian government is a populist government and if so how it is realized in its politics*.

The paper began with a theoretical part, which explored the different types of populism, the characteristics, techniques and the different messages populists communicate towards the voters. The second part of the paper applied the findings of the literature review on the Hungarian government and its actions, led by Viktor Orbán between 2010 and 2019. As the main research question is quite complex, the paper operated with three sub- questions.

The first sub- question of the paper asked *what the nature and character of Hungarian populism is*. Based on the analysis of the paper, it can be concluded that the populist ideology of Fidesz can be put into the typology of political populism. However, it has to be mentioned that this is not the only type of populism present in Hungary and Fidesz moved towards populism after 2010.

Based on the analysis, the paper can also conclude that all characteristics of populism, which were identified in the literature review, could be detected in the case of Fidesz. The party presents itself as the protector of the Hungarian population against foreign and liberal interest, it does not have a developed political agenda, it uses propaganda in order to convince its

supporters, its politics are strongly nationalistic, the party has Viktor Orbán as its strong and characteristic leader and the party is strongly against the European Union.

The second sub- question of the paper was *how populism is realized in Hungarian politics*. The question was examined along three characteristics, which were the extent the government interferes in state matters (occupies the state), mass clientelism and the relationship of the government with NGOs. Based on the analysis it could be concluded that all populist techniques are present in Hungary in several different ways.

The government tries to occupy the state on many different levels. It made attempts to intervene in the judiciary branch, centralized the education system and introduced changes to the election system. Through these measures, the government managed to be present in crucial areas, but it goes against one of the fundamental elements of democracy, which is the separation of powers. Mass clientelism is also present in Hungary, in two ways: in the form of presents for those who are loyal supporters of the government and in the form of threats for those who criticise the government. It could be also seen, that the government is strongly criticizing NGOs and makes their work difficult, especially criticizing those NGOs, which focus on social issues, which do not conform the Christian- Hungarian ideology of the government.

The last sub- question of the paper was *what is the role of media in populism maintaining its popularity in Hungary*. Regarding this question, two main conclusions could be made. The first is that the government centralized the media and through this centralized media has a strong control over Hungarian media, which also contributed to the strategy of the government of occupying the state. By having a strong influence, media provides the possibility for the government to communicate its own viewpoints on political questions. The second is, that the Hungarian government created a strong message towards the voters that is based on the mixture of propaganda and conspiracy theory, the so- called Soros plan.

It was also presented in the last chapter, that the usage of media has an impact on the popularity of Fidesz as through the centralized and monitored media sources, the government can channel specific messages towards the citizens, which make the party attractive in the eyes of the voters. Messages such as the threat caused by immigration or György Soros, the efforts of the Hungarian government to protect the nation and propaganda.

These messages help the government to make itself attractive. As the last chapter also highlighted, the political environment in Hungary also contributed to the success of populism in the country. Citizens lost their trust in liberal governments and the economic and social crisis also provided a strong ground for populism. This political environment with the mixture of strong political messages, the Fidesz- KDNP could maintain its popularity in recent years. Moreover, by using populist rhetoric on certain issues such as immigration, the government could even increase its popularity.

By going back to the main research question of the paper it can be said that based on the characteristics, techniques and communication, the Hungarian government is a populist government, and its populism is originated in political populism. Populism in Hungary is present through the realization of the three main populist techniques: the occupation of the state, mass clientelism and the criticism of NGOs. Through the measures of the government, the fundamental elements of democracy are challenged and political rights and civil liberties are being limited through the intervention of the government into non- state matters and centralization, such as media, education or arts.

Although the paper examined the different techniques used by the government to maintain its power from above, it did not examine the reasons behind the popularity of Fidesz among Hungarians. In order to learn more about Hungarian populism and understand it more, it would be beneficial for future studies to approach the question from this perspective.

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