



Liberal Democracy and its Current Illiberal Critique: The Emperor's New Clothes?

Heino Nyysönen & Jussi Metsälä

To cite this article: Heino Nyysönen & Jussi Metsälä (2020): Liberal Democracy and its Current Illiberal Critique: The Emperor's New Clothes?, Europe-Asia Studies, DOI: [10.1080/09668136.2020.1815654](https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2020.1815654)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2020.1815654>



© 2020 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 24 Sep 2020.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 223



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Liberal Democracy and its Current Illiberal Critique: The Emperor's New Clothes?

HEINO NYSSÖNEN & JUSSI METSÄLÄ

Abstract

This article focuses on the challenge of illiberalism to democracy, even though the nature of this contestation is ambiguous. The illiberal critique of liberal democracy is contextualised using conceptual history and two major 'political credit ratings', namely the Democracy Index and the *Freedom in the World* Report. Empirically we concentrate on Hungarian politics, which we consider to be an example of soft authoritarianism, drawing on two key speeches by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán: his launch of the idea of the 'illiberal state' in 2014 and his emphasis on 'Christian democracy' after the 2018 election campaign.

DESPITE OPTIMISTIC PREDICTIONS AT THE END OF THE COLD WAR, the progress of democracy has demonstrably slowed. This growing disbelief in democracy has touched even the established Western democracies in the last decade (Plattner 2010, pp. 81, 83). Simultaneously, there has been a rather worrying trend, even in parts of Europe, of a 'rollback' of liberal democracy, that is, a discontent with the actual results of democratisation in relation to economic welfare.¹ More alarming is the point made by Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt in early 2018 that democracies still die, not at the hands of tanks and generals, but of elected governments themselves. Hungary and Poland are mentioned alongside Venezuela, Georgia, Nicaragua, Peru, the Philippines, Russia, Sri Lanka, Turkey and Ukraine (Levitsky & Ziblatt 2018, p. 5).²

In Eastern Europe this disappointment in liberal democracy is clear from the rankings of the Democracy Index: the whole region has relapsed since 2006. This direction is disturbing: over 25 years of democratisation have not produced a single full democracy in Central and Eastern Europe (Democracy Index 2017, 2019). Moreover, this development is also

This work was supported by The Ella and Georg Ehrnrooth Foundation.

¹For a contrary assessment of the phenomenon, see Levitsky and Way, although they do state, rather evasively, that Hungary is 'suffering democratic recession' (Levitsky & Way 2015, pp. 47–8).

²Moreover, Paul Mason (2017) postulated in *The Guardian* that democracy is dying and wondered why so few people were worried about it. While the article focused on presidents Vladimir Putin, Recep Erdoğan and Donald Trump, Hungary and Poland had the (dis)honour to be mentioned.

© 2020 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2020.1815654>

demonstrated in the rise of nationalistic, populist and—indeed—illiberal political movements in several European countries.³ The concept of ‘illiberal democracy’ covers countries which still adhere to the forms and rituals of democracy, such as elections, but whose actual practice—free and fair elections, civil and political liberties, and, perhaps most importantly, the rule of law—is questionable. Based on conceptual history and analysis of political rhetoric, we argue that Viktor Orbán has—contrary to the original interpretation by Fareed Zakaria—aimed to make a virtue of necessity, that is, to present illiberal democracy as a positive concept that describes the ongoing development in Hungary. Although we consider Orbán’s use of the concept of the ‘illiberal’ state in 2014 as a potential lapse of judgement, it remains in use and represents the prime minister’s own interpretation of events (Nyssönen & Szabó 2015; Nyssönen 2019). Moreover, contrary to common views of the ‘illiberal turn’ as being relatively recent, there are clear signs that the backlash against democratisation started a few years earlier, even around 2006.

We consider the concept of ‘illiberal democracy’ to be dynamic, and, from a nominalist point of view, highly contested. Thus, non-democrats are naturally seeking to expand the definition of the concept to suit their own personal power arrangements and present these as legitimate alternatives, playing to an electoral disillusioned by their experience of ‘democracy’. Yet, even the concept of liberal is contested; for us it has mainly two meanings: moral values and economic liberalism, which are not the same thing (Rhoden 2015). Hence, it is the purpose of this article to examine both liberal democracy and the Hungarian illiberal critique of it. Is illiberal democracy actually a relevant political concept or is it just a case of the Emperor’s new clothes? In a broader context we contribute to the current academic discussion of the ‘backsliding’ or the ‘death’ of democracy and the rule of law.⁴ In addition, we claim that Viktor Orbán, as an innovative ideologist, aims to equate ‘illiberal’ with ‘Christian democracy’ in order to legitimate the authoritarian character of his system. In Orbán’s usage, ‘liberal’ is a loose concept referring to all of his opponents not only on the left but even on the centre and the political right.

Methodologically the article is based on conceptual history, thus, instead of adopting a universalistic understanding of concepts, we understand them and their use as means in political struggle.⁵ Under this approach, the speeches of Prime Minister Orbán, no matter how shallow or inconsistent they might be, have to be taken seriously, as they have consequences in the real world. Structurally the article sheds light first on the meaning of democracy, then on the politics of classification and the ‘credit ratings’ of democracies. Our empirical examples come from Hungary, from Orbán’s speeches, first, in 2014, when he first launched the idea of the ‘illiberal state’ and then in 2018, when he laid down its relationship to ‘Christian democracy’. Having systematically observed Orbán’s annual speeches at the summer camp over many years, we chose these two speeches as the most relevant for the topic at hand. Nevertheless, as some description or name has to be used to define the current situation, and because Hungary is currently closer to a hybrid regime than it is to a full

³According to Müller (2016, pp. 3–5), the potential danger of populism to democracy lies in its intrinsic opposition to diversity, the core element, possibly even the basic requirement, of democracy.

⁴See, for example, Bermeo (2016), Carothers and Youngs (2017), Mechkova *et al.* (2017), Plattner (2017), Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018), Nyssönen (2018), Zielonka (2018).

⁵On conceptual history, see particularly Koselleck (2002, 2004).

democracy, Hungary's political situation could be called soft authoritarian. In as much as 'illiberalism' belongs to Orbán's political vocabulary, the term soft authoritarianism is our own innovation drawing on Hungarian history (cf. Nyysönen 2019).

Remarks on the meaning of democracy

'Democracy' as a concept is contested, both vertically and horizontally, but when we are concerned about the erosion of democracy, what is it really that we are worried about? The seemingly simple task of defining mundane terms like democracy is in fact virtually impossible. If we are still satisfied with the literal meaning, 'rule of the people', a comprehensive description of the diversity of this regime-type in the modern sense is still lacking.⁶ Likewise, the reliance on the holding of elections in itself does not tell us very much about the conditions or the quality of any regime; therefore, additional attributes are needed to describe the democracy of any given country. This, then, leads to the phenomenon of 'democracy with adjectives' (Collier & Levitsky 1997) or 'prefix-democracy' (Nyysönen & Szabó 2015). Simply put, the term 'democracy' requires, in many cases, additional information in order to be a more or less accurate description of the reality—or a burden on the actual core meaning of the term, according to T. F. Rhoden (2015, pp. 563, 565).

It seems that we must agree with Zakaria on the matter, that usually when we (in the West) use the term democracy, we actually mean much more than simply leaders chosen by popular elections. In fact, Zakaria's description of liberal constitutionalism—separation of powers, rule of law and, most importantly, civil liberties—is indeed what seems to be commonly meant by the term democracy (Zakaria 1997, pp. 24–9).⁷ According to Rhoden, democracy as a modern concept always includes some liberal factors even though they may be ineffective in practice. Of course, in ideal circumstances civil liberties and rule of law are causally linked to free elections and civil liberties; that is, elections lead to civil liberties, which then ultimately lead to the rule of law (Møller & Skaaning 2010, p. 275; Rhoden 2015, p. 571).

Democracy *per se* does not mean good governance; in fact, absent constitutional liberalism, the 'introduction of democracy in divided societies has actually fomented nationalism, ethnic conflict, and even war'. A bad decision, even when made

⁶However, according to T. F. Rhoden, that is exactly what we should accept as the true meaning of democracy: in its purest form, democracy is just that, rule of the people, even if it is 'unchecked, unbalanced incompetence voted into power' (Rhoden 2015, p. 565). Only after the addition of distinct liberal concepts, such as the rule of law, separation of powers and civil rights, did democracy take on its modern guise—that of liberal democracy: 'Democracy by itself, without that pesky adjective [liberal] in front of it that so many of us are loath to say, is a frightening thing. ... Democracy without rights, without some form of liberalism, produces one of the most wanton forms of government known to people' (Rhoden 2015, pp. 563–66). For classical variants on the concept of democracy and their historical context, see, for example, Cartledge (2016).

⁷See also Plattner (2010, p. 84). Rhoden (2015, pp. 563–66) points out that democracy and liberalism are two distinct concepts with their own histories and should not be taken as synonyms, even though they often are. Whereas democracy can be simplified as a question of power and rule, liberalism aims to restrain and reduce the excessive nature of this power, providing the frequently used concepts of checks and balances.

democratically, is still a bad decision (Zakaria 1997, pp. 25, 30, 35, 38).⁸ In many cases, the greatest need is for good and transparent governance and not for mere democracy itself (Diamond 2015, pp. 148–50). Again, the process itself matters, not only the result. In this sense, modern democracy needs the rule of law and its constraints, which is typical of liberal democracy.

Even if we are able to agree on the definitions of the two opposites, democracy and authoritarianism, then we are faced with a new challenge: between liberal democracy and full-fledged authoritarianism lies an area of ambiguity; the ‘foggy zone’ (Schedler 2002, p. 37). Even in the Democracy Index, the majority of states are not classified as full democracies or authoritarian states but fall between these two categories (Diamond 2002, p. 23; Bogaards 2009, p. 399; Democracy Index 2017). To help navigate the treacherous waters of endless and sometimes contradictory definitions, several scholars use so-called ‘diminished subtypes’ of either democracy or authoritarianism.⁹ These subtypes are by definition incomplete forms of the basic concept; for example, an illiberal democracy is a democracy lacking the civil liberties associated with the archetype of liberal (constitutional) democracy (Collier & Levitsky 1997, pp. 437–42, 450). Moreover, if we think about the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020, democratic practices and processes also matter: in Hungary the Parliament was willing to grant the Prime Minister the right to rule by decree without a time limit (Scheppele & Halmai 2020). Therefore, as Matthijs Bogaards (2009, pp. 399–401, p. 411, Table 1) notes, it is of utmost importance to decide from the outset: are we dealing with democratic or authoritarian cases? Indeed, free elections might be a sufficient qualifier of democracy for illiberalism, but too narrow a definition for liberal, constitutional democracy.

To confuse the matter even further, elections—the core procedure of democracy—have a substantial legitimising role, regardless of our point of departure. Therefore, at the minimum, the procedures of democracy have been adopted almost universally, even if the essence of liberalism has not (Rhoden 2015, p. 569). Appeals to the concept of majority rule are most likely to remain the common standard among states; thus, we recognise that democracy is perhaps seen as the only truly valid form of governance (Diamond 2002, p. 24; Plattner 2010, pp. 82, 91). The number of ‘thinner types of democracy’ has been increasing, given that technicalities of the democratic process are easy enough to import and adopt while the liberal substance is not (Møller & Skaaning 2010, pp. 275–76).

Thus, there is a real danger of ‘pseudo-democracy’, especially because elections can be manipulated and often are (Diamond 2002, pp. 25–7). In these cases, elections and other democratic institutions are simply adapted patterns of authoritarianism, not democracy in some imperfect form, having the dual purpose of legitimising the incumbent’s rule and guarding it from any danger of democratic change. A ruling party might be in a position

⁸Zakaria quotes a remark by the US broker of the Dayton Accords, Richard Holbrooke, on the 1996 Bosnian elections, in which he noted the possibility of legitimate elections resulting in the victory of ‘racists, fascists, separatists, who are publicly opposed to [peace and reintegration]. That is the dilemma’ (Zakaria 1997, p. 22).

⁹See for example, Collier and Levitsky (1997), Schedler (2002), Bogaards (2009), and Møller and Skaaning (2010). Collier and Levitsky (1997, pp. 431–32) emphasise the need for alertness when using the various additional modifiers of democracy.

to manipulate the electoral system to guarantee its own success, as in contemporary Hungary or Russia, for example, even in the case of an actual drop in its popularity (Schedler 2002, pp. 36–7, 45). Overall, some ‘electoral authoritarian states’,¹⁰ such as Turkey, have demonstrated a certain longevity (Schedler 2002, pp. 48–9; Plattner 2010, p. 82). Consequently, excessive dependence on the pure majoritarian nature of democracy can lead to the multifaceted phenomenon of populism—a ‘democratic disorder’, as Plattner describes it—where direct, extra-democratic pleas to the majority of ‘the people’ are likely to enhance nationalism at the expense of the rights of minorities (Plattner 2010, pp. 86–8, 90–1).¹¹

It is also worth noting the difference in regime attitudes towards legislation, particularly in those situations when proposed policies are in conflict with existing legislation, or even against the constitution. In a liberal democracy, this sort of attempt should be halted as soon as the conflict becomes evident. However, illiberal regimes, notably in Hungary, seem to act in a rather different way. Instead of withdrawing such proposals or amending them, the solution is to alter the composition of the constitutional court (or any other government organ) to limit its authority. Ultimately it is the constitution that is perceived as in need of amending, not the new unconstitutional laws. Constitutions and laws are there not to be abided by but to be changed to suit the political needs of the ruling party. As Zakaria reminds us, the rule of law is compromised if and when legislation is used purely for political purposes: the ability to easily alter the legal system of a state to suit any needs sets certain parts of society above and beyond any laws (Zakaria 2003, pp. 95–6).

This brings us to the question of how a liberal democracy can survive faced by such an ‘illiberal challenge’. This is of course a big issue and cannot be solved in the context of a single article. However, the future of democracy is very topical, as demonstrated by the situation in Venezuela, for instance. Following the questionable presidential election in May 2018, several international actors, including the EU, did not recognise the results and demanded new elections be organised ‘in accordance with internationally recognised democratic standards and the Venezuelan constitutional order’.¹² Thus, it can be concluded that if elections are demonstrably neither free nor fair—particularly in the EU—we believe that certain external interference is legitimate. In the cases of Poland and Hungary, there is the ‘nuclear option’ of activating the provisions of Article 7 to suspend these countries’ membership. When discussing the conditions of democratic rule, annual indexes make potential problems more visible. For example, *The Economist* Democracy Index for 2018 rates and divides 167 countries into four groups: 20 ‘full democracies’ (encompassing 4.5% of the world’s population), 55 ‘flawed democracies’ (43.2%), 39 ‘hybrid regimes’ (16.7%) and 53 ‘authoritarian regimes’ (35.6%). In this sense, liberal, constitutional democracy, i.e. full democracy, is hardly a norm; in fact, it still seems to be in the minority.¹³ Nevertheless, the Western idea of (liberal) democracy seems to hold its

¹⁰Schedler (2002, p. 47) defines this term in the following way, ‘while democracy is “a system in which parties lose elections”, electoral authoritarianism is a system in which opposition parties lose elections’.

¹¹See also Müller (2016).

¹²See, for example, Council of the EU (2019).

¹³According to Freedom House (2020), 43% of the world’s population can be defined as ‘free’; 32% are ‘partly free’ and 25% are ‘not free’.

footing, as most of the full democracies belong to the metaphorical West.¹⁴ Having said this, full democracy is not equal to the metaphorical West; since 2016, the United States, for most of the twentieth century the self-designated exemplar of democracy, is no longer rated a full democracy according to *The Economist* Democracy Index 2018. Neither can the EU boast about the status of democracy in its member states: only 12 are full democracies, while the majority, 16, are ‘flawed’ democracies (Democracy Index 2019).¹⁵

According to Freedom House’s *Freedom in the World* (2019), Hungary had descended to the group of ‘partly free’, the only state in the European Union in this category. Its position remained the same in the 2020 index (Freedom House 2020). Overall, Freedom House stated in 2018 that ‘seventy-one countries suffered net declines in political rights and civil liberties, with only 35 registering gains. This marked the 12th consecutive year of decline in global freedom’ (Freedom House 2018). It is also notable that neither of the ratings used in this article use ‘illiberal democracy’ in their reports, so the category has to be formulated with additional information from other sources (Nyyssönen 2019).

Granted, we can criticise the methods used in such comparisons and ask who indeed has the right or the opportunity to classify and name states according to the status of democracy or some other quality. But this approach leaves out the fact that when the criteria are the same, they treat all states equally. Investigations such as the two above help not only to rank particular countries but also to observe their development in the long run and lead to a sort of ‘democracy stock market’ in which the status of a particular country varies according to changes in various interdependent factors. Thus, rankings are not the end of the story, but they serve as an ‘early warning system’ by highlighting troubling developments and trends in the long run.

Thus, it is more important to track the long-term tendencies of certain countries than simply rank them at a single point in time. If we study the results of the Democracy Index more closely, comparing the years 2006 and 2016, it will be clear that democracy weakened in 32 European countries. In some cases, the figure resembles ‘a saw’ with ups and downs, but still, the 2006 result is higher than that of 2016. Nevertheless, this kind of development is not inevitable; in the same period, ten countries raised their ranking. The most advanced of all, Norway, even improved its result. However, the starting point also matters: for example, in 2006 the Netherlands ranked higher than Norway, but fell to 12th position in 2016. This is still a very good achievement, but in absolute numbers, it means even a greater decline (9.66 to 8.80) than in Hungary (7.53 to 6.72) (see also Nyyssönen 2018). Since 2012 Hungary’s result has remained closer to hybrid regimes than full democracies. In the Democracy Index 2018, Hungary shared 57th position with Ghana; its position had deteriorated continuously, with the exception of 2013, the only year when Hungary’s result was the same as the previous year.

Moreover, in the *Freedom in the World 2018* report (Freedom House 2018), Hungary appeared on both lists of states with the largest one-year and ten-year decline, with scores of –4 points and –20 points respectively. To put this into context, Turkey leads this group with a staggering score of –34 points, and even Russia managed to lose only 11 points in the same

¹⁴Out of the 22 full democracies, 15 are situated in Europe. The others are Australia, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Mauritius, Uruguay and New Zealand (Democracy Index 2019, p. 10).

¹⁵The withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU on 31 January 2020 lowered the number of full democracies back to 11.

ten-year span. Furthermore, Transparency Index's *Corruption Perceptions Index 2017* reveals that, under the *Fidesz* regime, Hungary dropped ten points from 2012. Additionally, the European Anti-Fraud Office's (OLAF) 2017 annual report placed Hungary as second, along with Poland, in terms of the number of investigations into the abuse of EU funds.¹⁶

In this sense we may refer to the current situation as soft authoritarianism, which in the Hungarian case represents a certain continuity with recent history: the 'hard dictatorship' of the 1950s and early 1960s and the 'soft dictatorship' (*puha diktatúra*) of the 1980s, followed by 'hard democracy' (*kemény demokrácia*) after the system change in 1989 (Nyssönen 2019; cf. Ekiert 2017). Indeed, according to Bustikova and Guasti, out of the former Eastern Bloc EU members, only Hungary, after several consecutive *Fidesz* terms, has truly made a permanent and profound shift towards more and more illiberal policies.¹⁷

In several ways, this study is in line with MEP Judith Sargentini's report, which the European Parliament discussed in 2018 and voted on in September 2018. According to the draft, Hungary violates EU values on 12 points. There is no particular conceptual naming of the situation in the report, but the report unambiguously 'invit[es] the Council to determine that there is a clear risk of a serious breach by Hungary of the values referred to in Article 2 TEU' (Sargentini 2018).¹⁸

Viktor Orbán as an innovative ideologist

As already stated, we use the term 'illiberal democracy' in this article as a description of a state that holds regular and more or less legitimate elections but, at the same time, violates the civil liberties of its citizens (Zakaria 1997, pp. 22–4). In 1997 Fareed Zakaria depicted 'a disturbing phenomenon in international life', as 'democratically elected regimes ... are routinely ignoring constitutional limits on their power and depriving their citizens of basic rights and freedoms'. Is this just a culmination of the critique of liberal democracy or is it a question of the quality and quantity of democracy, civil liberties and rule of law, for instance? Illiberal democracy has also been named 'electoral democracy' (Møller & Skaaning 2010, p. 270);¹⁹ however, it is increasingly challenging to ignore Schedler's question as to whether illiberal democracies are truly democracies at all, if they actually

¹⁶Romania was ranked first in terms of the number of investigations. *Eighteenth Report of the European Anti-Fraud Office, 1 January to 31 December 2017*, European Anti-Fraud Office Report (Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2017); see also Magyar (2016).

¹⁷The results of the Hungarian Parliamentary elections on 8 April 2018 were a major factor in the continuation of illiberal policies in Hungary. A third term for the incumbent *Fidesz* government greatly enhances the argument for the consolidation of illiberal democracy, following Rhoden's (2015, p. 572) use of the term. See also Bustikova and Guasti (2017, p. 168).

¹⁸The actual vote on the report—and on launching the Article 7 procedures against Hungary—was passed with a significant majority (448 MEPs in favour, 197 against and 48 abstaining). Most importantly, the European People's Party (EPP), of which *Fidesz* itself is a member, took a decisively different stance towards Hungary than before, with a clear majority of its deputies voting in favour of the report with 115 MEPs in favour, 57 against and 28 abstaining ('Rule of Law in Hungary: Parliament Calls on the EU to Act', European Parliament Press Release, 12 September 2018, available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20180906IPR12104/rule-of-law-in-hungary-parliament-calls-on-the-eu-to-act>, accessed 31 January 2020).

¹⁹The political system created by *Fidesz* and Orbán has also been called a 'facade democracy' and a mafia-state (Magyar 2016).

act in the way that Zakaria describes (Schedler 2002, p. 43).²⁰ Once again, we have to emphasise that mere elections are not a sufficient qualifier for liberal democracy, but a more complex answer is required, even if a clear and definite demarcation line between these phenomena might not even exist: a democracy can be illiberal in its values, but not in its practices.

One answer to the question stated above is twofold: the (democratic) identity—or lack thereof—of any state is determined by two opposite phenomena. Firstly, there is the external factor—the ‘political credit rating’—that places a state into a certain group. Secondly, there is the internal issue of self-identification: the perception of the state itself (or at least the state’s ruling parties) of its status and situation. This is aptly demonstrated by the (in)famous speech by Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán in 2014 at the 25th Bálványos Summer Free University and Student Camp at Băile Tuşnad, in which he stated, among many things, the following:

This, ladies and gentlemen, is the explanation for the fact that the most popular topic in thinking today is trying to understand how systems that are not Western, not liberal, not liberal democracies and perhaps not even democracies, can nevertheless make their nations successful. The stars of the international analysts today are Singapore, China, India, Russia and Turkey.

And:

In other words, the Hungarian nation is not simply a group of individuals but a community that must be organised, reinforced and in fact constructed. And so, in this sense, the new state that we are constructing in Hungary is an illiberal state, a non-liberal state. It does not reject the fundamental principles of liberalism such as freedom, and I could list a few more, but it does not make this ideology the central element of state organisation, but instead includes a different, special, national approach. (Orbán 2014)

In this sense, it is not just external influences that have defined Hungary’s democracy as somewhat lacking, but a largely self-adopted understanding of the meaning and importance of democracy, a transition from consensus-based democracy towards majority-based democracy based on a history of extreme political polarisation and the excessive role of parties in Hungarian politics, something Bozóki calls ‘partocracy’ (Bozóki 2015, pp. 7–9).²¹ Thus, the political situation has come about according to the rules of democracy *per se*, if not liberal democracy: those voted to power have used that power to their own ends.²²

As Hungary’s position in the Democracy Index has deteriorated, Orbán has stressed Hungary’s success instead. In fact, Orbán is acting like Skinner’s innovating ideologist and making a virtue of necessity. Skinnerian ideologists aspire to social change by using language: ‘their defining task [is] that of legitimising some form of social behaviour generally agreed to be questionable’ (Skinner

²⁰According to Müller (2016, pp. 50–61), it is counterproductive to use the term illiberal democracy at all, as it implies that such regimes are still a certain kind of democracy, even if they habitually violate the basic tenets of democracy. However, in this context, it is worthwhile remembering that—as outlined by Rhoden (2015)—liberal democracy is not the only form of democracy.

²¹See also Lijphart (1999).

²²It seems that the turn towards illiberal policies in general has been mainly an internal political and social development and not a case of outside interference or an act of authoritarian spillover. See for example, Brownlee (2017) and Buzogány (2017).

2002, pp. 145–48). In our understanding, this idea refers neither to classic ‘isms’, like liberalism, nor to ideology as false consciousness, but rather to the political skills to manipulate reality. Moreover, competition for status and prestige is intrinsic to international relations, particularly in the view of the realist school, which stresses capabilities such as the strength of the state, population and GNP. In Orbán’s critique, liberalism is a question of prerogatives:

what happens ... is that the stronger party is always right. It is always the stronger neighbour who decides where the driveway will be; it is always the stronger party, the bank, who decides the interest rate on mortgages, and who changes it mid-term if needed, and I could continue on with a long list of instances that individuals and families with weaker economic defences experienced regularly during the previous twenty years. It is in reply to this that we suggest, and are attempting to construct Hungarian state life around this idea, that this should not be the principle on which society is built. (Orbán 2014)²³

Whether this kind of ‘liberalism’ is also the case in Viktor Orbán’s Hungary is not for us to decide here. According to Orbán, current liberal values incorporate corruption, sex and violence. More important is the allegation that liberal democracy is not capable of serving national interests. Moreover, the liberal Hungarian state since the 1990s did not protect the role of public wealth and public property in sustaining the nation, according to Orbán. Finally, in the prime minister’s analysis, the liberal state did not protect the country from indebtedness (Orbán 2014). In Orbán’s view these problems called the whole system into question and were not merely superficial policy issues.

For Orbán there are three conventional ways to organise a state: a nation state, a liberal state and a welfare state. In Orbán’s rhetoric ‘a workfare state’, which it is not of a liberal nature, could be the next step, at least for Hungary. Moreover, elements of the 2014 speech have since been realised, particularly after the 2018 election, in the form of the so-called ‘Stop Soros’ legislation.²⁴ This draws on the pre-existing suspicion in Hungarian society of political activism, which predisposes people to view civil society activity as inherently nefarious:

Now the non-governmental world in Hungary paints a very peculiar picture. Because, in contrast to professional politicians, a civil activist or community is organised from the ground up, stands on its own feet financially and is of course voluntary ... what I see is that we are dealing with paid political activists. And in addition these paid political activists are political activists who are being paid by foreigners ... And so, if we want to organise our national state to replace the liberal state, it is very important that we make it clear that we are not opposing non-governmental organisations here and it is not non-governmental organisations who are moving against us, but paid political activists who are attempting to enforce foreign interests here in Hungary. This is why it is extremely justified that the Hungarian Parliament has formed a Committee to regularly monitor,

²³The quotations from the speeches of Prime Minister Orbán used in this article are taken from the official English translations available on the website of the Hungarian Government, available at: www.kormany.hu, accessed 30 June 2020.

²⁴See, for example, ‘Magyarország kormányának javaslata a stop Soros törvénycsomagról’, Miniszterelnöki Kabinetiroda, available at: <https://www.kormany.hu/download/c/9a/41000/STOP%20SOROS%20T%C3%96RV%C3%89NYCSOMAG.pdf>, accessed 29 June 2020; ‘Hungary Passes Anti-Immigrant “Stop Soros” Laws’, *The Guardian*, 20 June 2018, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/20/hungary-passes-anti-immigrant-stop-soros-laws>, accessed 30 June 2020.

record and make public foreign influence so that all of us, including you, can know precisely who the real characters are behind these masks. (Orbán 2014)

This kind of Manichean either-or speech polarises the political arena, which was also typical for previous radical political movements, including the Hungarian Stalinists in the 1950s, who argued that whoever is not with us, is against us (Nyyssönen 1999). Recently, a new concept has gained popularity in Hungary: *álcivil szervezetek*, ‘fake NGOs’, implying that NGOs are in fact manipulated by political forces in the background. It is no coincidence that posters, which named certain politicians as puppets of people like philanthropist and businessman George Soros, and also then European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, started to appear in public before the 2018 election campaign.²⁵

Illiberal democracy as Christian democracy

In May 2018 Viktor Orbán won the elections again. The elections were immediately criticised by OSCE observers, who claimed that ‘intimidating and xenophobic rhetoric, media bias and opaque financing’ had limited the possibilities of an open political discourse (OSCE/ODIHR 2018).²⁶ In other words, the elections might have been free, but they certainly were not fair, which does not come as a surprise when taking into account the various peculiarities of the Hungarian electoral system, control of the media by pro-Orbán elements and negative campaigning (Nyyssönen 2019).²⁷ In the spirit of a true illiberal turn, Orbán’s *Fidesz*-led coalition has won all elections since the autumn of 2006. In 2018 victory was assured by 49.27% of the votes, which resulted in 133 seats, again, a two-thirds majority in the Parliament. This success was indeed historic: no other government since 1990 has won a third consecutive term in power.²⁸ Campaigning was based on anti-immigration policies and

²⁵As illiberal policies require popular support, something Bustikova and Guasti have called ‘uncivil society’, the necessary popular enemies have been sought, and found, outside the nation (Enyedi 2016, pp. 13–5; Bustikova & Guasti 2017, p. 168). This process can be described as the belief that the good of the nation supersedes any and all conflicting individual rights, which are ultimately a foreign concept anyway. The evils of the outside world include ‘globalization, neoliberalism, consumerism, privatization to foreign investors and cosmopolitanism’ and the government is responsible for shielding the nation from these dangers (Enyedi 2016, pp. 11–2). Typical liberal issues such as ‘personal freedoms, especially concerning issues such as euthanasia, same-sex marriage or access to abortion’ are scorned (Enyedi 2016, p. 21). Rupnik (2016, p. 80) draws the line of animosity in Hungary between the ‘urbanists’ and the ‘populists’. Furthermore, the Hungarian electoral system is ‘tricky’ in the sense that it excessively benefits the largest party, and after the reform of election laws in 2014 even more so.

²⁶See also Santora and Bienvenu (2018).

²⁷See also Nyyssönen and Metsälä (2018).

²⁸*Jobbik* came in as the second largest group, defeating the Hungarian Socialist Party (*Magyar Szocialista Párt* —MSZP). All in all, the leftist parties in general and the Greens (Politics Can Be Different; *Lehet Más a Politika*) gained around one quarter of the votes and fewer than one fifth of the seats. The most underrepresented group in the Hungarian Parliament, however, are women, as fewer than 10% of MPs are female, the lowest number in Europe. The Hungarian Parliament is very nationalistic by composition: *Fidesz*-KNDP and *Jobbik* have, when combined, nearly 70% of the votes and an even larger share of seats. If we consider only *Jobbik* to represent the extreme right following the 2018 elections, Austria and Hungary are the two top countries in terms of the parliamentary representation of the extreme right. If we also consider *Fidesz* an extreme right party, Hungary is the most conservative, if not outright the most extreme rightist, state. However, the narrow left–right division does not reveal the entire picture, as the policies of these parties are not always consistent with the labels attached to them (Inglehart & Norris 2016; Nyyssönen 2018).

on the concept ‘To us, Hungary comes first’—not that far from Donald Trump’s slogan ‘America First’, while the entire opposition was branded as being in the pocket of the business magnate George Soros (Nyysönen 2019).

As the original statement of illiberal democracy, Orbán’s 2014 speech received huge publicity even outside Hungary. As a result, Orbán’s administration was obliged to explain the statement and the concept abroad. In 2018 one of the clumsiest attempts by Orbán was to equate ‘illiberal democracy’ to ‘Christian democracy’ (Orbán 2018). However, we understand that the concept of illiberal was then politically contested as Orbán claimed to be building ‘Christian democracy’ in Hungary. Nevertheless, we believe that Christian democrats belong to liberal democracy, despite debates surrounding the populist nature of the CSU in Bavaria (see for example Chase 2018). In this context, European Christian democratic parties, like the Dutch Christian Democratic Appeal (*Christen-Democratisch Appèl*—CDA), and EU-wide groupings such as the European People’s Party (EPP) face a dilemma: do they maintain *Fidesz* in their ranks or not? Apparently Orbán has set these parties a challenge, that is, whether they are ready to follow Orbán’s ‘illiberal’ views or to maintain proper democracy and rule of law in Europe. Orbán also welcomed the founding of the anti-EU Movement group by Steven Bannon, a far-right former aide to US President Donald Trump, to boost the nationalist, anti-immigrant vote ahead of elections to the European Parliament (Than & Peto 2018). In this sense these debates do not deal only with Hungary but have a wider European dimension, with the 2019 elections to the European Parliament representing a test for Orbán’s ‘Christian democracy’. At the time of writing, *Fidesz* still belongs to EPP, but the debate over its future is ongoing.

In the light of the forthcoming EU elections at the 29th Bálványos Summer Open University and Student Camp at Băile Tuşnad, Orbán argued that illiberal democracy is the future of Europe, noting that after ‘two chaotic decades of transition’ Hungarians had built a new system following *Fidesz*’s two-thirds victory in 2010 (Orbán 2018). According to Orbán, all European nations have the right to defend Christian culture and the traditional family model and to reject immigration. Instead, the European elite is building an ‘open society’ Europe and denying Christian principles. Orbán went even further than the authors or external measures such as the Democracy Index in defining Hungary’s political status: for him liberal democracy in the West has transformed into liberal non-democracy: ‘The situation in the West is that there is liberalism, but there is no democracy’ (Orbán 2018). Moreover, he claimed that the European Commission appointed in 2014 was partisan, siding with ‘the liberals’ and working against Central Europe. In Orbán’s rhetoric the term ‘liberals’ is usually used rather loosely to refer to his European and domestic opposition in general. Moreover, the Commission was not a friend of freedom; instead of freedoms, it was working towards building what Orbán’s black and white rhetoric described as European socialism (Orbán 2018). Thus, just as ‘illiberal’ and ‘Christian’ are blurred into one, so are ‘socialism’ and ‘liberalism’ associated with the same camp, an argument which is certainly not anomalous in the politics of the extreme right.

For Orbán, as for every other nationalist, there is an imagined golden era to pursue: ‘In Christian Europe, there was honour in work, man had dignity, men and women were equal, the family was the basis of the nation, the nation was the basis of Europe, and states guaranteed security’ (Orbán 2018). Contemporary Europe has rejected its Christian foundations, as open borders mean European people can be readily replaced with

immigrants; the family has been transformed into an optional, fluid form of cohabitation, and so on.

There is an alternative to liberal democracy: it is called Christian democracy. And we must show that the liberal elite can be replaced with a Christian democratic elite ... Christian democracy is not about defending religious articles of faith—in this case Christian religious articles of faith ... Christian democratic politics means that the ways of life springing from Christian culture must be protected. (Orbán 2018)

In the Hungarian case, ‘Christianity’ refers to the thousand-year-old state and its first king, Stephen, who converted to (Western) Christianity. However, over the years, the narrative of a ‘one-thousand-year history’ and ‘defending Europe’ has been a feature of most conservative and right-wing movements, including the Nazis. The history of Christian Europe encompasses wars of religion, the Inquisition and, in modern times, the scandal of sexual abuse by the clergy. However, right-wing views of ‘Christian Europe’ conveniently overlook its historical record.

However, in Orbán’s world view, there are no nuances, not even in European politics. Thus, over the past century or so:

... matters in Europe have effectively been decided by competition between two camps: on one side, communities based on the continuing foundations of Christian tradition—let us call them Christian democratic parties; and, on the other side, the organisations of communities which question and reject tradition—let us call them left-wing liberal parties. (Orbán 2018)

This dualistic oversimplification deliberately ignores political complexity. For Orbán there is no *die Mitte*—middle way—or Centrum but *de facto* a Marxist dualism, or even the Leftist ‘progress’, does not belong to his vocabulary.

According to Orbán, liberal democracy is in favour of multiculturalism, while Christian democracy gives priority to Christian culture. In Orbán’s polarised view, liberal democracy is pro-immigration, while Christian democracy is anti-immigration and thus illiberal. Furthermore, liberal democracy sides with flexible family models, while Christian democracy rests on the foundations of the Christian family. Thus, Christian democracy cannot be liberal, otherwise Orbán’s platform would collapse:

... it is the claim that Christian democracy can also, in fact, be liberal ... if we accept this argument, then the battle, the struggle we have fought so far will lose its meaning, and we will have toiled in vain. Let us confidently declare that Christian democracy is not liberal. Liberal democracy is liberal, while Christian democracy is, by definition, not liberal: it is, if you like, illiberal. (Orbán 2018)

Another political distinction made by Orbán concerns generations:

Next May we can wave goodbye not only to liberal democracy and the liberal non-democratic system that has been built on its foundations, but also to the entire elite of ‘68 ... the generation of the ‘90s is arriving to replace the generation of ‘68. In European politics it is the turn of the anti-communist generation, which has Christian convictions and commitment to the nation. (Orbán 2018)

Here Orbán is playing with a myth: in March 2017, the average age of an MEP was 54 years—comparable to Orbán, born in 1963. At the constituent session in July 2014, the average age was 53 years. Although Orbán's opponent MEP Daniel Cohn-Bendit has a 1968 background, half of the commissioners are younger than Viktor Orbán. In 2018, none of the EU commissioners were born in the 1940s; 12 were born in the 1950s, 11 in the 1960s and five in the 1970s. Thus, the average commissioner was born in 1962—that is, close to the average MEP.²⁹

After the 2018 elections, Orbán set 12 goals for Hungary and promised that Hungary would be among the leading European states by 2030 in terms of quality of life. In another speech, given in 2019, Orbán expressed a wish to concentrate more power to himself (Nyyssönen 2019), something which he achieved *de facto* during the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020. His aspiration to make Hungary a model for other states has also been expressed: 'twenty-seven years ago here in Central Europe we believed that Europe was our future; today we feel that we are the future of Europe' (Orbán 2017).

When depicting the project of building up Central Europe in his rhetoric, Orbán identified himself as Central European in Băile Tuşnad in 2018. Since then, Hungary has been in the vanguard of the new populism and illiberal ideas have become equated with the region as a whole:

I have formulated five tenets for the project of building up Central Europe. The first is that every European country has the right to defend its Christian culture, and the right to reject the ideology of multiculturalism. Our second tenet is that every country has the right to defend the traditional family model, and is entitled to assert that every child has the right to a mother and a father. The third Central European tenet is that every Central European country has the right to defend the nationally strategic economic sectors and markets which are of crucial importance to it. The fourth tenet is that every country has the right to defend its borders, and it has the right to reject immigration. And the fifth tenet is that every European country has the right to insist on the principle of one nation, one vote on the most important issues, and that this right must not be denied in the European Union. (Orbán 2018)

These examples suffice to demonstrate that political concepts are on the move. According to our perception, two ideal types seem to be at work in Hungarian politics: 'European Hungary' and 'Hungarian Europe'. In Hungarian Europe elections and electoral systems are not meant to be fair; they are to secure career continuation for the key political players. There is also no fair competition or belief in institutions and rules—laws are purposefully ambiguous—and all that matters are the deals made by strong leaders in a world of mutual distrust between states. On the other hand, European Hungary is based on the interpretation that cooperation and interaction have produced stability and prosperity. In this context, the rule of law is respected, and democratic processes are based on the notions of fairness and openness. New laws should be enacted according to the basic rules set by the constitution and have proper transition periods and while the nationalistic political mindset is still

²⁹'Age of MEPs by Member State', European Parliamentary Research Service Blog, 13 March 2017, available at: <https://epthinktank.eu/2014/11/26/european-parliament-facts-and-figures/4-age-of-meps-by-ms/>, accessed 31 January 2020.

present, the political opposition is not seen as an enemy or an intrinsically unpatriotic threat (Nyssönen 2019).

Conclusions

One crucial difficulty in political science is to adequately describe dynamic phenomena like illiberal democracy or democratic backsliding with valid descriptions. Our answer in this study is a kind of democratic stock-market, in which we relate ‘the internal’ to ‘the external’. We suggest that the Hungarian regime is most appropriately classified as ‘soft authoritarian’, which is in line with earlier Hungarian recent history: the late state socialist years were known as a ‘soft dictatorship’, which was followed by ‘hard democracy’ from the 1990s.

The second problem is methodological: the use of speeches as a source and what concepts to use in relation to the phenomenon itself. Politicians such as Trump, Erdogan, Putin and Orbán have not endeavoured to avoid controversies or scandals, and in principle any and all publicity is good publicity. For example, in 2011 WikiLeaks revealed how in 2006 Viktor Orbán had told Ambassadors to the EU to ‘pay no attention to what I say to get elected’.³⁰ Nevertheless, in conceptual history, according to Reinhart Koselleck, ‘in politics, words and their usage are more important than any other weapon’ (Koselleck 2004, p. 57). We may continue to defend this view with another slogan, this time from the young Marx, who distinguished the weapon of criticism from the criticism of the weapon; in essence, words can lead to action (Marx 1970). Thus, we take speeches seriously, sometimes even literally, while linking and contextualising their content with external factors, like the Democracy Index.

The theme of Orbán’s annual Băile Tuşnad speech in 2018 was the forthcoming European elections. To what extent did Orbán’s own illiberal interpretation of ‘Christian democracy’ divide Christian Democratic parties across Europe? Hungary is a small country, but in Băile Tuşnad the ideological message aimed at strengthening the populist right was much broader. It is clear that illiberal democracy is a usefully ambiguous concept. As used by Viktor Orbán, this originally negative concept has been turned into a positive one legitimised by its identification with Orbán’s version of ‘Christian democracy’.

The academic community has also absorbed the concept of ‘illiberal’, as innovatively promoted by Orbán. The concept is broad and has the potential to become an umbrella term for the less democratic states, which occupy a grey zone between democracy and authoritarian regimes. Currently the gap between full democratic and authoritarian states is so wide in Democracy Index’s classification that a majority of states are placed in this ‘grey zone’. The classification of full and flawed democracies, as well as of hybrid and authoritarian regimes, is simply too loose.

Determining what illiberal democracy actually means in a political and ideological sense is challenging.³¹ It is worth asking which part is emphasised more: the democratic or the

³⁰ ‘Budapest Demonstrations: Fidesz out for a Spin’, Wikileaks, 30 August 2011, available at: https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06BUDAPEST1953_a.html, accessed 31 January 2020.

³¹ ‘Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s policies are based on the pillars of (1) a central arena of power (*centrális erőtér*), (2) a rhetoric of national unification, (3) a change of elite, (4) the practice of power politics, and (5) the belief in revolutionary circumstances’ (Bozóki 2015, p. 13).

illiberal, or even the authoritarian? Both terms are very broad; at the same time they are both clearly diminished subtypes that are pointing in opposite directions, that is, being a democracy or a non-democracy. Paraphrasing Rhoden, the important questions to be asked are whether illiberal democracy is a critique of only liberalism or also democracy or both at the same time, and whether liberalism should be understood as a mainly political or economic term (Rhoden 2015, pp. 565–66).³²

There is no clear answer in the Hungarian case: the policies of the *Fidesz* government are hardly consistent with any single political ideology or school of thought. Therefore, the case of Hungary is particularly interesting. According to one commentator, *Fidesz* has been providing ‘neoliberal economic policies for the upper classes and ethnonationalist, populist discourse for the poor’ (Bozóki 2015, p. 3).³³ What is perceived as a negative, external influence is a mixture of both political and economic liberalism. The background to the current political rhetoric in Hungary lies partially in the ill-fated economic and social reforms of the previous left leaning and liberal governments, therefore some illiberal policies can be seen as a form of protest (Bozóki 2015, pp. 10–2, 17–8; Rupnik 2016, p. 81). The government has enjoyed almost a decade of uninterrupted majority power, strong enough to change even the constitution at will. Perhaps it is also questionable whether *Fidesz* is a mere political party anymore in the Western sense of the term, or more like a power concentration and manifestation of the Hungarian state, just like the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party was before 1989.

For those who still support the concept of illiberal democracy, it seems to mean a kind of electoral democracy in which the government is relatively free to act between the elections. Moreover, it supports the Orbánist style of politicking, in which questions of democracy and rule of law are secondary. Consequently, in Orbán’s model only results and propaganda matter and they are only tested in the next elections. However, in the Hungarian case, even the electoral system is overly complicated, to the extent that for the authors of this article it hardly represents a functioning model of democracy even in the narrowest sense of an electoral system. Moreover, similar patterns were adopted in Russia’s electoral legislation, and in 2016 the ruling party United Russia (*Edinaya Rossiya*) won 76% of the seats (343 out of 450) under this mixed electoral system (Nyssönen 2019).³⁴

This brings us to another aspect of illiberal democracy: the bald fact of ‘winner takes all’. What we mean by this is that an election victory, resulting in a strong enough—or even dominant, as is the case in Hungary—position enables a party to act in accordance with a purely majoritarian form of democracy, namely, to implement legislation with very little respect for the ideas and objections of the opposition and other minorities, concentrating power in the party and in particular, around its leader (Enyedi 2016, p. 13). Such brute majoritarianism makes it possible to alter the entire political and societal fabric of a given state by filling all meaningful public positions with sympathetic persons, from election officials to the courts—producing soft authoritarianism. In this sense, we agree with the

³²See also Rensmann *et al.* (2017, pp. 107–8).

³³See also Enyedi (2016, pp. 14–5).

³⁴See ‘Federal Law On Elections of Deputies to the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, Adopted by State Duma February 14 2014’, available at: <http://www.legislationline.org/documents/id/19906>, accessed 29 June 2020.

views that the state becomes an extension of the ruling party, a private playing field for the new political and economic elite, ripe for corruption and abuses of power (Bánkuti *et al.* 2015, pp. 37–9, 43–5; Bozóki 2015, pp. 3–4). In Hungary, the illiberal state has become a smoke screen for the march towards authoritarianism.

HEINO NYSSÖNEN, Adjunct Professor, Senior Lecturer and Political Scientist, Department of Philosophy, Contemporary History and Political Science, University of Turku, Finland. *Email:* heino.nyssonen@utu.fi

JUSSI METSÄLÄ, Doctoral Researcher, International Relations, Faculty of Management and Business, Tampere University, Finland. *Email:* jussi.metsala@tuni.fi

References

- Bánkuti, M., Halmaj, G. & Scheppele, K. L. (2015) 'Hungary's Illiberal Turn: Disabling the Constitution', in Krasztev, P. & Van Til, J. (eds) *The Hungarian Patient: Social Opposition to an Illiberal Democracy* (Budapest & New York, NY, Central European University Press).
- Bermeo, N. (2016) 'On Democratic Backsliding', *Journal of Democracy*, 27, 1.
- Bogaards, M. (2009) 'How to Classify Hybrid Regimes? Defective Democracy and Electoral Authoritarianism', *Democratization*, 16, 2.
- Bozóki, A. (2015) 'Broken Democracy, Predatory State, and Nationalist Populism', in Krasztev, P. & Van Til, J. (eds) *The Hungarian Patient: Social Opposition to an Illiberal Democracy* (Budapest & New York, NY, Central European University Press).
- Brooker, P. (2009) *Non-Democratic Regimes* (2nd edn) (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan).
- Brownlee, J. (2017) 'The Limited Reach of Authoritarian Powers', *Democratization*, 24, 7.
- Bustikova, L. & Guasti, P. (2017) 'The Illiberal Turn or Swerve in Central Europe?', *Politics and Governance*, 5, 4.
- Buzogány, A. (2017) 'Illiberal Democracy in Hungary: Authoritarian Diffusion or Domestic Causation?', *Democratization*, 24, 7.
- Carothers, T. & Youngs, R. (2017) 'Democracy Is Not Dying', *Foreign Affairs*, 11 April.
- Cartledge, P. (2016) *Democracy: A Life* (Oxford, Oxford University Press).
- Chase, J. (2018) 'Angela Merkel and Bavaria: What Germany's Regional Election means for the Chancellor', *Deutsche Welle*, 17 September, available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/angela-merkel-and-bavaria-what-germanys-regional-election-means-for-the-chancellor/a-45522744>, accessed 29 June 2020.
- Collier, D. & Levitsky, S. (1997) 'Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research', *World Politics*, 49, 3.
- Council of the EU (2019) 'Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the New Mandate of President Maduro', 10 January, available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/01/10/declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu-on-the-new-mandate-of-president-maduro/>, accessed 31 January 2020.
- Democracy Index (2017) 'Free Speech Under Attack. A Report by *The Economist* Intelligence Unit', available at: http://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/Democracy_Index_2017.pdf, accessed 31 January 2020.
- Democracy Index (2018) 'Me Too? Political Participation, Protest and Democracy. A Report by *The Economist* Intelligence Unit', available at: https://www.eiu.com/public/topical_report.aspx?campaignid=Democracy2018, accessed 31 January 2020.
- Democracy Index (2019) 'A Year of Democratic Setbacks and Popular Protest. A Report by *The Economist* Intelligence Unit', available at: <http://www.eiu.com/Handlers/WhitepaperHandler.ashx?fi=Democracy-Index-2019.pdf&mode=wp&campaignid=democracyindex2019>, accessed 28 June 2020.
- Diamond, L. (2002) 'Thinking About Hybrid Regimes', *Journal of Democracy*, 13, 2.
- Diamond, L. (2015) 'Facing up to the Democratic Recession', *Journal of Democracy* 26, 1.
- Ekiert, G. (2017) 'How to Deal with Poland and Hungary', *Social Europe*, Occasional Paper 13, August.

- Enyedi, Z. (2016) 'Paternalist Populism and Illiberal Elitism in Central Europe', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 21, 1.
- Freedom House (2018) 'Democracy in Crisis', *Freedom in the World*, available at: https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FH_FITW_Report_2018_Final_SinglePage.pdf, accessed 31 January 2020.
- Freedom House (2019) 'Democracy in Retreat', *Freedom in the World*, available at: https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/Feb2019_FH_FITW_2019_Report_ForWeb-compressed.pdf, accessed 31 January 2020.
- Freedom House (2020) 'A Leaderless Struggle for Democracy', *Freedom in the World*, available at: https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/FIW_2020_REPORT_BOOKLET_Final.pdf, accessed 29 June 2020.
- Inglehart, R. & Norris, P. (2016) *Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-Nots and Cultural Backlash*, HKS Working Paper No. RWP16-026 (Cambridge, MA, John F Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University), available at: <https://research.hks.harvard.edu/publications/getFile.aspx?Id=1401>, accessed 3 July 2020.
- Koselleck, R. (2002) *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts* (Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press).
- Koselleck, R. (2004) *Futures Past. On the Semantics of Historical Time* (Cambridge, MA, The MIT Press).
- Levitsky, S. & Way, L. (2015) 'The Myth of Democratic Recession', *Journal of Democracy*, 26, 1.
- Levitsky, S. & Ziblatt, D. (2018) *How Democracies Die* (New York, NY, Crown Publishing).
- Lijphart, A. (1999) *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries* (New Haven, CT, & London, Yale University Press).
- Magyar, B. (2016) *Post-Communist Mafia State: The Case of Hungary* (Budapest, Central European University Press).
- Marx, K. (1970) *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (Oxford, Oxford University Press), available at: https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx_Critique_of_Hegels_Philosophy_of_Right.pdf, accessed 31 January 2020.
- Mason, P. (2017) 'Democracy is Dying—and it's Startling how Few People are Worried about it', *The Guardian*, 31 July.
- Mechkova, V., Lührmann, A. & Lindberg, S. I. (2017) 'How Much Democratic Backsliding?', *Journal of Democracy*, 28, 4.
- Møller, J. & Skaaning, S.-E. (2010) 'Beyond the Radial Delusion: Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy and Non-Democracy', *International Political Science Review*, 31, 3.
- Müller, J.-W. (2016) *What is Populism?* (Philadelphia, PA, University of Pennsylvania Press).
- Nyyssönen, H. (1999) *The Presence of the Past in Politics: '1956' After 1956 in Hungary* (Jyväskylä, University of Jyväskylä).
- Nyyssönen, H. (2018) 'The East is Different, isn't it?—Poland and Hungary in Search of Prestige', *The Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 26, 3.
- Nyyssönen, H. (2019) *A demokrácia lebontása Magyarországon* (Budapest, Napvilág kiadó).
- Nyyssönen, H. & Metsälä, J. (2018) 'State, Dual-Citizenship and Voting Rights', in Wiesner, C., Björk, A., Kivistö, H.-M. & Mäkinen, K. (eds) *Shaping Citizenship. A Political Concept in Theory, Debate and Practice* (New York, NY, London, Routledge).
- Nyyssönen, H. & Szabó, G. (2015) 'Unkarin "illiberaali demokratia" ja politiikan luottoluokittajat', *Politiikka*, 3/2015.
- Orbán, V. (2014) 'Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's Speech at the 25th Bálványos Summer Free University and Student Camp', 26 July, available at: <http://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-speech-at-the-25th-balvanyos-summer-free-university-and-student-camp>, accessed 31 January 2020.
- Orbán, V. (2017) 'Viktor Orbán's Speech at the 28th Bálványos Summer Open University and Student Camp', 22 July, available at: <http://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/viktor-orban-s-speech-at-the-28th-balvanyos-summer-open-university-and-student-camp>, accessed 31 January 2020.
- Orbán, V. (2018) 'Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's Speech at the 29th Bálványos Summer Open University and Student Camp', 28 July, available at: <http://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-speech-at-the-29th-balvanyos-summer-open-university-and-student-camp>, accessed 31 January 2020.
- OSCE/ODIHR (2018) *Hungary Parliamentary Elections 8 April 2018 Limited Election Observation Mission Final Report*, Warsaw, 27 June, available at: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/9/385959.pdf>, accessed 3 July 2020.
- Plattner, M. F. (2010) 'Populism, Pluralism and Liberal Democracy', *Journal of Democracy*, 21, 1.

- Plattner, M. F. (2017) 'Liberal Democracy's Fading Allure', *Journal of Democracy*, 28, 4.
- Rensmann, L., de Lange, S. L. & Couperus, S. (2017) 'Editorial to the Issue on Populism and the Remaking of (Il)Liberal Democracy in Europe', *Politics and Governance*, 5, 4.
- Rhoden, T. F. (2015) 'The Liberal in Liberal Democracy', *Democratization*, 22, 3.
- Rupnik, J. (2016) 'Surging Illiberalism in the East', *Journal of Democracy*, 27, 4.
- Santora, M. & Bienvu, H. (2018) 'Hungary Election was Free but not Entirely Fair, Observers Say', *The New York Times*, 9 April.
- Sargentini, J. (2018) 'DRAFT REPORT on a proposal calling on the Council to determine, pursuant to Article 7 (1) of the Treaty on European Union, the existence of a clear risk of a serious breach by Hungary of the values on which the Union is founded (2017/2131(INL))', available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/resources/library/media/20180411RES01553/20180411RES01553.pdf>, accessed 31 January 2020.
- Schedler, A. (2002) 'The Menu of Manipulation', *Journal of Democracy*, 13, 2.
- Scheppele, K. L. & Halmai, G. (2020) 'Don't be Fooled by Autocrats! Why Hungary's Emergency Law Violates the Rule of Law', *Hungarian Spectrum*, 22 April, available at: <https://hungarianspectrum.org/2020/04/22/kim-lane-scheppele-and-gabor-halmai-dont-be-fooled-by-autocrats-why-hungarys-emergency-violates-the-rule-of-law/>, accessed 29 June 2020.
- Skinner, Q. (2002) *Visions of Politics Vol. 1: Regarding Method* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).
- Than, K. & Peto, S. (2018) 'Hungarian PM Sees Shift to Illiberal Christian Democracy in 2019 European Vote', *Reuters*, 28 July.
- Zakaria, F. (1997) 'The Rise of Illiberal Democracy', *Foreign Affairs*, 76, 6.
- Zakaria, F. (2003) *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad* (New York, NY, Norton).
- Zielonka, J. (2018) *Counter-Revolution. Liberal Europe in Retreat* (Oxford, Oxford University Press).