

ABSTRACT

Embedded Autocracy: Hungary in the European Union

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The presentation discusses the causes and processes of decline of democracy and the rise of an electoral authoritarian regime in Hungary. The Orbán regime became a historical epoch that covers the last 15 years since 2010. Our book, published last year at Lexington Books, covers both the historical-political dynamics of autocratization just as the structural characteristics of the regime. As for the historical processes, we discuss the period of 1. liberal, institutional democracy, 2. its deconsolidation, 3. the authoritarian takeover, and 4. the authoritarian accommodation that occurred between 1998 and 2024.

We investigate these developments on both political and social level. A regime that is rightly considered as electoral autocracy from the viewpoint of political science should also be analyzed from a sociological aspect – that is the behavior, attitude, and mentality of large segments of the society. This sociological contextualization reveals the everyday aspect of the regime, as an embedded autocracy.

The significance of Hungarian autocratization goes beyond the relevance of a single case study, because there has never been any nondemocratic member state in the history of the European Union. Therefore, autocratization in Hungary, first appeared as an isolated case, turned out to be a European problem. The EU displayed contradictory policies toward Hungary: It enabled, legitimized, and constrained the Orbán regime. These contradictions highlight the structural problem: The very existence of an autocratic member state contradicts to the commonly accepted principles of the EU, and it might undermine its credibility.

BIO

András Bozóki is Professor of Political Science at the Central European University, Vienna, Austria. He is Doctor of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and research affiliate at the Democracy Institute in Budapest, Hungary. His main fields of research include politics in Central Europe, democratization, autocratization, political ideas, and the role of intellectuals. His publications include 21 authored and co-authored books, and 23 edited and co-edited books. András Bozóki has taught at Columbia University as recurrent visiting professor, plus at Smith College, Mount Holyoke College, Nottingham, Tübingen, Bologna, Ljubljana, and in his native Hungary, at Eötvös Loránd University. He gave invited lectures at several universities (Harvard, Columbia, Princeton, Texas, Florida, Indiana, New School, Washington, UCLA, University of New South Wales, Humboldt University, LSE, University College London, University of Vienna, European University Institute, Hong Kong University, University of Copenhagen etc.) He has been a research fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study (Wissenschaftskolleg) in Berlin, at UCLA in Los Angeles, at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study (NIAS) in Wassenaar, the Netherlands; at the Institute for Advanced

Study at CEU in Budapest; at the European University Institute (EUI) in Florence, at the Sussex European Institute in Brighton, and at the Institute for Humane Sciences (IWM) in Vienna. András Bozóki was Chairman of the Hungarian Political Science Association (2003-5). He was also member of the board of the European Political Science Network (EpsNet, 2002-8) and of the European Confederation of Political Science Associations, (ECPSA, 2008-13). He was a founding editor of the Hungarian Political Science Review (1992-99). He participated at the Hungarian Roundtable Talks of 1989 as delegate of the democratic opposition. Later he served as Minister of Culture of Hungary (2005-6).

Andrzej Sadecki is the head of the Central European Department at the Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW) in Warsaw, where he previously worked as an analyst on Hungary and regional cooperation in Central Europe. On behalf of the OSW, he coordinates the Think Visegrad – V4 Think Tank Platform. He worked as a researcher in the Horizon 2020 project ‘Delayed Transformational Fatigue in Central and Eastern Europe’ at Charles University in Prague and the University College London (UCL). He is interested in contemporary politics, politics of memory, and foreign policies of the Central European countries, with a particular focus on Hungary. He is a regular contributor to Tygodnik Powszechny, a leading Polish weekly.