

Autocracy and Resistance in Hungary since 2010

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Abstract

The first part of this chapter tells the story of Hungary's autocratization process since 2010, constitutionalizing an unbound executive power and restriction on fundamental rights being the main characteristics of it. The result of this transformation has been that the country is no longer a constitutional democracy able to ensure a peaceful rotation of power. The second part deals with institutional and extra-institutional strategies of domestic resistance, the main actors of the former being certain ordinary court judges, and local self-governments, while of the latter some courageous lawyers, civil society organizations and disobedient citizens. The third part devoted to transnational resistance concentrates on traditional tools of the European Union, such as infringement actions and triggering Article 7 procedure, as well as on the newly introduced conditionally mechanism against the Hungarian government.

Our main conclusion is that neither domestic nor transnational institutions, such as the European Union and the Council of Europe have been able to intercept the process of backsliding, and by now autocratization has reached a level, where resistance is less and less effective. We argue that besides the current actors of domestic resistance, the political opposition should play a more pro-active role by articulating a coherent (politico-economical) alternative to the Hungarian government's authoritarian populism. Instead of focusing only on legal or economic sanctions, the EU and member states should also look to alternative economic and social policies that would speak directly to the anxieties of the voters of the governing party, Fidesz. But at the end of the day, the fate of liberal democracy depends on the Hungarian voters.

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