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National and minority policies in the political survival strategy of Orbán

Introduction

Leaders, above anything else, are motivated by the desire to survive. This desire influences their policy choices, shifting them to apply measures that are more likely to prolong their reign. In order to maximize the time they spend in office, they need a certain part of the selectorate: the winning coalition, who are essential for the survival of the government, and who receive benefits in return to their support. It is important to bear in mind that the winning coalition of politically stable times does not equal to the winning coalition of elections. This research focuses on the winning coalition of the elections, thus the votes of the electorate and their cost forms a central part of this study. The main question that is to be answered, is whether and to what extent the policies of the Orbán government, regarding nationalities, form a part of the overall political survival strategy of the Hungarian Prime Minister, furthermore, if these strategies in general coincide with the rules of power, as set by Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Alastair Smith.

A winning coalition is never homogeneous, it is composed of people with various backgrounds and with diverse motivations and intentions. It is inevitable to find certain minority groups within an electoral winning coalition, based on various criteria. Nationality is one of these dividing lines. The change of electoral law has brought important novelties regarding the votes of non-resident Hungarians, and minority members residing in Hungary.¹

¹ Nézópont Intézet. (2017). Reform of the Hungarian electoral system. *Nézópont Intézet*. Retrieved from: http://nezopontintezet.hu/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Factpaper_Election_system_April2017.pdf. Accessed: 13. 01. 2019.

In case of Hungary, there is a group of electors, who are considered as national minority in their respective home countries as Hungarians. They are in possession of Hungarian citizenship and consequently have the right to vote, however, they do not have residence in Hungary. They are mostly but not exclusively the members of the historical Hungarian minority of Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine. They form a particular subgroup of the voters of FIDESZ, the governing party of Viktor Orbán, and they have a particular role in the survival policy of the Hungarian Prime Minister. Their role is the first to be analyzed in the research. Immigration, which is a highly-debated and well-known issue, regarding Hungary, should be examined, especially regarding the position of the government, to understand more precisely, which purpose the government policies towards immigration and immigrants have in the survival strategy of Orbán. In the meantime, within the borders of Hungary, there are various national minorities, who are recognized by the state and granted with special rights. They are another distinct group of the electorate, and partly the winning coalition, therefore to understand the complex role which nationalities play in the political survival of the regime of Orbán, they should not be exempted from this analysis.

According to the key assumptions of de Mesquita and Smith, as it was summarized in *The Dictator's Handbook*, a leader should minimize the winning coalition, maximize the nominal electorate, while the winning coalition members should only be paid the minimally, but well enough not to defect to a challenger². This assumption coincides with a key logic that is applied by hybrid regimes, which intend to gain the maximal benefits through minimal investment, while provoking the least possible resistance from the side of the population.

The analysis, which has been carried out using qualitative and documentary research, highly relies on the theoretical literature on the electorate theory by de Mesquita and Smith. Furthermore, primary resources from Hungary, both laws and legal regulations, as well as

² de Mesquita B. B. and Smith A. (2011), *The Dictator's Handbook*, New York (NY), Public Affairs, pp. 17-18.

articles, reports and polls published in independent Hungarian media outlets are used extensively. In some special cases, references to pro-government propaganda media have been used intentionally. Significant quantitative data has been retrieved from official statistical data of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, including the census of 2011, which is the most recent, reliable, but now partially obsolete dataset regarding the composition of the Hungarian population. Quantitative data regarding electoral participation and results has been retrieved from the official website of the Hungarian National Electoral Office (NVI).

Hungarians abroad

As Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Alastair Smith wrote in their book, *The Dictator's Handbook*, a leader should have a nominal selectorate as large as possible³. In the contemporary era, when universal suffrage has already been introduced, one might face difficulties when attempting to find solutions to a simple question: How can the nominal selectorate be expanded in such a situation? Involving more people domestically in politics by decreasing the age-threshold is one of the solutions, however, it is by far not the most beneficial for the government. It has been mentioned in the introduction, that hybrid regimes, such as that of Orbán, prefers to have maximal gains through minimal investment, with the smallest amount of resistance. Involving younger generations into the politics, as it had been suggested by the opposition party LMP in 2017⁴, brings no benefits to the government, as it would only increase the segment of population which is not likely to support the current political establishment, consequently, such an expansion of the nominal selectorate would be harmful for Orbán's political survival. It is not a coincidence that such proposals have been firmly rejected by the

³ de Mesquita B. B. and Smith A. (2011). *The Dictator's Handbook*, New York (NY), Public Affairs, p. 17.

⁴ Magyar Nemzet. (2017, August 07). A tinédzsereknek is választójogot adna az LMP. *Magyar Nemzet*. Retrieved from: <https://mno.hu/belfold/a-tinedzsereknek-is-valasztojogot-adna-az-lmp-2411432>. Accessed: 15. 01. 2019.

FIDESZ government, as well as any proposals to revoke universal suffrage and bind it to level of education, which was the proposal of Jobbik, another opposition party of Hungary⁵.

If the nominal selectorate cannot be expanded by using the preexistent domestic human resources, a leader need to find the solution beyond the borders of the state, and find non-citizens, who are willing to support the establishment. The most orthodox way could be immigration. As it is a controversial issue for various reasons, it is to be discussed in the next chapter. However, Hungary, due to historical reasons, enjoys a unique reservoir of potential voters: members of the historical Hungarian nation, who, as a consequence of two lost world wars, now live in foreign countries, such as Slovakia, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine.

Even before the second Orbán cabinet was officially inaugurated, on the 14th May 2010, the Prime Minister and some important members of his winning coalition proposed the modification of the law on Hungarian citizenship that was accepted 12 days later⁶. The XLIV. Law of 2010⁷ of Hungary eased the conditions for primarily, but not exclusively those residing in the territory of “historical Hungary” and can prove their Hungarian ancestry to gain Hungarian citizenship, without having residence in the Republic of Hungary. However, this law did not concern suffrage. Consequently Orbán had chosen a cunning tactic to secure the support of the opposition, as the measure was then perceived as a symbolic one. It took a year and a half before the new electoral law, the CCIII. Law of 2011⁸, extended suffrage. Consequently people who are not resident, even have never lived in Hungary, were given the right to vote. They have the same right to interfere into the domestic affairs of Hungary as their

⁵ Index. (2017, August 03). Megvonná a választójogot az analfabétáktól a Jobbik. *Index*. Retrieved from: https://index.hu/belfold/2017/08/03/megvonna_a_valasztojogot_az_analfabetaktol_a_jobbik. Accessed: 15. 01. 2019.

⁶ HVG. (2010, May 26). Elsőprő többséggel elfogadták a kettős állampolgárságról szóló törvényt. *HVG*. Retrieved from: https://hvg.hu/itthon/20100526_elfogadtak_kettos_allampolgarsag. Accessed: 16. 01. 2019.

⁷ Magyar Közlöny. (2010). 2010. évi XLIV. törvény. *Magyar Közlöny*, 2010(89).

⁸ Magyar Közlöny. (2011). 2011. évi CCIII. évi törvény. *Magyar Közlöny*, 2011(165).

counterparts within the borders of the country, yet, they do not directly and equally enjoy benefits or suffer consequences.

It is important to highlight, that his idea was nothing new: already in 2004 the issue provoked heated political debates, which culminated in a referendum on the 5th December 2004⁹. Despite the fact that three years earlier Orbán and his party did not promote the idea of giving citizenship to the Hungarians of the neighboring countries, following his electoral defeat of 2002, the tide was turned¹⁰. Orbán used the campaign of the referendum to build personal connections to the leaders of the Hungarian communities, furthermore to promote his agenda and gain acceptance among the ordinary people. This campaign was a milestone which has determined the attitude of the Hungarian minorities in the Carpathian basin towards the political parties of Hungary. Orbán was the leader of the only considerable, strong political party, which had protected and promoted the idea of dual citizenship, consequently the leader of FIDESZ started to build up his myth of competence among these people¹¹. The Socialist Party successfully distanced these possible members of the nominal electorate by taking hostile or hesitant position during this vote¹². Despite the fact that the all but 4 representatives of the Socialist Party voted yes during the vote on the 26th May 2010 to the citizenship law¹³, and the apology of then-president of the party, Attila Mesterházy, in Cluj Napoca, in 2013¹⁴, the Socialist Party was unable to find a way to this new layer of the nominal electorate.

⁹ Index. (2004, December 05). Eredménytelen a kettős népszavazás. Index. Retrieved from: <https://index.hu/belfold/nszvs1205>. Accessed: 17. 01. 2019.

¹⁰ Pap, Sz. I. (2017, December 05). 13 éve volt a kettős állampolgárságról szóló népszavazás. *Mérce*. Retrieved from: <https://merce.hu/2017/12/05/13-eve-volt-a-kettos-allampolgarsagrol-szolo-nepszavazas>. Accessed: 19. 01. 2019.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Kovács, A. (2016, October 01). Két népszavazás, ami tönkretette a baloldalt. *Origo*. Retrieved from: <http://www.origo.hu/itthon/20160926-nepszavazas-kettos-allampolgarsag-vizitdij-gyurcsany-fidesz.html>. Accessed: 19. 01. 2019.

¹³ Király, A. (2010, May 26). Elfogadták a kettős állampolgárságot. *Index*. Retrieved from: https://index.hu/belfold/2010/05/26/elfogadtak_a_kettos_allampolgarsagot. Accessed: 19. 01. 2019.

¹⁴ HVG. (2013, January 16). Az MSZP elnöke bocsánatot kért a határon túli magyaroktól. *HVG*. Retrieved from: https://hvg.hu/itthon/20130116_mszp_kolozsvar. Accessed: 19. 01. 2019.

Throughout the following pages, the costs and benefits of this expansion of the nominal electorate are to be examined. Whether and to what extent was this policy beneficial for the political survival of the Orbán regime? Does the current voting system, regarding the Hungarian with no residence in Hungary, maximize the profit of FIDESZ? And most importantly, how much is the vote of non-residents cost-efficient?

Regarding the first question, if one analyzes only the electoral results, it can be seen, that the decision to grant voting right to Hungarians without residence in Hungary has brought hundreds of thousands of vote to the party of Orbán, according to the official data of the National Election Office (NVI). It has contributed with 128 712 to the overall votes in 2014, that is merely 2.61% of the total 4 918 934 votes, however, 95.28% of these votes supported the governing party, which constitutes 5.41% of their overall votes. Four years later, the number of non-residents who have participated in the elections increased by 75%, to 225 471, the votes supporting FIDESZ grew by 76.5%, to 216 561. During the previous parliamentary elections, non-residents gave 7.67% of the supporters of Orbán, which is a considerable increase.¹⁵ The increase can be attributed not only to the increased interest of non-residents in Hungarian politics, or the personal charisma of the Hungarian Prime Minister, but as well as to the fact that the number of citizens among nationality members have shown a considerable rise, as it was highlighted by Potápi, secretary of state for national policy, in 2016.¹⁶

While the numbers are impressive, and participation rate among registered citizens in 2014 was higher than among residents of Hungary (prior was 66.42% while the latter was 61.24%), in four years, it dropped to 59.58%, whereas it was near records in Hungary with 70.22%. It is due to the fact that for the latest elections, many more people registered, but due to personal or technical reasons, they finally decided not to vote. According to the NVI,

¹⁵ NVI. (2014; 2018). Eredmények. Retrieved from: www.valasztas.hu. Accessed: 18. 01. 2019.

¹⁶ Magyar Idők. (2016, September 19).Potápi: Harmadával több külhoni magyar regisztrált az októberi népszavazásra. *Magyar Idők*. Retrieved from: <https://magyaridok.hu/belfold/potapi-harmadaval-tobb-kulhoni-magyar-regisztralt-az-oktoberi-nepszavazasra-1013908/>. Accessed: 18. 01. 2019.

108 886 votes have arrived from Romania alone, where lives the largest number of Hungarian nationals. In the previously cited article, Potápi confirmed, that the consulates of Cluj Napoca and Miercurea Ciuc are among the busiest ones regarding citizenship requests. According to the study of KSH, published in 2017, $\frac{3}{4}$ of those who have submitted a request for Hungarian citizenship, are nationals of Romania¹⁷, which means, in case of 700 000 new nationals, that more than 525 000 voters should live in Romania. In this case, participation rate among Transylvanian Hungarians fall even lower, below 25%. Considering that fact that there were more than 1.2 million Hungarians in Romania according to the National Institute of Statistics of Romania (INS) in 2011¹⁸, the number of citizens has still potential to increase considerably, despite the fact that the number of citizenship requests have been in a decline following the initial boom.¹⁹

Why is it important? On the one hand, it has demonstrated, that Orbán has an overwhelming support among the non-residents, however, only a small fragment of the voters have been active participants in the electoral struggle of Hungary during the previous two elections. This, on the other hand, shows us, that Orbán can still compensate the drop of support among residents by increasing his approval and the number of active voters among the non-residents. Fidesz has been actively campaigning among non-residents, especially in Transylvania²⁰, which can be intensified in the forthcoming years.

Another important fact to bear in mind is the difference between the voting options of Hungarian citizens without residence in Hungary, and those citizens, who are Hungarian citizens with *de jure* residence in Hungary, but who are living abroad. While the prior is legally

¹⁷ KSH (2017). Új magyar állampolgárok. p. 8. Retrieved from:

<http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/idoszaki/pdf/ujmagyarallampolgarok.pdf>. Accessed: 29. 01. 2019.

¹⁸ INS (2011). Recensământul populației și al locuitorilor 2011. Retrieved from:

<http://www.recensamantromania.ro>. Accessed: 30. 01. 2019.

¹⁹ KSH (2017). Új magyar állampolgárok. p. 7. Retrieved from:

<http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/idoszaki/pdf/ujmagyarallampolgarok.pdf>. Accessed: 30. 01. 2019.

²⁰ Bayer, L. (2018). Viktor Orbán courts voters beyond ‘fortress Hungary’. *Politico*. Retrieved from:

<https://www.politico.eu/article/viktor-orban-courts-voters-in-transylvania-romania-hungarian-election-2018>. Accessed: 30. 01. 2019.

authorized to cast the vote in letter, the latter is obliged either to return home, or to proceed to the nearest Hungarian Consulate to vote in person. While the system is criticized by various actors of the Hungarian political life, including the safety of the votes casted in letters, as it was pointed out in the study of Nézőpont Intézet, a prestigious Hungarian think-tank,²¹ it should be highlighted that due to this system, only 51 854 people participated on the elections through the consular offices²². By obstructing these voters, who are more likely to be the supporters of various opposition parties, FIDESZ has been able to further strengthen its positions by decreasing the participants of the elections who could weaken the positions of the governing party.

It is a more interesting issue, if the current voting franchise maximizes the benefits of the governing party of Hungary or not. As it has been told, non-residents can have only one vote on a party list, they are deprived from the possibility to vote on an individual candidate. A thought-provoking writing of Tihamér Czika, published in *Élet és Irodalom*²³, criticized this system, and claimed that Hungarians from Transylvania should be enabled to send a few representatives to the parliament, as if they were from individual constituencies. Apart from moral and ethical dilemmas, this question should be addressed simply from the aspect of political survival, and from this perspective, there are only counterarguments.

Such a measure would be certain to provoke harsh reactions from Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine. Establishing individual constituencies by one country in the territory of another can be interpreted as a serious violation of sovereignty. Already the nationality law of 2010 has infuriated the Slovakian government, which swiftly banned the institution of dual

²¹ Nézőpont Intézet (2018). *Szabad és tisztességes – 20 kritika és tény a magyar választási rendszerről. Nézőpont Intézet*. Retrieved from: http://nezopontintezet.hu/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Nezopont_Intezet_elemzes_2018_03_28.pdf Accessed: 03. 02. 2019.

²² NVI. (2018). *Külképviseleti szavazás*. Retrieved from: www.valasztas.hu. Accessed: 18. 01. 2019.

²³ Czika, T. (2017). *Nem mindegy*. *Élet és Irodalom*, LXI(47). Retrieved from: <https://www.es.hu/cikk/2017-11-24/czika-tihamer/nem-mindegy-.html>. Accessed: 30. 01. 2019.

citizenship²⁴, and while other countries have taken a more silent position, none of them were pleased by the Hungarian initiative^{25 26}. Delegating representatives from the territory of one country to the parliament of another country to represent the given territory of the state in the legislative organ of another state, while there is no ethnic homogeneity in the given area is an idea that is unacceptable for any state. The government is not in need to expand the parliament and to involve non-residents into Hungarian politics in such a dramatic way. The theoretical benefits does not worth the consequences, as the neighboring states would be infuriated by such a step of Hungary. The losses in the field of international relations would be too high for Hungary, and it is unlikely that any European country supported such an irresponsible measure of the Orbán government. Still, it is not the only one difficulty: who and how should decide on the way of representation? Such a dilemma is certain to provoke intense debates and discussions, and FIDESZ needs none of them.

Last but not least, maintaining an individual constituency is responsibility: electors need to be pleased. The current level of symbolic measures is unlikely to satisfy a population of hundreds of thousands. Furthermore, according to the founders of the selectorate theory, it is only the selectorate that should be as large as possible, while the winning coalitions should be kept at the lowest possible numbers. Forming individual constituencies, apart from causing diplomatic incidents, would also mean more winning coalition members who need to be pleased in return for their support, moreover direct involvement in the daily life of these electors, which is an unreasonable financial burden. There is no rational reason of political survival, at the current point, that would support such measure, however, the desire of power

²⁴ Nemzetpolitikai Kutatóintézet. (2014). Politikai játékszerré vált a kettős állampolgárság kérdése. Retrieved from: http://bgazrt.hu/files/NPKI/Politikai_jatekszer_kettos_allampolgarsag_K01.pdf. Accessed: 29. 01. 2019.

²⁵ Sáska, Z. A. (2013). A szomszédos országok a kettős állampolgárságról. *Hadtudományi Szemle*, 6(1), pp. 159-175.

²⁶ Szymanowska, L. (2011). The implementation of the Hungarian citizenship law. *Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW)*. Retrieved from: <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2011-02-02/implementation-hungarian-citizenship-law>. Accessed: 01. 02. 2019.

at one point of the forthcoming decline of the myth of competence of Orbán might force him to act so, thus securing one final term for himself. However, this is still distant future.

It has been shown so far, that the government has high gains, with practically no resistance (hence almost all voters support Orbán). Last but not least, the costs of this policy is to be analyzed. In her study, Herner-Kovács discusses the primary policy tools of the process, which she calls, “nation-building extended”: Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Internship, Mikes Kelemen Program, Balassi Institute, even ReConnect Hungary Program,²⁷ which are, in this analysis, should be evaluated as elements of the above highlighted symbolic measures. There are further measures of economic nature, as highlighted by Potápi, including tens of billion forint worth economy-supporting programs for Zakarpattia Oblast, Novi Sad, and for Transylvania, various tenders for Hungarian entrepreneurs in the neighboring countries, furthermore scholarships and training programs for the youth of these people.²⁸ However, in the planned budget of 2019, the Hungarian parliament has dedicated merely 0.47% of the total budget on various programs for the Hungarians of the Carpathian basin, including the *Bethlen Gábor Alap* (33.793 billion HUF), financing extra-border development programs (50 billion HUF), education and cultural support (1.1 billion HUF), and several other, smaller expanses.²⁹ This does not mean that during the current year the government cannot redirect additional financial resources to these policies, still, in any cases, it is clearly visible that the financial resources invested in the neighboring countries are extremely low, when one takes into consideration their political gains.

²⁷ Herner-Kovács, E. (2014). Nation Building Extended: Hungarian Diaspora Politics. *Minority Studies*, 17. pp. 55-67. Retrieved from: http://bgazrt.hu/dbfiles/blog_files/4/0000009484/Minority%20Studies_17.55-67.pdf. Accessed: 04. 02. 2019.

²⁸ Magyar Idők. (2016, September 19).Potápi: Harmadával több külhoni magyar regisztrált az októberi népszavazásra. *Magyar Idők*. Retrieved from: <https://magyaridok.hu/belfold/potapi-harmadaval-tobb-kulhoni-magyar-regisztralt-az-oktoberi-nepszavazasra-1013908/>. Accessed: 18. 01. 2019.

²⁹ Magyar Közlöny. (2018). 2018. évi L. törvény. *Magyar Közlöny*, 2018(123).

To summarize the role of non-resident Hungarians, it is important to highlight, that while they are not only a logical extension of the nominal selectorate, they as well significantly contribute to the electoral winning coalition of Orbán. Despite the fact that the results have been highly positive throughout the past years, there is still room to grow, as only a part of Hungarians abroad have citizenship, while only a small fragment of these people are active during elections. Orbán can utilize these cheap votes in the future even more extensively, especially if and when his domestic approval rate declines. Meanwhile, the responsibility on the government to satisfy the needs of these voters are minimal, as they are not represented by separate members of parliament, as such a measure would most certainly cause diplomatic tensions between Hungary and its neighbors, however, the possibility of such measure, while almost negligible, it cannot be excluded either.

Immigration

Immigration is a controversial issue in Hungary. While the anti-immigration policies of Orbán have gained worldwide attention, it is lesser known that immigration is an existing phenomenon in Hungary, moreover the integration level of immigrants is relatively high, as it was highlighted during an interview by the prestigious immigration researcher, Attila Melegh³⁰. However, there are certain issues to clarify, first and foremost: who are immigrating to Hungary?

The first group of immigrants is self-evident: members of the Hungarian minority from neighboring countries, mostly Romanians and Ukrainians. Following 2010, their numbers have shown a sharp decrease in official statistics, due to the eased conditions of naturalization. They are logical consequences of the policies of Orbán, and support him in his political survival, as they form a pool of cheap labor force that can be used to ease the problems which are generated

³⁰ Melegh, A. (10. 06. 2015). Informational interview. Retrieved from: <http://www.origo.hu/gazdasag/20150609-a-bevanderlok-gazdasagi-hatasa-pozitiv-magyarorszagra-nezve.html>. Accessed: 01. 02. 2019.

by the current shortage of labor. Their votes can be utilized not only for parliamentary elections, but for local electoral struggles as well, as it has been reported by various news agencies throughout the years^{31 32 33}. This aspect of immigration is not opposed by Orbán, on the contrary, it is given significant support.

Despite the fact that Hungary does not belong to the group of wealthiest and most developed countries of Europe, thus it is not a popular destination for immigration, there are more than a hundred thousand people of various national backgrounds, who have chosen Hungary as their new home, as it has been reported by several media^{34 35}. These people could be logical target for the government to expand the electorate, in the spirit of the advices of de Mesquita and Smith, therefore one might ask, why does the government acts differently?

It would be mistaken to perceive these immigrant groups as homogeneous in terms of political preferences and political status, hence a significant share of these people belong to the nominal electorate due to successful naturalization. Still, their political activity is low. Unfortunately the latest data which was found during this research is already a decade old, it demonstrates the situation among immigrants prior to the second Orbán cabinet was inaugurated. Therefore the Orbán cabinet was already aware of the situation which is to be presented in the following paragraphs, and these data shaped their policy choices. In the following description, the members of the Hungarian minorities from other countries are exempted from analysis.

³¹ Bátorfy, A. and Becker, A. (2018, May 22). Fantomszavazók duzzasztják a választói névjegyzéket a vásárosnaményi választókerületben. *Átlászo*. Retrieved from: <https://atlatszo.hu/2018/05/22/fantomszavazok-duzzasztjak-a-valasztoi-nevjegyzeket-a-vasarosnamenyi-valasztokeruletben>. Accessed: 02. 02. 2019.

³² Átlászo. (2014, April 02). Voksturizmus és gerrymandering: az újszentiváni csoda. *Átlászo*. Retrieved from: <https://atlatszo.hu/2014/04/02/voksturizmus-es-gerrymandering-az-ujszentivani-csoda>. Accessed: 02. 02. 2019.

³³ Hír Tv. (2018, April 04). 200 ukrán bejelentését intézte a polgármester. *Hír TV*. Retrieved from: https://hirtv.hu/ahirtvhirei_adattar/200-ukran-bejelentese-intezte-a-polgarmester-2457772. Accessed: 02. 02. 2019.

³⁴ Lajtai-Szabó, G. (2018, January 17). 40 000 Asian people in Hungary. *Daily News Hungary*. Retrieved from: <https://dailynewshungary.com/20000-asian-people-hungary/>. Accessed: 06. 02. 2019.

³⁵ Vaskor, M. (2018, January 16). Megjelent húszezer ázsiai Magyarországon. *24.hu*. Retrieved from: <https://24.hu/kozelet/2018/01/16/megjelent-huszezer-azsiai-magyarorszagon>. Accessed: 06. 02. 2019.

As of 2009, according to the research, entitled, *Bevándorlók Magyarországon*, cited in the book edited by Kováts, more than 50% of the immigrants were unaware of Hungarian political parties.³⁶ Despite the fact that the Hungarian Socialist Party lost support in 2009, compared to the previous year, still, it was the preferred party of the majority of Vietnamese, Chinese and even Turkish immigrants, and the decrease of popularity of the Socialists did not coincide with the strengthening of the rival FIDESZ.³⁷ But still, more people answered that they had preferred either another party, or none of the parties. It is important to highlight that before the start of the anti-immigration and anti-Muslim campaign of the government in 2015, FIDESZ had more sympathy among Muslim immigrants than the Socialist Party³⁸. It would be interesting to know, how the past four years have changed their electoral preferences. Political activity is the lowest among Chinese immigrants.

Regarding immigrants, Orbán's government has faced the following policy choice following 2010: There was an immigration community of nearly 200 000, including 143 197 people without Hungarian citizenship, according to the census of 2011³⁹, with various national background. However, apart from Hungarians from neighboring countries, there were significant non-historical minorities present in Hungary, mostly without, partly with citizenship. These people did not have strong political ties to the governing party, nor high ambitions to enter Hungarian political life, they have remained passive. There was no expectation that masses of immigrants could have gained citizenship in the foreseeable future (between 1st Jan 2010 and 30th June 2015, only 89 Chinese, 163 Vietnamese and 63 Turkish people were given citizenship⁴⁰), which is almost negligible when it is compared to the overall

³⁶ Kováts, A. (Ed.). (2013). *Bevándorlás és integráció*. Budapest, MTA Társadalomtudományi Kutatóközpont. p. 205.

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ *ibid.*

³⁹ KSH. (2013). *2011. évi népszámlálás*. Budapest, Központi Statisztikai Hivatal. p. 52.

⁴⁰ Pálffy, G. [government publication]. (2015, 09 25). *106-Ti-61267/1/2015*. Retrieved from: <https://kimittud.atlatszo.hu/request/5419/response/8692/attach/2/4686%20001.pdf>. Accessed: 31. 01. 2019.

size of the nominal electorate. As researches have shown that immigrants have usually higher qualifications than the native population⁴¹, which is not an attractive data for the government, as they tend to be more popular among the lesser-educated population, as they are more easy to be manipulated, as it was pointed out by Hungarian think-thanks, such as *Republikon Intézet*⁴², *Závecz Research*⁴³ and *Publicus Intézet*⁴⁴.

Consequently, the government could either diverge significant resources into the political integration of immigrant population, which is an activity with high costs both regarding the temporal and the financial dimensions, while the benefits are not only marginal, but as well as at least dubious. It is logical why the government is not enthusiastic about further increasing its electorate with, if not hostile, at least passive voters, who are unlikely to be their supporters if minimal financial resources are invested into their persuasion. The government has more appealing social strata among the society, consequently the role of immigrants in Hungarian policy remains a marginal and marginalized issue, and it is unlikely to change. As of now, the government does not need a few thousands of votes of non-Hungarian immigrants, and is clearly not ready to invest time and money into these voters.

Last but not least, the government's position on the current immigration crisis is to be examined from the perspective of political survival. It is important to bear in mind that the immigration crisis, stated in 2015, has no effect on the electorate of Hungary, as it was a transitory movement of masses of humans, not real immigration to Hungary as a destination state. Consequently it is understandable why the Orbán cabinet was not considering them as

⁴¹ Kováts, A. (Ed.). (2013). *Bevándorlás és integráció*. Budapest, MTA Társadalomtudományi Kutatóközpont. pp. 78-79; 87.

⁴² Republikon Intézet. (2016). *A politikai közhangulat 2016 februárjában – a Republikon Intézet kutatása* [Data set]. Retrieved from: <http://republikon.hu/elemezsek,-kutatasok/160310-koezhangulat.aspx>. Accessed: 02. 02. 2019.

⁴³ Závecz Research. (2017). *Kik szavaztak, hogyan szavaztak április 8-án?* [Data set]. Retrieved from: <http://www.zaveczezsresearch.hu/kik-szavaztak-hogyan-szavaztak-aprilis-8-an/>. Accessed: 02. 02. 2019.

⁴⁴ Publicus Intézet. (2017), *Ha most vasárnap országgyűlési választások lennének, Ön melyik pártra adná szavazatát?* [Data set]. Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/53447723449/photos/a.142179838449/10154872356098450>. Accessed: 02. 02. 2019.

possible electorate. Rather than transforming the country into an attractive target for immigrants, which would be a nearly impossible task, due to several factors, including the difficulty of the language, through the xenophobia of the population up to financial situation and standard of living, the Orbán cabinet decided to capitalize on the situation by reinforcing xenophobia in the country. This decision is in connection with the myth of competence, which has been explained in various studies of Guriev and Treisman^{45 46} Transforming transitory immigrants into political nemesis instead of electorate has brought more benefits to the government both on the short and on the medium run.

Nationalities of Hungary

Having seen the ideologically slightly controversial, but survival-oriented immigration policy of the Orbán regime, there still remains an important aspect of the survival strategy of the government, regarding those Hungarian citizens, residing in Hungary, who are the members of one of the historical national minorities of the country. The Hungarian state recognizes 13 historical nationalities, according to the CLXXIX law of 2011⁴⁷, which include the following minorities: Armenian, Bulgarian, Croatian, German, Greek, Polish, Roma, Romanian, Rusyn, Serbian, Slovakian, Slovenian, and Ukrainian. They are limited in numbers, hence Hungary, since the peace treaty of Trianon, has become ethnically quite homogeneous. Despite the fact that there are other minorities living in Hungary, including Chinese, Russian and Vietnamese people, they do not fulfill the preconditions of the CLXXIX law of 2011 to be considered

⁴⁵ Guriev, S. and Treisman D. (2015, May 24). The New Dictators Rule by Velvet Fist. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/25/opinion/the-new-dictators-rule-by-velvet-fist.html>. Accessed: 23. 01. 2019.

⁴⁶ Guriev, S. and Treisman D. (2015). How Modern Dictators Survive: An Informational Theory of the New Authoritarianism (NBER Working Paper No. 21136). Retrieved from: The National Bureau of Economic Research, <https://www.nber.org/papers/w21136>. Accessed: 23. 01. 2019.

⁴⁷ Magyar Közlöny. (2011). 2011. évi CLXXIX. törvény. *Magyar Közlöny*, 2011(154).

nationalities of Hungary, as these people do not have a regular presence within the borders of the country for a minimal period of one century.

Those nationalities, who fulfill this simple preconditions, are entitled to all the rights which are guaranteed in the above quoted law, including the right of the establishment of National Self-Government (*nemzetiségi önkormányzat*), furthermore, the nationalities receive the right to participate in the general elections in a distinct way. The system resembles on the electoral right of the non-residents in several aspects: first and foremost, registration is necessary for all those who wish to vote on the nationality list instead of the party list. Furthermore, the registration does not concern the vote in the individual constituencies, only the party lists, as all those who register, are not going to vote on a national party list, but on a nationality list. Nationality list is neither self-evident, nor automatic, in order to establish it, the National Self-Government is obliged to collect signatures from minimum 1% of all those members of the given nationality who are registered as nationality voters. Nationality lists are exempted from the 5% parliamentary threshold, they need to gain more votes than a reduced quota that is $\frac{1}{373}$ part of the total votes. In 2018, it was 23 829 votes. It is important to bear in mind, that one historical nationality can have maximum one representative in the parliament. Should a nationality send a representative into the parliament, it does not increase the number of representatives from 199 to 200, but the number of maximally obtainable seats based on party lists is reduced from 93 to 92. If a nationality fails to collect the above mentioned number of votes, they are still entitled to delegate an advocate to the legislative organ, however, this person does not have the right to vote.

Based on the census of 2011, it can be stated, that there is a theoretical possibility for several nationalities, to send a representative to the parliament, as member of parliament, with the right to vote, of which the most numerous are the Roma people, with a number of 315 583. However, only 18 497 people have registered in 2018, as nationality voters of Roma people,

however, participation of these registered voters was low. A question is to be answered: why the government does not promote for the Roma people, to register as nationality voters. The reason is, that most Roma people are voters of the governing party, they are easy to be manipulated, consequently there is no need to partially remove them from the electoral procedure, and hence it would only weaken the position of FIDESZ, not the position of the opposition parties. It could mean, according to the estimations of the prominent Hungarian investigation journal, *Átlátszó*, about 200 000 votes in favor of the government, both for the party list, and for individual candidates⁴⁸. It is logical, that this 200 000 votes can decide the faith of more than just one seat in the parliament, consequently it is logical and understandable, why the government does not promote to Roma people to register themselves as nationality voters, and to vote on the nationality list of their own nationality, but instead keeps them among the regular electorate.

However, there are further nationalities, which have the theoretical possibility, based on their numbers, to delegate a voting member of the parliament: there are 200 000 Germans, 35 641 Romanians, 35 208 Slovaks and 26 744 Croats⁴⁹. It could mean that there could be theoretically maximum 5 representatives in the parliament, however, the reality of 2018 has showed us, that only the Roma and the German nationalities had enough registered electors to win a seat, but the sole representative of a nationality with the right to vote in the Hungarian parliament, belongs to the National Self-Government of Germans in Hungary (*Landesverwaltung der Ungarndeutsche - Magyarországi Németek Országos Önkormányzata*). The newspaper *Ungarn Heute* called a “historical victory - *Historischer*

⁴⁸ Becker, A. (2018, April 06). A szegregátumokban működik a kormánypropaganda: a vidéki romák többsége a Fideszre fog szavazni. *Atlatzo.hu*. Retrieved from: <https://orszagszerzte.atlatzo.hu/a-szegregatumokban-mukodik-a-kormanypropaganda-a-videki-romak-tobbsege-a-fideszre-fog-szavazni>. Accessed: 03. 02. 2019.

⁴⁹ KSH. (2013). *2011. évi népszámlálás*. Budapest, Központi Statisztikai Hivatal. p. 21.

*Sieg*⁵⁰, that Imre Ritter (former representative of FIDESZ) was elected, and in this way was promoted from advocate of the German nationality, which position he held following the elections of 2014⁵¹, to real parliamentary representative, with the right to vote.

Why is it therefore beneficial for the government, to maintain such a system for all the nationalities? On the one hand, there are general expanses of the budget which are directed to National Self Governments, which in 2019 constitutes 0.016% of the state budget (3.47 billion HUF), which is negligible, furthermore, it does not increase significantly during the times of elections. The system and the strategy of the establishment resembles somewhat the situation of the “fake-parties” of the regular segment of the elections: they take away voters and votes from the opposition, further weakening them, only its costs are even lower. It is logical to assume that if someone gives up his or her right to vote on any of the parties on the list of parties, the person is not probable to vote on FIDESZ. However, if someone registers as a nationality voter, the same person cannot vote on any of the opposition parties either. In this way, FIDESZ was able to prevent 37 532 voters to support the party list of any parties. While it is only 0.65% of the total votes, for parties near electoral threshold, or when deciding about whether a party should have one more or one less seat in the legislative organ of Hungary, it can be a difference.

Apart from preventing the opposition to gain further votes on their party lists, the system has one further function that is beneficial for the governing party. There is a theoretical possibility for 5 seats in the parliament to be given to the representatives of nationalities. It means, that FIDESZ needs to gain control over these five people in order to further strengthen its positions, by achieving by any means that these nationality organizations nominate a person,

⁵⁰ Nagy-Vargha, Zs. (2018, April 09). Historischer Sieg: die Ungarndeutschen schaffen es nach 85 Jahren wieder ins Parlament. *Ungarn Heute*. Retrieved from: <https://ungarnheute.hu/news/historischer-sieg-die-ungarndeutschen-schaffen-es-nach-85-jahren-wieder-ins-parlament-84812>. Accessed: 03. 02. 2019.

⁵¹ Zentrum. (2014, May 12). Die Fürsprecher der Nationalitäten legten ihren Eid ab. *Zentrum*. Retrieved from: <http://www.zentrum.hu/de/2014/05/die-fursprecher-der-nationalitaeten-legten-ihren-eid-ab>. Accessed: 03. 02. 2019.

who is in support of the government, as it has happened in the previous year, when Imre Ritter, former local politician of FIDESZ. In this way, should the absolute majority of FIDESZ be endangered or lost due to failures in mid-term elections, there is still a possibility to maintain the absolute majority with the support of the representative of the German nationality. It is therefore not unimaginable, that should the support of FIDESZ weaken among the general public, nationality voters could gain more importance, and there could be more pressure on nationality members to register as nationality voters for the parliamentary elections and support their own candidates in order to fill five of 93 list-based seat in the parliament with the representatives of nationalities. It is another way of increasing nominal selectorate from a certain aspect.

It can be stated, that FIDESZ uses the historical nationalities logically: while it maintains most of Roma voters in the electoral game as regular voters, thus gaining a pool of 315 000 possible voters, of which an estimated number of 200 000 is ready to actually support them (which is nearly equivalent to the support received through the voting of non-residents), the regime encourages other nationality members to participate in the elections as registered members of the given minority. The administrative preconditions for registering a party list is free from difficulties, while the quota to gain a seat in the parliament is highly generous. While it diminishes the pool of possible opposition voters, it can also help the governing party to increase its non-conventional share of parliamentary seats through the elected representatives of National Self-Governments. The method is cost efficient, it provides Orbán with satisfactory benefits, while there is no resistance. Consequently it can be stated that the policy of the Orbán regime, regarding the pre-existent nationalities of Hungary, is in line with the logic of political survival.

Summary

In conclusion it can be stated that the national- and nationality policies can be considered as one of the cornerstones of the survival policies of the Orbán cabinets, regarding vote maximization. Including the non-residents abroad (225-350 000 politically active, 400 000 politically inactive, more than one million potential new citizens), the members of various national minorities of Hungary, including 315 000 Roma people, and additional 300 000 members of the historical minorities of Hungary, it can clearly be stated, that national and nationality policies are integral parts of the survival strategy of the Orbán regime, especially, since by these people nearly 450 000 votes are casted directly or indirectly in support of Viktor Orbán and his ruling party.

The expansion of the nominal selectorate, as suggested by de Mesquita and Smith, was one of the very first measures of the Orbán cabinet. They have applied cunning tactics: by separating the laws which are regulating electoral rights and nationality, they have been able to secure decisive majority to the cause of non-residents Hungarians, regarding citizenship. Not only the costs of the non-resident voters are relatively low, but due to the voting franchise, the government is not burdened with real responsibilities towards this layer of voters, consequently by investing minimal energy and money, combined with symbolic measures, they are able to gain significant support during elections from non-residents. They are, as well, able to minimize resistance: on the one hand, with nationalist and patriotic rhetoric, they have successfully maintained the support of the majority of the population towards the electoral right of non-residents, while with symbolic gestures and minimal investments, they have as well secured the support of these non-residents.

These new citizens as well serve as a pool of electoral manipulation in certain cases, when they are given *de jure* residence in Hungary. This aspect of immigration is not only accepted, but even supported by the government. In the meantime, the same establishment is

silent on real immigration, which is an existing phenomenon in Hungary, even if the scale of it is low, furthermore the scale of naturalization of these immigrants is almost negligible. It is understandable why the governing party does not invest spectacularly into the immigrant communities, and why it prefers to stay silent about them. It is important to highlight that political activity is low among non-Hungarian immigrants, consequently turning them into the supporters of any political force would require significant investments, both finances and energies, while the gains would be negligible. In the meantime, the highly-debated government hostility towards transiting migrants is a tool of political survival as well. Orbán has realized correctly, that turning these people into nemesis instead of nominal selectorate is much more beneficial to his political survival.

While the policies towards historical national minorities can be easily defended on ideological bases, hence it can be considered not only democratic, but even generous, it is as well a tool of political survival of FIDESZ. By maintaining Roma minority within the majority of the selectorate, FIDESZ can easily secure approximately 200 000 cheap votes, and by promoting minority voting lists to other national minority members, they not only weaken their opponents, but as well as have theoretical chance of gaining control over further seats in the parliament, as it has happened in 2018, due to the election of a German nationality MP.

Orbán has several tools in his hands to strengthen his position, thus prolong his time spent in office by using various minorities and nationalities. As it has been highlighted, not all non-residents are active voters, however, in the future, through various ways, including a widespread political network of FIDESZ in Transylvania, the participation rate can be increased. Such measures can balance a domestic decrease in Orbán's popularity and approval rates. In the meantime, as of now, the opposition parties have negligible support among these selectors, and are unlikely to focus on gaining support among them, hence they are occupied with domestic issues. With little chances that the political preferences of the non-resident voters

change, and without possibility that the electoral law changes in the near future, non-resident voters will remain not only important part of the Hungarian political life, at least once in every four years, but as well as important reserve of voters for Orbán when he needs to be reelected. The same is valid for the historical nationalities, except that they have even more potential, as they can still decide the faith of 4 more seats in the parliament. It is possible that Orbán will encourage nationality voting if his reign or majority is threatened.

In conclusion it can be said, that Orbán obeys the main rules of political survival also through his national and nationality policies. The support he receives from various minorities improves his chances of prolonged political survival. As the laws and regulations are unlikely to change as long as FIDESZ benefits them, it can be stated, that nationalities will continue to remain important supporters of the current establishment.

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