

Victor Orbán wins fourth election victory, remains Hungarian prime minister

Markus Salzmann
10 April 2022

Victor Orbán remains head of the Hungarian government. His right-wing Fidesz party won the parliamentary elections on Sunday for the fourth time in a row.

With 53 percent of the vote, Fidesz did much better than predicted, winning 135 of 199 parliamentary seats, and retaining a two-thirds majority in parliament. The opposition alliance “Hungary in Unity,” a coalition of six parties, fell far short of expectations with 35 percent.

Also represented in parliament is the ultra-right party “Our Homeland,” which achieved 6 percent of the vote. And one mandate goes to the representative of the German minority. Voter turnout was around 70 percent, the same as in the last election four years ago.

Orbán is not popular. He is responsible for countless social attacks and has built up an authoritarian system of rule over the past twelve years, restricting democratic rights and bringing the press into line.

The class nature of his government has been particularly evident during the coronavirus pandemic, during which 45,510 people have died from the virus in Hungary. In relation to the size of population, only Bulgaria has more deaths in the EU.

The health system is in a disastrous state. For this reason, the government banned doctors, nurses, and other hospital staff from giving press interviews as early as 2020. Critical journalists are not allowed to enter public hospitals. According to the European Health Care Systems Index (EHCI), Hungary ranks 33 out of 35 countries.

At the beginning of March, the government lifted all coronavirus protections. At the same time, there has been no serious vaccination campaign. By the end of March, only 64.2 percent of the population in Hungary had been vaccinated twice.

The inhumane treatment of refugees, the enforced conformity of the media and the executive’s open influence on the judiciary meet with strong popular hostility. However, the fact Orbán was nevertheless able to win the elections is due to the bankruptcy of the so-called opposition.

The only thing on which the alliance of six parties—ranging from the fascist Jobbik party to the Greens, and two completely discredited social democratic parties—agreed was the desire to get rid of Orbán. On many issues it was clearly to the right of him.

The fact that Peter Márki-Zay, a right-wing, Christian fundamentalist provincial politician, entered the election as the alliance’s top candidate speaks volumes. The mayor of the small south-eastern Hungarian town of Hodmezövasarhely accused the xenophobic Fidesz of being only against immigration in words. He accused Orbán, who locks up refugees in concentration camps at the border, of preventing the effective control of immigration by generously granting “golden visas” and residence permits.

While Orbán maintains his distance from Brussels—at least in words—the alliance promised to improve relations with the European Union. It criticised Orbán, saying his tax cuts and economic aid for businesses were too small.

It is significant that this right-wing alliance received support from politicians in several European countries. Greens, such as Germany’s Anton Hofreiter, explicitly supported it, even though Jobbik’s anti-Semitic and racist representatives would have held ministerial posts had it won the elections.

Ultimately, the decisive factor for Orbán’s clear electoral success was the Ukraine war. Initially, the alliance had run an “anti-corruption” election campaign

against Orbán. When the war broke out, Márki-Zay fully backed NATO and supported its aggressive war policy.

Members of the six-party alliance demanded arms deliveries to Ukraine and the deployment of their own soldiers. Orbán was “a disgrace in Europe” because he had lost the support of NATO, without which Hungary could not be protected, they claimed. In the end, the alliance ran its campaign under the motto, “Putin or Europe.”

Orbán pursued an ambiguous course; he supported the EU’s sanctions but did not join in its warmongering, avoiding open criticism of Putin and presenting Hungary as a neutral force between the EU and Russia. He accused the opposition of wanting to drag Hungary into the war, while he favoured neutrality and was keeping the country out of the war.

This won Fidesz more votes than originally predicted. Significant sections of the Hungarian population, as in other European countries, reject both NATO’s war policy and Russia’s war policy. Orbán took advantage of this.

His election victory caused anger in Brussels and Berlin. Two days after the election, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced that the EU was now initiating the long-delayed procedure against the country for violations of the rule of law.

European Parliament Vice-President Katarina Barley (Social Democratic Party, SPD) said, “We now have an avowed EU opponent, an avowed Putin friend in the ranks of the European Council.” The leader of the Left Group in the EU Parliament, Martin Schirdewan, added that Orbán’s election was an encouragement for other authoritarian-oriented heads of government. “The contradictions especially along the conflict line of democracy versus authoritarianism will increase massively.”

In fact, the representatives of German and European imperialism are not concerned with defending democracy. Rather, in view of the escalation in the Ukraine war, governments fear that there will also be fierce conflicts within Europe.

In Serbia, where elections were also held on Sunday, there was a similar development. The incumbent President Aleksandar Vucic won the first round of the presidential election with over 58 percent. In the parliamentary elections, his Serbian Progressive Party

(SNS) scored more than 42 percent.

Vucic, who in the past was considered pro-Moscow, held back on criticising Russia in the Ukraine conflict. He rejected the attack on Ukraine, but also the threats of war against Russia.



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