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Disruption within the EU: A comprehensive analysis into the communication of Hungarian Government ministers

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**Disruption within the EU: A comprehensive analysis into the communication of Hungarian
Government ministers**

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In the summer of 2014, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán declared in a speech at an annual event comprised of Hungarian political intellectuals that “the new state that we are constructing in Hungary is an illiberal state, a non-liberal state” (Orbán, 2014). While previous statements, policies, and actions have indicated a shift away from liberalism and the values of the European Union (EU), Orbán’s speech at Baile Tusnad marked a decisive and obvious turning point away from “liberal” Europe (Madlovics & Magyar, 2023). Ever since Fidesz came to power in 2010 with a two-thirds constitution-altering supermajority in parliament, there has been a gradual, yet increasingly intense, erosion of democratic values and the rule of law (Ágh, 2022; Bánkuti, Halmai & Scheppele, 2012; Éltető & Szemplér, 2023; Halmai, 2020; Kornai, 2015).

Nearly ten years have passed since Orbán presented this speech, and Fidesz remains in government, having won every national election since 2010 with a majority in parliament (Madlovics & Magyar, 2023; Sata, 2023). The Hungarian Government has received criticism for its stance on various EU-specific issues and on EU values, garnering the attention of the EU and the broader international community (Ágh, 2022; Bugarič, 2014). Tensions reached a new peak when the European Parliament (EP) initiated Article 7 proceedings against Hungary following the publication of the Sargentini Report in 2018 (Ágh, 2022; Halmai, 2020). These events demonstrated the determination of the EU to prevent Hungary from sliding further into authoritarianism, eventually resulting in the EU establishing a conditionality mechanism tied to funding for member states (Éltető & Szemplér, 2023).

Despite the Hungarian Government’s disruptive behavior within the EU, the Hungarian population continues to remain overwhelmingly supportive of remaining in the EU. A recent survey published by independent Hungarian think-tank Policy Solutions has shown that 72% of the Hungarian population would vote to remain in the EU if a referendum was held on this issue (Bíró-Nagy et al., 2023, p. 2). Over the past years surveys have consistently shown that the Hungarian population approaches the EU with overwhelming favor (Agoston, 2023; Éltető & Szemplér, 2023). Furthermore, despite the rhetoric of certain figures prominent in Hungarian media, there is no clear sign or intention of Hungary’s desire to exit the EU (Madlovics & Magyar, 2023).

As a result, the events occurring between the Hungarian Government and the EU culminate in a puzzle, which was previously elaborated upon by Agoston’s (2023) investigation into how

Orbán was able to inject euroscepticism into a pro-EU domestic population. On the one hand, the Hungarian Government remains dependent on support from its domestic, largely pro-EU population. On the other hand, the Hungarian Government adopts the role of an active disruptor and rule-breaker within the EU (Madlovics & Magyar, 2023). A notable example of such behavior is Hungary's stance on Ukraine within the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), where it constantly uses its veto power to prevent Ukraine from receiving the support necessary to continue its fight against Russia (Éltető & Szemplér, 2023; Madlovics & Magyar, 2023). Further contributing to this gap is the recent developments surrounding the situation of EU funding for Hungary. Hungary has been provided with a set of criteria it must satisfy in order to receive the funding it is entitled to from the EU (Schwarcz, 2023). Despite this, Hungary has yet to properly satisfy all of the criteria and continues to behave in ways that contribute to its negative reputation within the EU. All of these developments necessitate further investigation, culminating in the following research question: *What does the communication of Hungarian Government ministers on EU values and CFSP issues reveal about Hungary's strategy regarding the EU?*

This question raises several sub-questions this thesis will aim to answer. Does the Hungarian Government interpret and communicate Treaty on European Union (TEU) Article 2 values in EU-coinciding ways, or does it not? In what ways do the ministers communicate and frame different topics and issues, such as migration, in light of the degrading relationship between the Hungarian Government and the EU? How do Hungarian Government ministers communicate and justify the government's position over crucial CFSP issues, and can this help explain why it continues to disrupt common EU stances over these issues? Finally, what sort of insights can the answers to these questions provide regarding Hungarian Government's strategy within the EU?

There are several reasons these questions need to be asked. From a socio-political perspective, gaining deeper insight into these questions could help explain the reasons for the Hungarian Government's behavior. If explanations can be deduced, it may be possible to devise and apply remedies to the problems preventing EU consensus from taking place in areas such as CFSP. The disruptive behavior of Hungary proves to be detrimental to the EU and Hungary alike. On the one hand, the Hungarian Government engages in policies that undermine EU unity and stances on issues. Once again, a relevant example of this is Hungary's veto-politics with regards to the EU's approach to Ukraine (Éltető & Szemplér, 2023; Madlovics & Magyar, 2023). Failing to

tackle such problems raises the risk of the EU falling into a state of irrelevance and being perceived as weak (Matthijs & Kelemen, 2015). On the other hand, such behavior distances the Hungarian Government and Hungarian people from the EU (Agoston, 2023), and Hungary fails to be a proper member of the EU and receive funding that is critical to the proper functioning of the country (Bozóki & Hegedűs, 2018, p. 1181). Thus, the status quo situation at the moment will only continue to produce losers in the future.

Additionally, the case of Hungary is unique in that it is rare. The frequency and extent of conflicts between the EU and the Hungarian Government are not common with most other member states, with the exception of Poland (Kelemen, 2020), although in Poland a pro-EU government was recently elected into power (Chiappa, 2023). Nonetheless, Europe continues to witness Eurosceptic leaders being elected to positions of power, with the overwhelming success of Geert Wilders in the Netherlands illustrating the seriousness of the situation (van Kessel, 2023). Thus, while Hungary's case is currently the most visible, it is likely not to be the only internal obstacle the EU will face in its future. As a result, if EU integration is to be expanded into more areas, it is necessary to discover and properly understand the root of Eurosceptic behavior and democratic backsliding. Tackling Euroscepticism and democratic backsliding within the EU is imperative because "if the EU allows even one member state to slide into autocracy, it will irreversibly diminish the meaning of EU membership." (Matthijs & Kelemen, 2015, p. 107).

From an academic standpoint, this thesis contributes to the existing literature in several ways. These ways will be elaborated upon in further detail within the methodology section of this thesis, but a short overview is provided here. Firstly, the range of actors analyzed is more extensive than that of previous studies (Agoston, 2023; Gera, 2023; Sata, 2023). Instead of merely focusing on the Orbán, this thesis will observe the rhetoric of various government ministers. In addition to this, the sources will be analyzed in their original Hungarian language. Secondly, this thesis aims to observe the role of TEU Article 2 values within the rhetoric of officials, similar to Mos (2020). However, this thesis attempts to bridge the ambiguity of the values through the development of a coding framework that attaches meaning to Article 2 values. The aim is that this will allow for the clear coding of values and will allow for the detection of any changes in the interpretation of EU values by Hungarian Government officials to be recognized. Thirdly, as opposed to previous studies (Agoston, 2023; Mos, 2020; Sata, 2023), this thesis focuses on a recent timeframe that

encompasses various external conflicts that have been dominating EU policy debates. In doing so, this thesis acknowledges the various contributions made by the academic community regarding these topics and strives to evaluate the validity of previous theories in light of new issues and developments.

To provide sufficient answers to the research question, a background chapter detailing the events taking place in Hungary since 2010 will be provided, alongside discussion on the impact these events have had on the Hungarian Government's relationship with the EU. Following this, a chapter outlining academic views, previous findings, and prominent theories on various related topics will be provided. After this, the methodology chapter will provide an elaboration on the means of data collection and analysis and outline the key concepts that will be observed. Finally, the results of this research will be presented and analyzed, alongside concluding remarks and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Background

Following months of political turmoil and significant economic recession in Hungary, in 2010 Viktor Orbán and his Fidesz party were elected into power with a two-thirds majority in parliament after having been in opposition for 8 years (Batory, 2016). Orbán's government was quick to utilize its vast political power to alter the constitution, electoral laws, and the system of checks and balances (Ágh, 2022; Halmai, 2020; Kornai, 2015). One of the reforms implemented within the judiciary included lowering the age of retirement for judges, forcing 247 judges into immediate retirement (Halmai, 2020, p. 206; Kornai, 2015). Other reforms included appointing new, Fidesz-friendly heads to all constitutional institutions (Ágh, 2022, p. 6), and the creation of the National Office for the Judiciary; an institution endowed with the authority to appoint judges and select cases that could be brought before courts (Kornai, 2015, p. 282). Overall, the overwhelming victory of Fidesz in 2010 immediately resulted in the creation of an entirely new constitution and the complete overhaul of the rule of law began to raise serious questions and concerns about Hungary's approaches to democracy and the rule of law (Batory, 2016; Halmai 2020).

Yet, as a member of the EU, these reforms did not remain unnoticed and gradually fell under intense political and legal scrutiny within the EU. These reforms resulted in numerous cases being brought before the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) (Bugarič, 2014). A notable example is the aforementioned judge retirement law that was brought to court under the argument of age discrimination in Case C-286/12 Commission v. Hungary, where the court found that Hungary had violated EU law, although there was no way to reinstate the judges who had lost their position as a result of the reform (Halmai, 2020, p. 210). In similar fashion, on the political stage, the European Parliament (EP) began to express increasingly vociferous opposition to Hungary's violation of the rule of law and other EU values. In 2013, through the Tavares Report, the EP called for the creation of a framework that would enforce Article 2 TEU values and likewise urged the Commission to monitor and assess the situation (Halmai, 2020, p. 208). Following this, the EP released the Sargentini Report in 2018 outlined the problems in Hungary and resulted in the initiation of Article 7 proceedings against Hungary (Ágh, 2022; Halmai, 2020; Kelemen, 2020). These actions demonstrate that EU institutions were quick to notice the direction Hungary had begun to head towards under Fidesz and applied a range of actions to remedy the situation.

Aside from the erosion of judicial institutions, the Hungarian Government also began to erode personal and institutional freedoms. The government amended the laws on higher education in 2017 and reformed the operation of academic institutions in Hungary by restricting their operation on the basis of international agreements and introducing requirements for foreign educational institutions to “perform education activities in the country of their seat” (Kosta & Piqani, 2022, p. 814). However, the amendments introduced had an obvious political element to them and were part of a much larger campaign by the government against Hungarian-American billionaire philanthropist George Soros, and the reason this is known is because the target of this law was the Central European University (CEU) located in Budapest, which was founded by Soros (Kosta & Piqani, 2022, pp. 816-817). The amendments forced CEU to cease operations in Budapest and move to Vienna after the Council failed to advance on Article 7 proceedings despite the EP imploring the Council to do so (Kosta & Piqani, 2022). The case eventually reached the European Court of Justice (ECJ) where the amendments were ruled to be violating EU fundamental values, although by the time of the ruling the damage had been done and CEU had relocated for good (Kosta & Piqani, 2022).

Finally, the Hungarian Government under Orbán has also attacked democratic institutions and values in a multitude of ways (Ágh, 2022; Éltető & Szemplér, 2023; Matthijs & Kelemen, 2015). Fidesz began to modify electoral laws so that they would be able “to maintain a proportion of deputies which is higher than the critical minimum needed to pass laws requiring a two-thirds majority” (Kornai, 2015, p. 291). Furthermore, Fidesz altered the constitution so that even if Fidesz were to lose an election in the future, certain changes could only be achieved with a two-thirds majority in parliament (Kornai, 2015). In addition to the modification of electoral laws, Kornai (2015, p. 299) lists several positions crucial to the functioning of a state that now require a two-thirds majority in parliament to be changed, such as the chief prosecutor and head of the central bank. Such reforms ensure Fidesz’s dominance over the Hungarian state for years to come, and even in scenarios where Fidesz would no longer be in power.

Having observed the extent and nature of reforms, it is important to outline how the Hungarian Government has justified its actions, and how EU institutions have reacted to more recent accusations of rule of law and democratic violations. One of the ways Orbán has attempted to justify the government’s reforms and policies is through national consultations (Batory, 2016;

Éltető & Szemplér, 2023; Pócza & Oross, 2022). Ever since coming to power in 2010, Orbán has utilized national consultations as “an agenda-setting tool of the government to influence public opinion” (Pócza & Oross, 2022, p. 93). These national consultations are presented as attempts for the government to ask citizens for their opinions on policy issues, but in reality, they are used to strengthen the government’s position in international negotiations (Pócza & Oross, 2022). One notable instance of this is the national consultation on migration, which eventually culminated in a referendum, where Fidesz was able to present the favorable results of both as reasons for its policies (Pócza & Oross, 2022). However, a notable caveat in these national consultations is that the questions are framed in an overwhelmingly biased manner (Éltető & Szemplér, 2023 p. 278). For instance, the most recent 2023 national consultation claims that Brussels wants to continue providing aid to Palestinian organizations, thereby supporting terrorism, and that Brussels and funders from overseas wish to influence the outcome of Hungarian politics (Kaiser, 2023). Additionally, opposition parties and politicians frequently call on their supporters to not participate in the consultations to prevent the legitimization of Fidesz’ tactics, and this eventually ends up skewing the results of the consultation as turnout is low but support for Fidesz initiatives appears overwhelmingly positive (Bíró-Nagy, 2022; Nagy, 2023; Siposhegyi, 2020).

As aforementioned, the reaction of EU institutions has resulted in court cases, the initiation of Article 7 proceedings, and most recently the introduction of the conditionality mechanism for the receipt of EU funds (Ágh, 2022; Schwarcz, 2023). In December 2022 the European Commission presented the Hungarian government with 27 so-called super milestones calling for increased anti-corruption measures, greater judicial independence, greater transparency in the decision-making process, etc. (Schwarcz, 2023). The most recent development in the area of funding is that the Commission agreed to release over 10 billion euros in cohesion funds to Hungary, citing its progress on reforms (Camut, 2023). Despite this recent turn in events, it remains to be seen how much of the remaining 21 billion euros Hungary is entitled to will be released, and several MEPs remain convinced that the Hungarian Government has failed to properly enforce necessary reforms (Camut, 2023). Nonetheless, the creation of a mechanism to restrict funding provides the EU with significant leverage over the Hungarian Government, considering the dependence of Hungary on these funds (Bozóki & Hegedűs, 2018, p. 1181).

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

This chapter is divided into four sections, with each section observing different aspects of the main research question and the sub-questions. Each section will explore and analyze the findings of previous literature, as well as relevant theories to this thesis. This chapter aims to establish a foundation for the expectations to be formed with regard to the main research question.

3.1. A Europe of Values

Within Article 2 of the TEU, the Union clearly defines its foundation as being based “on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.” (European Union, 2010, p. 17). This is further supported by the inclusion of how these values are part of “a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.” (European Union, 2010, p. 17). Alongside TEU Article 2 values is the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (CFREU), which can provide a greater explanation of what Article 2 values entail (Boeckstein, 2022). The cruciality of these values is that they serve as a necessary foundation for the EU and its activities (Boeckstein, 2022; Weatherill, 2016).

In order to understand the values of the EU, it is relevant to discuss the nature of the EU in relation to the state. The debate concerning the democratic, or undemocratic, nature of the EU has been ongoing for decades and has been complicated through the variety of ways one can conceptualize the EU and democracy (Goodhart, 2007). An interesting perspective on this debate is offered by Weatherill (2016) where Weatherill (2016, p. 403) acknowledges that the EU suffers from problems of democratic legitimacy, but argues that becoming a democratic state is not the purpose of the EU. Instead, Weatherill (2016) claims that the EU is intended “to manage the interdependence of States without itself becoming one.” (p. 404). Based on this conceptualization, the EU is not intended to supplant or undermine the democratic states of Europe, but instead exists to manage the complicated levels of interdependence among EU states (Weatherill, 2016). However, the condition for such a relationship requires foundational values (Boeckstein, 2022; Weatherill, 2016). The founding values stipulated in Article 2 are non-negotiable and it was expected that any state wishing to join the EU would automatically protect and preserve these basic, underlying values (Boeckstein, 2022, p. 436; Kelemen, 2017; Mos, 2020, p. 272). As a result, failing to adhere to the values of the EU, is a failure to be a member of the EU.

The strong emphasis the EU places on norms and values has resulted in the emergence of the concept of normative power Europe (NPE); a term initially coined by Manners (2002). According to Manners (2002), the EU's ability to "shape conceptions of 'normal' in international relations" requires greater attention and emphasis, alongside focusing on the EU's civilian and potential military power (p. 239). This produced a shift from focusing solely on the means of hard power to a focus on the importance of soft power. The concept of NPE is also essential to understanding the unique nature of the EU. The research conducted by Manners (2002) has shown that norms are diffused out of the EU into the international context, have the ability to alter behavior, and "the EU should act to extend its norms into the international system." (p. 252). Thus, alongside the ability of the EU to manage states across different levels of governance (Weatherill, 2016), the concept of NPE provides the EU with a unique ability to spread its norms and values to states outside of the EU (Manners, 2002).

Yet, a crucial flaw with Article 2 values lies within their ambiguous nature (Boekestein, 2022, p. 437, Mos, 2020). Mos (2020) contributes significantly to the elaboration of this problem by investigating how this ambiguity of norms may be used by governments and ministers in their legitimization strategies. A crucial assumption to this argument is that Article 2 TEU values are ambiguous, meaning that "although all parties agreed to uphold the values, it is unclear how this commitment requires member states to behave in practice." (Mos, 2020, p. 268). Mos (2020) proposes three steps through which the ambiguity of norms can be strategically utilized. Norms may initially act as a constraint on behavior, which then catalyzes actors to provide explanations for their actions that result in a specific and individualized conceptualization of a given norm and this leads to the final stage where actors respond to accusations of norm violation with "alternative conceptions" (Mos, 2020, p. 274). A noteworthy takeaway from these claims is that this logic disconfirms the notion of "unapologetic backsliding" by demonstrating that the justification and legitimization of actions matter even to those actors where this may otherwise appear to be untrue (Mos, 2020, p. 275).

Mos' (2020) investigation specifically focuses on how Orbán utilized the ambiguity of Article 2 values to justify the Hungarian Government's policies. His investigation found that Orbán "consistently reaffirmed the fundamental values' general validity", but "twisted their meaning as he saw fit" (Mos, 2020, p. 280). As a result, Mos (2020) proved that political actors can use the

ambiguity of norms to their own advantage, allowing Orbán to present himself as a “pro-European statesman who is ready to steer the Union back to its moral roots” (Mos, 2020, p. 280). This claim posits that Orbán presents himself as the true protector and disseminator of European morals, values, and norms while implying that the EU, along with its employees and member states, have diverged from the original meaning of the foundational values. Nevertheless, having observed the imperative and ambiguous nature of values within the EU, and the methods through which values can be utilized by political actors for their legitimization strategies, the following expectation is formed:

Expectation 1: Hungarian Government ministers interpret and communicate Article 2 values in EU-conflicting ways. This is part of the Hungarian Government’s ideological shift away from EU.

3.2. The Politicization of Enemies

Following the loss of Fidesz in the 2002 election, Orbán adopted a strategy in which he began to embrace right-wing values and equated the political right with the nation (Krekó & Mayer, 2015, p. 188). As Krekó and Mayer (2015, pp. 198-199) have pointed out, values centered around anti-modernism, Christian traditionalism, and Euroscepticism provide a strong foundation for Fidesz’s ideology. The shift in the ideology of Fidesz from an originally liberal party to one centered around far-right ideological elements was partly due to the emergence of the far-right Jobbik party, which served as a “pioneer” for Fidesz to discover which, often radical, policy ideas resonate with the Hungarian public (Krekó & Mayer, 2015, p. 201). Thus, Fidesz’s position in the opposition catalyzed a revival of the party into a far-right direction that resonated with increasingly disenchanted voters, and these far-right ideological elements continue to remain a part of Fidesz today.

Fidesz has also engaged in the politicization of issues to its own political advantage, one of the most notable issues of which is migration (Agoston, 2023; Bíró-Nagy, 2022; Sata, 2023). The 2015 migration crisis saw the politicization of migration through the creation of an extensive billboard campaign alongside a national consultation campaign and referendum that received 3.3 million votes in favor of a rejection of the EU’s quota mechanism (Agoston, 2023, p. 16; Bíró-Nagy, 2022). The results of this allowed Orbán to present himself as acting in the interests of the vast majority of Hungarians and provided him with the legitimacy he required to continue opposing EU policies on migration (Agoston, 2023; Pócsa & Oross, 2022). Another result

produced through the politicization of migration witnessed Fidesz increase its own popularity and gain the support of 465,000 additional voters (Bíró-Nagy, 2022, p. 421). Simultaneously, Fidesz was able to eliminate its political alternative Jobbik from becoming an existential threat (Bíró-Nagy, 2022), although Krekó and Mayer (2015, pp. 201-202) argue that Jobbik remains necessary for Fidesz in its fulfillment of its pioneer role. Nevertheless, these facts clearly show that the politicization of migration provided Orbán with the tools necessary to increase his domestic support, as well as the legitimacy of his policy positions on the international stage.

However, migration is certainly not the only topic that endures politicization from Orbán's government. Sata (2023) examines the rhetorical techniques used by Orbán to separate “‘the good people’ and its enemies” and in doing so provides an extensive overview of the main areas of focus Orbán has focused on over his past three terms in government (p. 4). From 2010-2014 Orbán's populist rhetoric was aimed at the financial crisis and he focused on portraying the image of protecting the Hungarian people from international elites and financial institutions (Sata, 2023, pp. 5-7). Orbán's rhetoric in the 2014-2018 period was overwhelmingly centered around the migration crisis, portraying the EU “as the threatening ‘other,’ who endangers or would water down this civilization with its liberal multiculturalist policies” (Sata, 2023, p. 8). Finally, 2018-2022 saw the attention shift to the concept of liberalism more broadly, where Orbán blames the liberal world order for all issues affecting Hungary (Sata, 2023, pp. 8-10). All of these themes and issues were applied by Orbán to legitimize his plans to construct an illiberal Hungary and shift the population towards greater Euroscepticism, all whilst portraying himself as a “true” European (Sata, 2023). Additionally, topics related to gender and LGBTQ rights are becoming increasingly politicized in the rhetoric of Orbán (Gera, 2023), demonstrating the ability of Orbán to turn virtually any issue into an enemy of the Hungarian nation. It is clear that the portrayal of enemies has been a useful political tactic for Orbán who transforms political issues into enemies in order to portray Hungary as constantly under attack. As a result of this politicization of enemies, Fidesz adopts the role of a protector and the Hungarian people are those who require protection.

The findings from the literature observed here demonstrate that Orbán has continuously relied upon the creation of enemies. These enemies can come in many forms, but all of them necessitate the protection of the Hungarian people. As a result, the politicization of enemies will

continue to be analyzed for any changes, and these have resulted in the formation of the following expectation:

Expectation 2: Hungarian Government ministers continue to politicize issues into enemies in order to cultivate the idea that they are acting in the interests of all Hungarians, all whilst portraying the EU as an enemy in the process.

3.3. Hungarian Foreign Policy

A final aspect this thesis seeks to observe is Hungary's approach to foreign policy, and specifically to CFSP issues. Regarding CFSP, the Hungarian Government has been impeding several EU policies and decisions from becoming achieved (Éltető & Szemplér, 2023; Madlovics & Magyar, 2023). In order to gain accurate and contemporary insight into this area, this thesis will observe the reaction of Hungarian Government ministers to three recent conflicts: the Russo-Ukrainian War, the Azerbaijani-Armenian conflict, and the current Israeli-Hamas War. The reason for selecting these specific cases is elaborated upon within the methodology chapter.

Out of these three conflicts, Hungary's approach to the Russo-Ukrainian War is what has received the most attention within the literature. This is largely due to what many academics perceive as the Hungarian Government's friendly approach towards Russia. The Hungarian Government's decisions on the Russo-Ukrainian War frequently conflict with the consensus reached by the 26 other member states of the EU (Éltető & Szemplér, 2023; Madlovics & Magyar, 2023). When there is a consensus among all 27 member states, this is often reached by granting Hungary significant concessions, such as the decision in the sixth sanctions package to remove Orthodox Patriarch Kirill from a list of sanctioned Russians (Éltető & Szemplér, 2023, pp. 292-293). Another concession was made in the eighth sanctions package where Hungary received an "exemption from the oil price cap mechanism for pipeline transport and got nuclear energy-related activities exempted" (Éltető & Szemplér, 2023, p. 293). This behavior raises questions about what motivates the Hungarian Government to reach such decisions.

Madlovics and Magyar (2023) argue that "Orbán continues to serve Russian interests as a client autocrat in the EU" (p. 274). This statement has profound significance as it claims that Orbán is essentially adopting the role of a loyal Russian ally within the EU. Considering the concessions Orbán has fought for, it does not appear far-fetched to make such a claim. Madlovics and Magyar

(2023) describe the processes and frames Orbán has used over the course of the conflict and find that Orbán used elements of fear-mongering and collective egoism to justify the Hungarian Government's approach to the war. These findings also demonstrate that the government continues to rely on its portrayal as a protector of the people. Thus, having observed these conclusions, it will be worthwhile to discover whether these rhetorical patterns continue to exist within the communication of government officials, and likewise which elements of rhetoric stand out the most.

The relationship Hungary has maintained with Russia in this conflict is expected to serve as an example of how Hungary approaches other foreign policy issues. These case-specific findings, alongside conclusions on how Orbán continues to use the portrayal of enemies in its rhetoric shows that Orbán continues to behave as if it acts in the interests of the Hungarian people in all areas. As a result, it is expected that this approach to foreign policy is continued, which has resulted in the following expectation:

Expectation 3: Hungarian Government ministers communicate decisions on foreign policy issues as in the interest of Hungarians. This is done in order to legitimize the Hungarian Government's disruptive behavior within CFSP.

3.4. What is the Overall Strategy?

Complicating all of these issues is the indirect support the EU has provided to its rogue member states, namely Hungary, which is best explained through Kelemen's (2020) theory of authoritarian equilibrium of the EU. Kelemen (2020) argues that "partial politicisation, money and migration" are the three pillars that allow the EU to become an environment where authoritarian regimes are able to grow and develop (p. 482). The argument can be summarized in the following way: autocratic regimes are protected in the EU through Europarties that are dependent on their votes, EU funds help support autocratic regimes through financial means, and freedom of movement allows emigration of unsupportive citizens to occur, thereby causing the domestic population to be comprised of mainly regime-supportive citizens (Kelemen, 2020, pp. 482-483). As a result, the EU has indirectly supported the growth and protection of autocratic regimes within its community.

However, while Kelemen's (2020) argument may have been applicable to the Fidesz regime at the time of its inception, as Éltető and Szemplér (2023) point out two of the three aforementioned pillars have been significantly weakened by recent developments. The first pillar of partial politicization has been weakening as Orbán's regime becomes increasingly less "viable to the EU" (Éltető & Szemplér, 2023, p. 295). This can be combined with the departure of Fidesz from the European People's Party (EPP) (Éltető & Szemplér, 2023, p. 278). The second pillar is less applicable at the moment as the conditionality mechanism continues to prevent Hungary from receiving a significant EU funds, although Éltető and Szemplér (2023, p. 295) argue that the Hungarian Government continues to benefit from the inflow of foreign investments from Asia. Nevertheless, the claim that the EU is directly funding the Hungarian Government's autocratic tendencies is currently not applicable at the moment in the same way as it was previously. Finally, the third pillar remains intact, even strengthened, considering the large scale of emigration out of Hungary, especially after Fidesz's fourth consecutive victory in the 2022 elections (Éltető & Szemplér, 2023, p. 296). The result of these developments show that the authoritarian equilibrium of the EU is no longer applicable to the case of Hungary in the same way it was previously.

This requires the examination of alternative explanations the concept of Hungary as an externally constrained hybrid regime (Bozóki & Hegedűs, 2018). With this theory, Bozóki and Hegedűs (2018, p. 1174) argue that the EU sustains, constrains, and legitimize hybrid regimes, notably Hungary. The result of this is that Bozóki and Hegedűs (2018) predict two possible scenarios for Hungary's future. One scenario is that if the EU restricts funding to Hungary, this loss in revenue would make remaining in the EU less appealing to the Hungarian government and may catalyze a Hungarian exit from the EU (Bozóki & Hegedűs, 2018, p. 1182). This, however, appears unlikely because literature has shown that the Hungarian government is far less Eurosceptic when producing and voting on domestic legislation, despite Eurosceptic rhetoric (Bíró-Nagy & Buzogány, 2023). Similar findings have shown that the Hungarian government is enthusiastic about expanding the EU towards many Balkan nation-states, although this may also be seen as a national strategy attempting to import friendly-states into the EU (Huszka, 2017). The second scenario proposed by Bozóki and Hegedűs (2018, p. 1182) is that if the EU is unable to constrain the Hungarian Government's shift towards authoritarianism, then Hungary will remain in the EU and continue the shift into authoritarianism. Both of these scenarios posit that the Hungarian Government will undoubtedly continue to shift towards authoritarianism. While this

may be a correct assessment, it is likewise important to observe the different elements of Hungary's strategy regarding the EU, while it continues to remain a disruptive member within the EU.

Another aspect to consider is that the Hungarian Government is engaged on multiple fronts. For the sake of this thesis, it is assumed that the Hungarian Government has to engage with its domestic population and with actors on the EU level, namely institutions and other member states. However, it appears Hungary may be acting against the logic of traditional two-level games. According to Putnam's (1988) original conception of two-level games, Level I consist of "bargaining between the negotiators, leading to tentative agreement" and Level II is where "separate discussions within each group of constituents about whether to ratify the agreement" occurs (p. 436). The success of finding agreement in international negotiations is dependent on the size of the win-set, which ultimately depends on the constraints imposed by the actors present in Level II on the negotiating actor, in this case the government (Putnam, 1988). All in all, negotiations on the international stage, especially within the EU where various actors and interests are present, are complicated by domestic restraints posed by public opinion, institutions, constituencies, etc. This logic should theoretically constrain Hungary from acting in ways that impede further EU-integration, considering how the population is overwhelmingly supportive of the EU, so it will be necessary to consider the approach of ministers to European integration in general when analyzing the data.

Once the data pertaining to the main research question has been collected and analyzed with respect to the formulated expectations, this thesis will aim to consider what possible long-term strategic scenarios the Hungarian Government may be striving to achieve or hoping for. The five following strategies are concisely laid out by a Political Capital (2023) report. The five possible strategies are: Hungary exits the EU (Huxit), Hungary shifts to the periphery of the EU and abstains from greater integration, the status quo remains, Hungary returns to the EU (in a positive manner), or the EU becomes overtaken with governments and parties sympathetic towards the Hungarian Government (Political Capital, 2023, pp. 31-33). Following the investigation, these strategies will be considered and evaluated in light of the newly observed rhetoric.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Source Selection

In order to conduct an investigation centered around the main research question, this thesis will utilize a combination of discourse and frame analysis techniques to analyze speeches, social media statements, press conferences, and interviews by Hungarian Government ministers. Discourse and frame analysis techniques share ontological and epistemological foundations and are therefore similar in various aspects (Lindekilde, 2014, p. 197). The comparison of methods presented by Lindekilde (2014) shows that discourse and frame analysis techniques both observe how meaning is interpreted and created by actors, but frame analysis techniques adopt a more pronounced approach to developing “ideative patterns through which the world is understood by audiences” (p. 199). Similarly, Creed, Langstraat, and Scully (2002) describe the aim of frame analysis as a technique to understand “how certain idea elements are linked together into packages of meaning, potentially encoded into soundbite-like signifiers that stand for those packages of meaning, and deployed in situated discursive activity.” (p. 37). Frame analysis is therefore useful in the creation of patterns of meaning, which can contribute to meaningful analysis.

Discourse analysis, on the other hand, is concerned with more detailed analysis of language, often focusing on the implicit meaning within word choice and grammar (Lindekilde, 2014). Discourse analysis, in comparison to frame analysis, is more focused on details and relies on an inductive coding strategy, while frame analysis attempts to spot and analyze general trends that appear within analyzed sources, all while relying on a primarily deductive method of coding (Lindekilde, 2014). The analysis of the sources in this thesis relies on the creation of a coding framework that utilizes both inductive and deductive methods to establish codes, making it difficult to situate this method of analysis under one specific category. Likewise, the analysis of sources will observe the means through which language is used (a more discourse analysis approach), but this is ultimately done with the aim of contributing to the discovery of certain frames and reoccurring themes (a more frame analysis approach). The aim of this combined approach is for the creation of concrete and observable frames and themes to be discovered. It is expected that the observation of sources in this manner will allow for greater details to be revealed about Hungary’s strategy regarding the EU in a thematic and visualizable manner.

The sources originate from six different ministers within the current Hungarian Government (see Figure 1.1 for an overview of actors and sources). The reason for the inclusion of ministers other than Orbán is because much of the previous literature focuses solely on the rhetoric of Orbán (Agoston, 2023; Gera, 2023; Sata, 2023). This is understandable considering the vast amount of power Orbán has within Fidesz, and therefore the Hungarian Government (Agoston, 2023, p. 3; Kornai, 2015). Nevertheless, broadening the scope of analysis to include the rhetoric of other ministers will provide the opportunity to visualize and compare the individual perspectives of ministers. Moreover, the diversity of sources contributes to enhancing the external validity of the conclusions reached.

Figure 1.1, Overview of sources analyzed

<i>Actor</i>	<i>Number of sources</i>	<i>Total</i>
Viktor Orbán, Prime Minister	Facebook posts: 4, Interviews: 4, Speeches/press conference: 15	23
Péter Szijjártó, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade	Facebook posts: 32, Interview: 1	33
Bence Tuzson, Minister of Justice	Interviews: 2	2
Tibor Navracsis, Minister of Regional Development	Interview: 1	1
János Bóka, Minister for European Union Affairs	Interview: 1	1
Gergely Gulyás, Minister of the Prime Minister's Office	Interviews: 4	4

Despite the wide range of actors, extensive attention is given to sources from Orbán and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Péter Szijjártó, for two main reasons. One practical reason is simply due to the ease of accessibility of sources from Orbán and Szijjártó. Interviews, speeches, and statements from Orbán are readily available and accessible on official and verified government websites, which makes it simple to access all types of sources. Szijjártó's official Facebook page is very active and contains hundreds of posts and video clips related to the issues that fall under

the topics of this thesis. Another more theoretical reason concerns the positions of Orbán and Szijjártó within the Hungarian Government. As aforementioned, Orbán is an unavoidable actor in Hungarian politics and within the Hungarian Government (Agoston, 2023, p. 3; Kornai, 2015). For similar reasons that led Agoston (2023, p. 3) to focus solely on Orbán's rhetoric, the comments and opinions expressed by Orbán allow for an accurate generalization of Fidesz's ideology and strategy to occur. On the other hand, considering the various foreign policy issues this thesis analyzes, it is important to consider the perspective of the minister officially responsible for the Hungarian Government's stance on many of these issues, hence the need to include sources from Szijjártó.

This thesis investigates and codes for a total of 64 sources. Speeches by Orbán can be found on the Prime Minister's official website (miniszterelnok.hu) and on the official website of the Hungarian Government (kormany.hu). Once a source was found, many of the sources were traced back to their original origin (e.g., Facebook), if possible. Sources from other actors were obtained from websites where original interviews and speeches were published, and Szijjártó's Facebook posts were obtained from his official Facebook page. The sources are free to access and some of them can be found in English as well, although in order to remain consistent throughout the sources, this thesis observes and codes all of these sources in their original language, which was mainly Hungarian, although some sources were originally presented in English. Finally, sources are also selected according to the topics discussed. For instance, an interview with a minister concerning domestic tax legislation will not be selected, whereas a general speech centered around Hungary's position in the EU will be selected. The references to all of the sources are accessible in Appendix A.

The timeframe for the selection of sources is from February 24, 2022, until November 30, 2023. The beginning date of this timeframe marks the beginning of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the end is due to time constraints imposed on this thesis. This timeframe allows for the analysis of several speeches, interviews and press conferences to occur, as well as more specific sources centered on foreign policy issues the EU has had to respond to. As aforementioned, the three issues analyzed will be the Russo-Ukrainian War, the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict, and the Israeli-Hamas War. An exception is made to this timeframe in order to be able to collect sources on the perspective of ministers regarding the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict. As a result, sources concerned solely with

this conflict are collected from September 27, 2020, which is the start of the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War, until November 30, 2023. The reasons for selecting these three specific conflicts are explained below.

Regarding Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent Russo-Ukrainian War, the Hungarian Government initially supported several joint EU sanctions packages, but is currently refusing to provide additional funding and stricter sanctions from being put forth by the EU most notably with the government's decision to veto a 50-billion-euro EU aid package to Ukraine (O'Carroll, 2023). Prior to this decision, the only way the EU was able to agree to open accession negotiations with Ukraine was due to a planned walkout of Orbán while voting on this issue took place (Camut et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the Hungarian Government continues to present a stubborn obstacle to the hopes of the EU developing any form of a stronger relationship with Ukraine and continues to actively obstruct Ukraine's war efforts by refusing to provide any joint financial and military support. Some have argued this is the result of Hungary's close relationship with Russia, and the government's dependence on Russian oil and gas (Madlovics & Magyar, 2023). As a result, Hungary continues to act as a supporting actor of Putin's regime within the EU to the detriment of its reputation and the unity of the EU (Madlovics & Magyar, 2023). These conclusions and developments around the issue provide a foundation that allows for some of the codes investigating this issue to be developed deductively.

The Azerbaijani-Armenian conflict has been occurring over the past decades, with mounting tensions resulting in the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War and the subsequent recent retaking of Nagorno-Karabakh by Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan's recent 2023 annexation of Nagorno-Karabakh resulted in over 100,000 Armenians fleeing the region over fears of ethnic cleansing (Gavin, 2023). Nevertheless, the Hungarian Government continues to maintain strong diplomatic and financial ties to Azerbaijan and maintains an observer state status within the Organization of Turkic States (Ágh, 2022; Éltető & Szemlér, 2023). Hungary's friendly approach towards Azerbaijan is not only visible through the development of economic ties but also through controversial political gestures. Most notably, in 2004 an Azeri soldier murdered an Armenian soldier in Budapest with an axe and was subsequently extradited to Azerbaijan in 2012, where the convicted murderer received a hero's welcome (Kerner, 2019). Regarding CFSP, in 2023 the Hungarian Government vetoed an EU statement condemning Azerbaijan's recent military actions

against Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh (Márton, 2023). These actions, alongside increasingly strong diplomatic and financial ties between the two countries, demonstrate that Hungary has acted as an outlier to the majority of European states regarding this conflict by adopting an overwhelmingly pro-Azeri stance on individual issues, regardless of their content.

Finally, the recent war that has broken out in the Gaza Strip following the October 7th terrorist attacks and kidnappings committed by the Palestinian terrorist organization Hamas on thousands of innocent civilians is another issue area that will be observed. Prior to the issue, Hungary has expressed staunch political support for Israel, evident in its recent plan to relocate the Hungarian embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, despite EU and international opposition to the move (Sorgi, 2023). Similarly, in 2021 Hungary vetoed EU statements that would have called for ceasefires and for Israel to act within the boundaries of international law in its military operations against Hamas (Zsíros, 2021). Interestingly enough, however, regarding the outbreak of the most recent conflict, the Hungarian Government has not utilized its veto power in CFSP to prevent EU statements calling for humanitarian pauses in the fighting from being released (Moens, Barigazzi, & Hernández-Morales, 2023). It is worthwhile to compare the reasons behind the difference in approach to the current Israeli-Hamas War in comparison to the previous two conflicts to discover the reason(s) for the difference in behavior. Overall, it is expected that gaining insight into these highly politicized cases will shed light on the reasons for the Hungarian Government's behavior.

While investigations into the rhetoric of Hungarian Government actors exist, this thesis differs from previous literature in several ways. Firstly, the time frame explored in this thesis has, at the time of writing this thesis, yet to be observed and analyzed (Agoston, 2023; Mos, 2020; Sata, 2023). As a result, the most recent sources are being analyzed, which is especially important considering the vast changes that have occurred since the start of the analytical timeframe. Secondly, many studies are concerned with investigating the rhetoric of Orbán (Agoston, 2023; Mos, 2020; Gera, 2023; Sata, 2023). The reason behind this is the result of Orbán's monopoly of power over the Hungarian Government, as well as Hungarian politics in general (Sata, 2023, Kornai, 2015). Additionally, by expanding the number of actors observed, this thesis aims to discover whether Orbán's rhetoric can rightfully be generalized to the entire government and his political party as claimed by Agoston (2023, p. 3). This will allow for comparison to occur between different officials, and for differences to be accurately pinpointed. Thirdly, this thesis is not limited

to the observation of rhetoric on a single issue such as migration (Agoston, 2023, Bíró-Nagy, 2022) or LGBTQ+ rights (Gera, 2023; Mos, 2023), but will instead observe sources related to several issues. In that sense, this thesis resembles the study conducted by Sata (2023) in which he discovers what issues and topics dominated the rhetoric of Orbán over his years in power. There are, however, notable differences. The time frame differs as Sata (2023) only observes cases until the 2022 Hungarian elections and from Orbán. Moreover, one of the aims of this thesis is to contribute to the existing literature by evaluating predictions of how the Hungarian Government's relationship with the EU will evolve.

4.2 Coding Framework

Inspiration for the coding framework originates from previous studies observing the political rhetoric of right-wing parties (Pytlas, 2021) and Orbán's rhetoric (Sata, 2023; Gera, 2023; Agoston, 2023), but special attention was devoted to literature investigating the effects of the ambiguity of values within the EU (Mos, 2020). In his study, Mos (2020) first notes whether Orbán "embraced or rejected a specific value", then observes how the value in question was interpreted, and finally focuses on how Orbán responded to accusations of non-compliance (p. 275). Having observed 36 speeches, Mos (2020) concludes that Orbán interpreted EU values and his actions in ways so that they coincide with one another, but "twisted their meaning as he saw fit" (p. 280). It is also noteworthy to mention that Mos (2020, p. 275) also observed how Fidesz MEPs responded to various accusations of norm violation and found that their strategies were consistent with Orbán's.

In a similar fashion to Mos' (2020) first and second steps, this thesis will code whether a statement related to one or more Article 2 values mentioned by an actor is EU-coinciding or EU-conflicting. Statements can also be coded as neutral, although this is not expected to be a frequent occurrence and concerns statements where discerning an actor's view into a category is untenable. Following this, the instances of such statements will be analyzed in order to discover any patterns that may occur in the interpretation of specific values. The aim of this is to discover which values are the most commonly reappearing in the rhetoric of actors and provide an analysis of plausible reasons for this. In addition, the coding framework will provide insight into whether the interpretation of values by Fidesz officials coincides with an EU interpretation of the values. As

mentioned in expectation 1, it is expected that Fidesz is increasingly interpreting Article 2 values in conflicting ways, signaling the shift of the Hungarian Government away from the EU.

Mos (2020) observes speeches present within the period from May 29, 2010, to September 11, 2018. At the time of writing this thesis, 5 years have passed since 2018 and several notable and momentous events have occurred, namely the COVID-19 pandemic, the success of Fidesz to achieve another two-thirds majority in the 2022 elections, the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, and much more. As a result, the timeframe in Mos' (2020) investigation could not have possibly accounted for these situations, which necessitates an updated investigation to observe whether Mos' (2020) conclusions remain accurate. In other words, this thesis will focus on discovering whether Fidesz actors continue to act as if they adhere to EU norms and values, or whether they have begun to communicate these values in newfound ways.

Additionally, the concern here is not centered around the embracement or rejection of values, but whether or not the interpretation of values coincides or conflicts with EU interpretations provided within this framework. In order to do this, this thesis will expand step two within Mos' (2020) methodology by attaching definitions to the interpretation of TEU Article 2 values. As a result, this thesis will add meaning to the values with the hopes of being able to limit their ambiguity. Likewise, this will also allow for the values coinciding or in conflict with EU interpretations to be singled out and observed accordingly. As a result, interesting conclusions may arise where, for instance, actors may interpret the rule of law in an overwhelmingly EU-conflicting manner but may interpret the value of democracy in more EU-coinciding manners. Simultaneously, this will help conceptualize the values observed. Another difference to emphasize is that sources will be analyzed in their original, Hungarian language, perhaps providing for interesting differences.

With regards to the coding of the values, Boekestein's (2022) definitions and interpretations of Article 2 values are fundamental to understanding what each value entails. Boekestein (2022, p. 441) defines the values by observing their presence in three different ways: the way values operationalize the EU legal order, the way EU fundamental rights have shaped the values (overlap between the TEU values, Charter, and principles), and the requirements posed onto candidate states. Boekestein's (2022) method of defining the values bridges philosophical understandings and practical implementations of these values and therefore allows for the

conceptualization and coding of these values to occur. An important caveat of these values is that they can overlap with one another (Boekestein, 2022, p. 442). This means that a statement from a minister can simultaneously be coded into two separate categories, if the value mentioned is not explicit, although the specificity of this thesis' coding framework is devised in a way to limit this from occurring.

Boekestein (2022) includes an extensive list outlining the connection of the values to each TEU, TFEU, and CFREU article. However, for simplicity, this thesis conceptualizes the founding values through their connection to the CFREU. Furthermore, Boekestein (2022, p. 451) often attributes a CFREU article to more than one value, which is accurate when taking into consideration the vast philosophical and practically applicable scope of the articles. However, this thesis limits the scope of the articles to a specific value in order to create a comprehensive framework capable of providing a clear distinction between the values. While Boekestein (2022) provides concise interpretations of the values, alongside relevant case law, the definitions are often insufficient on their own for the development of an extensive coding framework to occur. Seeing as this is the case, the interpretation of the Article 2 values here will be derived largely from Boekestein (2022), in combination with the understanding of these values present within the CFREU.

The coding framework will also provide codes for the three aforementioned CFSP issues. Many of these codes were created in a deductive manner, having observed the findings of previous studies (Agoston, 2023; Madlovics & Magyar, 2023; Sata, 2023). Nevertheless, some codes were created in an inductive manner as common frames and themes continued to arise within the sources.

Additionally, a final distinction when observing the coding framework is that words are not automatically coded for. For instance, the mere mention of the “migration”, “progressive liberalism”, or “democracy” is not sufficient to be coded into a category. Instead, these words need to be in context; the presence of word is required in sentences expressing a new idea or thought. For instance, claiming that liberal progressives wish to destroy the Hungarian nation would be sufficient for coding, whereas separate mentions of the two main phrases here (liberal progressive and Hungarian nation) are not coded if they are not connected to a specific frame. Furthermore, a phrase or statement may be coded into one or more different categories if applicable. For instance, if migration is used in a sentence discussing human rights, that sentence can be coded under both

migration and human rights. This is done so that during the analysis of the results it may be seen which issues ministers emphasize and the way in which they interpret and communicate Article 2 values.

A shorter version of the coding framework can be seen in figure 1.2, while the entire coding framework alongside detailed explanations and examples can be observed in Appendices B and C. The coding framework in relation to the expectations of the thesis can be simplified in the following ways. Code 1 along with all of the subcodes pertains to investigating the first expectation. Codes 2-5 are mainly observed in consideration to the second expectation. Codes 6-8 are concerned with the three main foreign policy issues and therefore pertain to expectation 3.

Figure 1.2, Codes and sub-codes

Code	Sub-code and Code Specification(s)	
1.0. Mention of EU Value	1.1. Human Dignity	1.1.1. EU-Coinciding
		1.1.2. Neutral
		1.1.3. EU-Conflicting
	1.2. Freedom	1.2.1. EU-Coinciding
		1.1.2. Neutral
		1.1.3. EU-Conflicting
1.3.	
2.0. Nationalism	2.1. Mention and appeals to the Hungarian nation; presenting Hungarians and/or the nation as unique regarding culture, history, behavior, etc.; <u>emphasizing the greatness of Hungary, Hungarians</u>	
	2.2. Appealing to Hungarian minorities abroad in Ukraine, Slovakia, Romania, etc.	
	2.3. Equating Fidesz with the Hungarian nation	
3.0. Common Enemies	3.1. Negative comments about “Brussels”, Western-media, liberalism, leftists, Soros, etc.	
	3.2. Migration, migration policy, 2015 migration crisis, etc.	
	3.3. Gender, gender ideology, gender-politics, claims of indoctrination, etc.	
4.0. Fidesz values	4.1. Family, the importance of family, etc.	
	4.2. Safety and security	

	4.3. Christianity, Christian culture, Christian democracy, Christian roots, etc.
5.0 References to the EU/Europe	5.1 EU/Europe must reform; Hungary as a model for the future of Europe
	5.2. Generally positive references to the EU, general EU policy; support for greater integration in an area; emphasis of EU solidarity, etc.
	5.3. Generally negative references to the EU, general EU policy; disapproval of further integration in an area; emphasis of EU weaknesses, etc.
6.0. Russo-Ukrainian War and EU-Ukraine policy	6.1. Direct condemnation of Russia, Russian aggression
	6.2. Support and calls for stricter sanctions/action to be taken against Russia
	6.3. Calls for peace (regardless of the costs)
	6.4. Rationalist, nation-centered approach to the issue; observing the issue through the lens of power politics; putting Hungarian economic and political interests first; making the issue about Hungarians and Hungary
	6.5. Claims that the West, Brussels, leftist, etc. want to drag Hungary into the war
	6.6. Support and calls for less sanctions and action
	6.7. References to “fake news” about Hungarian position
	6.8. Offers of humanitarian aid and support to Ukraine, i.e., through the acceptance of refugees
	6.9 European strategy does not work
	6.10. Hungary stands with Ukraine, supports Ukraine’s territorial integrity
7.0 Azerbaijan-Armenia Conflict	7.1. Congratulating Azerbaijan on its victories
	7.2. Accentuating the relationship between Azerbaijan and Hungary
	7.3. Condemnation of Armenia
	7.4. Condemnation of Azerbaijan
	7.5. Offering support to Armenia
	7.6. Offering support to Azerbaijan
	7.7. Calls for peace, negotiations
8.0 Israeli-Hamas War	8.1. Offering support to Israel
	8.2. Offering support to Palestinian groups and organizations
	8.3. Calls for peace, ceasefires, pauses in the fighting, or de-escalation
	8.4. Urging Israel to continue its fight, acknowledging right to self-defense
	8.5. Emphasizing Hungarian interests

Despite the various ways this thesis contributes to and expands on existing literature, there are certain limitations that must be acknowledged. One of the limitations of this investigation is the time restrictions posed on the thesis. The time restrictions limit the total number of sources available for analysis, and also limit the analysis of sources to predominantly written sources and shorter videos, as these are less time-consuming to analyze in comparison to longer video and audio sources.

Another limitation is that several statements can be coded under several different codes. This makes the coding process more difficult and necessitates as unique codes as possible. However, this is a difficult task to fulfill as the codes may be connected in many ways. For instance, statements on migration may simply be stating Hungary's position towards migration, or it may be a statement on migration that can simultaneously be coded under the code of human rights, if such a statement considers refugees to fall into the category of migrants and thus necessitates differentiated treatment. An example of such a statement is the following:

“I see Europe's plan to replace the inhabitants of Europe, which is an attempt to replace missing Christian children with adults arriving from other civilizations, as a suicide attempt. This is how I view the gender-craze, which sees humans as identities, including their sexual identity. And this is how I view liberal Europe's program that tries to go beyond the West's Christianity and nation-states, without having any alternatives in their place”¹ (Orbán, 2022j, para. 3)

Under the coding framework developed in this thesis, this statement is coded under migration, gender, human rights (EU-conflicting), and Christianity. The elements of gender, migration and Christianity are clearly mentioned as themes, while there is an EU-conflicting interpretation of human rights. The comparison made by Orbán of multiculturalism and the right of humans to select

¹ Original sentence: “Ilyen öngyilkossági kísérletnek látom a nagy európai lakosságcsere programját, amely a hiányzó európai keresztény gyerekeket más civilizációkból érkező felnőttekkel, migránsokkal akarja pótolni. Ilyennek látom a genderőrületet, amely úgy fogja fel az embert, mint identitásának, ideértve szexuális identitásának megteremtőjét. És ilyennek látom a liberális Európa programját, amely túllép a Nyugatot eddig megtartó kereszténységen és nemzetállamokon, és semmit sem ültet a helyükre.”

their gender identity to a suicide attempt has obvious negative connotations and is conflicting of an EU interpretation of human rights.

A potential limitation is that the actual coding of values can become interpretive. The framework attempts to eliminate all possibility of interpreting statements in a biased manner, yet it is impossible to eliminate all interpretive biased. For instance, a dedicated Fidesz supporter or opposition supporter might be more or less strict in their interpretation of the content depending on their subconscious bias. Nevertheless, the framework developed in this thesis attempts to attach meaning to values in a concise manner so as to result in an objective investigation of the sources.

Another limitation concerns the main focus points of the sources. For instance, some sources focus solely on the Ukrainian War, while others encompass a more general overview of Hungary's position in the EU, perhaps touching upon other issues. Thus, the overall results may produce an uneven presentation of topics discussed. This, however, does not affect the validity of the conclusions reached as the aim of the thesis is not to discover the frequency of topics that arise, but is instead to investigate how these topics are communicated when they do arise.

Chapter 5: Results and Analysis

This chapter is divided into four sections, with the first three of which pertaining to the respective expectation. The results of the data collection are visualized through charts and pie graphs. These results are interpreted within each section in relation to the main research question and sub-questions.

5.1 Communication of Interpretation of Values

As illustrated in Figure 2.1, Hungarian Government ministers interpret and communicate the majority Article 2 values in EU-conflicting ways. With the exception of human dignity, statements pertaining to all other Article 2 values were present throughout the sources. The values of freedom, democracy, rule-of-law, and human rights were communicated in EU-conflicting ways, while the value of equality was communicated equally in an EU-conflicting and EU-coinciding manner in the sources.

The value that appeared the most within the sources analyzed was democracy. A reason for this could be because several sources were analyzed shortly before and after to the 2022 national election, thus compelling ministers to discuss democracy and related topics. Throughout the 64 sources analyzed, democracy was interpreted in EU-coinciding ways 13 times, in neutral ways 3 times, and in EU-conflicting ways 51 times. Many of these instances consisted of ministers offering EU-conflicting interpretations of democracy by equating democracy with majority-rule (Kereki & Szalai, 2022; Szijjártó, 2022f) or portraying political opponents of Fidesz in undemocratic and unfounded ways, such as by labelling them as foreign agents (Orbán, 2022j, Orbán, 2023d; Sütő-Nagy, 2023), communists (Kereki & Szalai, 2022; Orbán, 2022h), and supporters of war (Szijjártó, 2022d; Orbán, 2022f). The findings of this thesis demonstrate that the findings of Sata (2023) concerning Fidesz's portrayal of opposition politicians remains "demeaning" with claims aimed at creating an existential enemy out of opposition parties and politicians, even after the elections had occurred (p. 10). These depictions also provided ministers with the opportunity to depict the national election as a matter of life or death for Hungarians and the Hungarian nation (Orbán, 2022g; 2022h).

In tandem with such statements, ministers would disregard any notion of democratic deficit in Hungary, and instead attempted to depict Hungary as one of the most democratic nation-states

within Europe, with Orbán claiming that, “in the sense of classic democracy, our political system stands much closer to this than Western Europe, which we used to view as a role model for a long time”² (Orbán, 2023h, para. 23). The issue with such statements is that the ministers observed democracy from the perspective of majority-rule and deviated away from traditional understandings of liberal democracy in which the respect for rule of law, minority rights, and individual freedoms remain protected regardless of electoral outcomes. In fact, in an interview with Mandiner, Orbán stated that “We have to now say that not all democracies are liberal, and although they are not liberal, they can continue to remain democracies.”³ (Kereki & Szalai, 2022, para. 28).

On the other hand, EU-coinciding statements emphasized the fact that democratic elections can result in various different governments forming (Kereki & Szalai, 2022; Orbán, 2023e, 2023h), or acknowledging, either directly or implicitly, the right of citizens to make free decisions in elections (Kereki & Szalai, 2022; Orbán, 2022i; Szijjártó, 2022e, 2023m). The contrast between EU-coinciding and EU-conflicting comments on democracy demonstrates that ministers strive to portray their government as adhering to crucial tenants of liberal democracy, but are adamant on stating that Hungary is not a liberal democracy, and can remain a democracy despite this. This results in a diluted version of democracy where citizens maintain the right to vote and engage in elections, but this does not ensure fair elections, which is a necessary part of liberal democracy (Ágh, 2022).

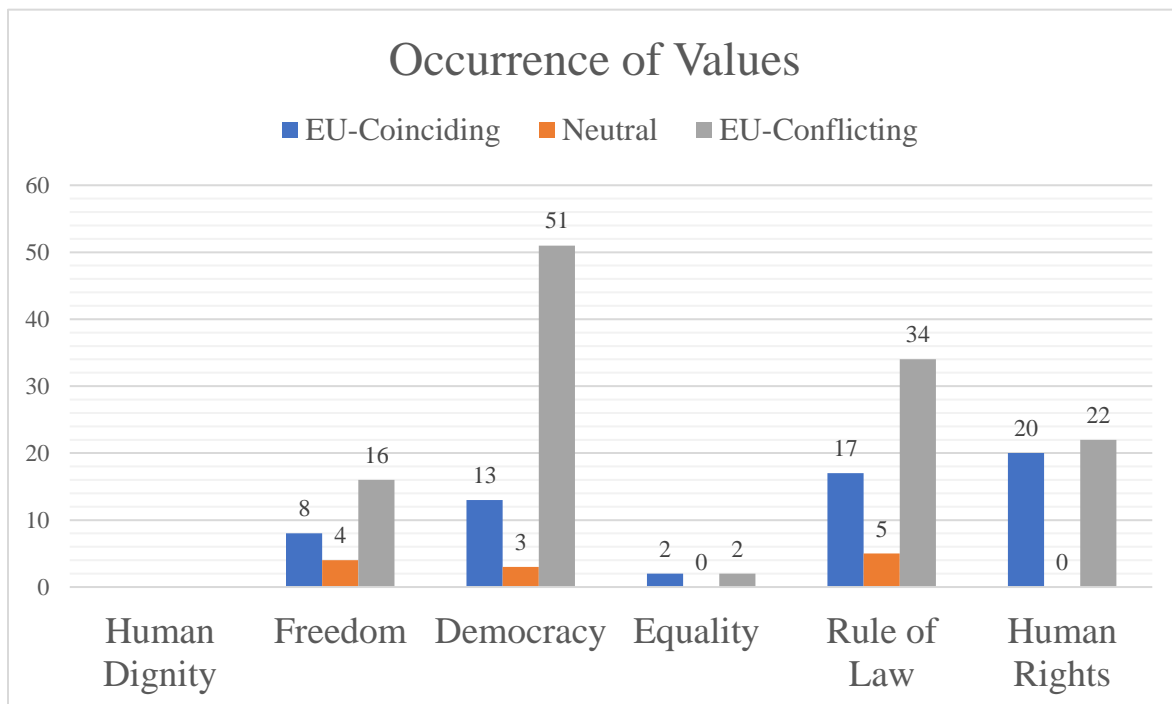
Another value reappearing across several of the sources is human rights. For this value, a total of 20 EU-coinciding and 22 EU-conflicting statements were recorded. An interesting discovery appeared with the EU-coinciding statements, which was most visible through Szijjártó’s Facebook posts on the topic of EU-Ukrainian relations, specifically with regards to the topic of Ukrainian accension to the EU. It was found that Szijjártó would consistently interpret human rights in EU-coinciding ways when the issue of Hungarian minorities, and particularly Hungarian language usage, in Ukraine was raised (Szijjártó, 2023c, 2023f, 2023t; Tóth, 2022). This tactic allows for the decisions of the Hungarian Government regarding Ukraine to be justified as they

² Original sentence: “És ennyiben nyugodtan vállalhatjuk azt, hogy a klasszikus demokratikus fölfogáshoz a mi politikai rendszerünk közelebb áll, mint az a nyugat-európai, amit hosszú időn keresztül mintaadónak tekintettünk”

³ Original sentence: “Nekünk most azt kell kimondanunk, hogy nem minden demokrácia liberális, és attól, hogy valami nem liberális, még lehet demokrácia.”

continue to claim that Hungarian minorities are facing human rights violations by being prevented to use their language in certain Ukrainian institutions. While it could be argued that providing Ukraine with a roadmap into the EU would eventually lead to the solution of these issues, it nevertheless provides the Hungarian Government with the opportunity to act as if its policies around Ukraine have the intention of protecting Hungarian minority rights, all while adhering to an EU-coinciding interpretation of human rights.

Figure 2.1, Occurrence of Values



Besides this, the other instances where human rights were communicated or interpreted in an EU-coinciding way was when ministers referred to the efforts made by the Hungarian government to support and accommodate Ukrainian refugees (Nyéki, 2023; Orbán, 2022c, 2022j, 2022n, 2023c; Szijjártó, 2022b, 2023d). This was often related to code sub-code 6.8, which will be discussed in the upcoming section. Additionally, ministers would clearly acknowledge that instances of racism, homophobia, and antisemitism are not tolerated in Hungary (Orbán, 2022k, 2023e), resulting in these statements being coded as EU-coinciding interpretations of human rights.

There is, however, a hypocritical element to Szijjártó using human rights as a scapegoat for Hungary's approach to Ukraine and this double standard is clearly seen through the

communication of ministers on issues of migration. When discussing migration, Orbán make distinctions between Ukrainian refugees and all other migrants (Orbán, 2022c, 2022g, 2022h, 2023e). In an interview on state television, Orbán stated that, “Nobody needs to be an atom physicist to make a distinction between the masses arriving from distant Muslim worlds in hopes of a better life and those Ukrainians who are fleeing the Russo-Ukrainian War to Hungary”⁴ (Orbán, 2022c, para. 5). There was, however, no distinction made between refugees and other types of migrants coming from parts of the world other than Ukraine. Ministers would frequently refer to migrants in ways that disregard a respect for human rights claiming that migrants will destroy culture and nations (Nyéki, 2023; Orbán, 2022k), claiming that migrants are violent (Tóth, 2022), and will replace European citizens (Orbán, 2022j). These claims in combination with the failure to make a distinction between refugees, asylum seekers, and other forms of migrants on a basis other than geographic origin, and instead categorize all of them as “migrants” demonstrates a disregard of human rights for a large category of people. Additionally, these findings are yet again consistent with Sata’s (2023) findings regarding Orbán’s communication surrounding migration, demonstrating that the communication surrounding migration has not changed significantly since the 2015 migration crisis.

The values of freedom and equality appeared within the sources as well. The limited amount of the statements collected for the value of equality are unable to provide a detailed overview of the ministers’ views on this value. Where equality was mentioned, the EU-coinciding statements showed Orbán acknowledging the importance of having a woman as president of Hungary for the first time in the country’s history (Orbán, 2022g), and accentuating the importance to treat women equally (Orbán, 2023e). The EU-conflicting statements on equality concerned the rejection of the possibility of other forms of marriage besides traditional marriage (Kereki & Szalai, 2022), and Orbán discussing how he would like to create a system where people who decide to have children will be entitled to a better financial life than those who do not (Orbán, 2023c).

EU-coinciding interpretations of freedom were centered around statements emphasizing the right of people to live life freely (Kereki & Szalai, 2022) and the importance of pluralism in

⁴ Original sentence: "Ahhoz sem kell atomtudósnak lenni, hogy valaki különbséget tegyen a messzi muszlim világokból érkező tömegek jobb remény életében Európa felé irányuló áradata meg az ukrán–orosz háború miatt Magyarországra átmenekülő ukránok megsegítése között."

society (Kereki & Szalai, 2022; Orbán, 2023h), with some references to the importance of media pluralism as well (Juhász, 2022). EU-conflicting interpretations focused on defining freedom in flawed ways. For instance, in his 2022 Independence Day speech, Orbán claimed that strength was required for freedom and stated that “weak nations do not receive freedom”⁵ (Orbán, 2022g, para 6.). Orbán also claimed that Hungary was one of the freest countries in the world (Orbán, 2022j, 2023d), often connecting the concept of freedom to that of the nation with the attempt to portray the two as inseparable (Orbán, 2023d; Orbán, 2023f). Such conceptualizations were also combined with claims that the West was directly attacking the freedom of Hungarians (Orbán, 2023d) and that Western conceptions of freedom are aimed at encouraging people to forget about themselves and their nations and to just focus on choosing an identity (Kereki & Szalai, 2022, Orbán, 2023h). Yet again, the communication of ministers, and in this case predominantly Orbán, on freedom show a divergence from EU-coinciding interpretations on what freedom entails.

Finally, the rule of law deserves special attention considering the vast number of conflicts and accusations the Hungarian Government has faced on this front. The value of the rule of law was the second most mentioned value within the sources. For this value, a total of 17 EU-coinciding statements, 5 neutral, and 34 EU-conflicting statements were discovered within the sources.

A significant discovery is that the value of rule of law and the issues Hungary has been facing with this value is increasingly framed as a political issue by various ministers (Pomichal, 2023; Sütő-Nagy, 2023; Veszprémy, 2023; Máté, 2023; Ternovác, 2023; Orbán, 2022j, 2023f). Minister of European Union Affairs, János Bóka, claimed in an interview that “Those procedures, as a result of which our country is unable to access certain Union funds, are political in nature. It is also true that the solutions will be part of a complicated political procedure.” (Máté, 2023, para. 14)⁶. The claim that the procedures and mechanisms preventing Hungary from accessing EU funds are purely political in nature was also emphasized by Minister of the Prime Minister’s Office Gergely Gulyás, who claimed that “We (Hungary) are waiting for a political decision from Brussels;

⁵ Original sentence: “Gyenge nemzetnek nem jár a szabadság, legfeljebb hamisgulyás a barakkjába”

⁶ Original sentence: “Azok az eljárások, amelyek következményeként hazánk bizonyos uniós pénzekhez nem fér hozzá, politikai természetűek. Ezekre is igaz az, hogy a megoldások egy bonyolult politikai alkufolyamat részei lesznek.”

we have fulfilled every legal requirement”⁷ (Veszprémy, 2023, para. 4). Such statements frequently coincided with claims that Brussels is overextending its purview (Sütő-Nagy, 2023; Nyéki, 2023; Ternovác, 2023), and that member states must begin to take control back in their hands and away from EU institutions and bureaucrats (Orbán, 2022j). Topics surrounding the rule of law issues provided ministers with the opportunity to label any accusations against Hungary as unfounded and the result of their political opponents (Juhász, 2022; Sütő-Nagy, 2023) Thus, officials are not interpreting the rule of law in an EU-coinciding way, but instead argue that Hungary’s stance on the rule of law is correct and that the institutions of the EU are deliberately trying to extract political concessions out of the government.

On the other hand, EU-coinciding interpretations of the rule of law saw ministers acknowledging crucial tenants of the rule of law, such as the need for an independent judiciary and institutions (Juhász, 2022; Nyéki, 2023; Ternovác, 2023; Weinhardt, 2022; Veszprémy, 2023) or the acknowledgement of ministers that it is imperative to respect European law and values (Máté, 2023; Pomichal, 2023). Clearly, the ministers understand and acknowledge the requirement of member states to adhere to the rule of law and respect European laws and values, but these claims are strongly undermined by the previous claims portraying the actions of the EU against Hungary as purely political.

Overall, many of the conclusions reached by Mos (2020) remain relevant to this day. The occurrence of values within the sources shows that Orbán and other ministers continue to deny that democratic backsliding is occurring (Mos, 2020, p. 277). Likewise, the claims Orbán made about the EP’s investigations into Hungary as being purely political in nature, which were highlighted by Mos (2020, p. 279), clearly continue to occur when ministers comment on the current procedures in place against Hungary. A notable discovery the investigation of this thesis has made, however, is that EU-coinciding interpretations of Article 2 values are actively being used to justify and legitimize the approach of the Hungarian Government to its decisions on foreign policy, as evidenced by the use of human rights in relation to Hungary’s policy towards Ukraine. All in all, these results demonstrate that the ministers are able to understand the importance and meaning of Article 2 values in EU-coinciding ways when it suits their political agenda. Otherwise, the ministers demonstrate an obvious disregard of Article 2 values by interpreting and

⁷ Original sentence: Egy politikai döntésre várunk Brüsszeltől, jogilag teljesítettünk mindent

communicating them in EU-conflicting ways, evidence of the Hungarian Government's ideological shift away from the EU and its values.

5.2 Approach to Enemies

The results pertaining to expectation 2 can be observed in the pie charts under Figures 3.1-3.4. The most frequently occurring frames were centered around negative comments aimed at Brussels, bureaucrats, Geroge Soros, liberal progressives, and other political opponents (Kereki & Szalai, 2022; Orbán, 2022h, 2022j, 2022l, 2022m, 2023d). Opposition politicians and candidates were lumped into the general category of “the left” (Sütő-Nagy, 2023; Kereki & Szalai, 2022; Orbán, 2022g; Orbán, 2022j) or as agents of Brussels and Soros who are attempting to take over Hungary (Kereki & Szalai, 2022; Orbán, 2022j), regardless of the opposition parties varied stances on issues. “Brussels” was a reoccurring term aimed at referencing EU institutions with authoritarian connotations, with Orbán even comparing Brussels to Soviet Moscow (Orbán, 2023f). Once again, the continuation of the politicization of enemies is consistent with the findings of Sata (2023) that show that Orbán is constantly striving to create enemies for the Hungarian nation.

Following the elections, the success of Fidesz was portrayed as a triumphal victory of the Hungarian nation over Brussels and all other enemies, with Orbán (2022h) stating in his victory speech:

The left at home, the international left all over, the Brussels bureaucrats, the Soros-empire's funds and organization, the international mainstream media and lastly the Ukrainian president. We never had this many enemies simultaneously. Despite the enormous amounts of money, and despite the dominance, if we stand together, we are unstoppable.”⁸ (para. 6)

Thus, the enemies of Fidesz continue to be portrayed as existential enemies to the Hungarian nation as a whole. Moreover, the scope of enemies continues to expand into new terms and concepts, with Orbán combining topics together under the category of progressive

⁸ Original sentence: A baloldal itthon, a nemzetközi baloldal köröskörül, a brüsszeli bürokraták, a Soros-birodalom minden pénze és szervezete, a nemzetközi, fősodratú média és a végén még az ukrán elnök is. Ennyi ellenfelünk egyszerre még sosem volt. De hiába a rengeteg pénz, és hiába a túlerő, ha összefogunk, nem lehet bennünket megállítani.

liberalism. This concept was framed as the ultimate enemy attacking the sovereign, independent nation-state. At a CPAC Hungary conference, Orbán claimed that,

This virus was developed in the progressive liberal laboratories. This virus attacks the Western world's most vulnerable point, and this is the nation. This is a nation-eating virus, which breaks down nations into atoms and eviscerates them...Migration, gender, wokeness, these are all just variants, variants of the same virus.⁹ (Orbán, 2023d, para. 6)

This quote summarizes the dominant narratives in the current communication of ministers. They frame the nation as under attack either from migration, gender, liberalism, Soros, and any other possible enemy, and then declare that the government will do everything in its power to protect the Hungarian people, their culture and their history (Orbán, 2022h, 2023d).

Migration also appeared throughout the sources in overwhelmingly negative ways, and was directly connected to Brussels bureaucrats and Soros (Tóth, 2022; Orbán, 2023d, 2023h). Migration was presented as an existential threat to Hungary and Europe, thus necessitating the protection of Europe (Orbán, 2023e, Szijjártó, 2023q). Referring back to the discussion in the previous section of this thesis, it is important to note that Ukrainian refugees were not labelled under the term “migrant”, but were instead labelled as refugees. This did not apply to refugees from other parts of the world, however. Nonetheless, migration continues to remain an overwhelmingly popular topic among the ministers, but particularly among the communication of Orbán.

Another reoccurring topic was that of gender. In this regard, ministers would portray this as another fundamental issue that requires Hungarians to be protected, with a specific emphasis on the need to protect children from LGBTQ propaganda (Kereki & Szalai, 2022; Orbán, 2022g, 2022j, 2023c, 2023d). A notable occurrence here is that Orbán was the only minister who continuously brought up this issue. These findings demonstrate that the conclusions reached by Gera (2023) continue to remain accurate.

⁹ Original sentences: Ezt a vírust a progresszív liberális laboratóriumokban fejlesztették ki. Ez a vírus a nyugati világ legsebezhetőbb pontját támadja, és ez a nemzet. Ez egy nemzet-felemészítő vírus, amely a nemzetünket atomra bontja és szétporlasztja... A migráció, a gender, a woke, ezek mind csak variánsok, ugyanannak a vírusnak a variánsai.

Nationalism also arose throughout several of the sources. Nationalism was understandably a popular frame in Orbán's speeches during national holidays, where he would accentuate the uniqueness and greatness of the Hungarian nation (Orbán, 2022g; 2023f). In addition to this, Hungarian minorities living in Ukraine were a frequently referred to topic, and often allowed for ministers to emphasize the Hungarian nation's direct role in the Russo-Ukrainian War (Orbán, 2022c, 2022g, 2022j, 2023e; Szijjártó, 2023d, 2023k). This frame was particularly useful in allowing for the ministers to emphasize Hungarian nation's direct role in the conflict.

The approach of ministers to the EU is illustrated can be seen in figure 3.1. On the one hand, ministers frequently dismissed greater political integration into the EU, often claiming that the EU was imperialistic with its ambitions and is striving to become a superstate or a United States of Europe (Máté, 2023; Orbán, 2022j, 2023c, 2023d, 2023e). Ministers instead discussed their aspiration to reform the EU into a "Europe of Nations", where supranational institutions and control would be limited to an absolute minimum (Juhász, 2022; Máté, 2023), or into a conservative-friendly Europe (Kereki & Szalai, 2022; Orbán, 2022d, 2022i, 2022j, 2022l, 2023d). In other words, the dominant frame is that the EU is overstepping its boundaries, and it is now the duty of member states to follow in the footsteps of Hungary and reform the EU. One notable exception to the general negative criticism of integration can be seen in the area of security and defense. In this area, Orbán was adamant in urging the EU to increase its military capacities (Kereki & Szalai, 2022; Orbán, 2023c) It is also important to mention that ministers reiterated Hungary's place within the EU (Orbán, 2022i, 2022j, 2022l; Weinhardt, 2022), dispelling any claims that a Huxit is imminent.

Despite the occasional positive references to some aspects of the EU, the constant framing of enemies continues to dominate the rhetoric of ministers. More specifically, the politicized framing of Brussels and other enemies contributes to the creation of a dichotomy whereby Hungarian Government ministers, and particularly Orbán in this case, continue to distinguish between "us" and "them", as elaborated upon by Sata (2023, p. 11), all while portraying the EU as an existential enemy aspiring to get rid of the nation-state. As a result, these findings support the second expectation of this thesis.

Figure 3.1, Nationalism

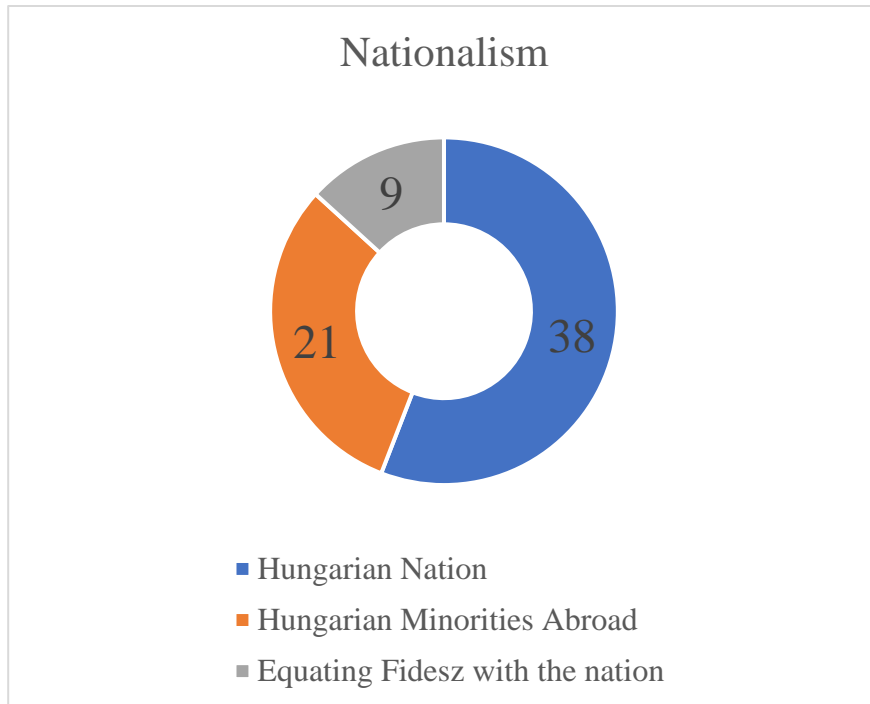


Figure 3.2, Enemies

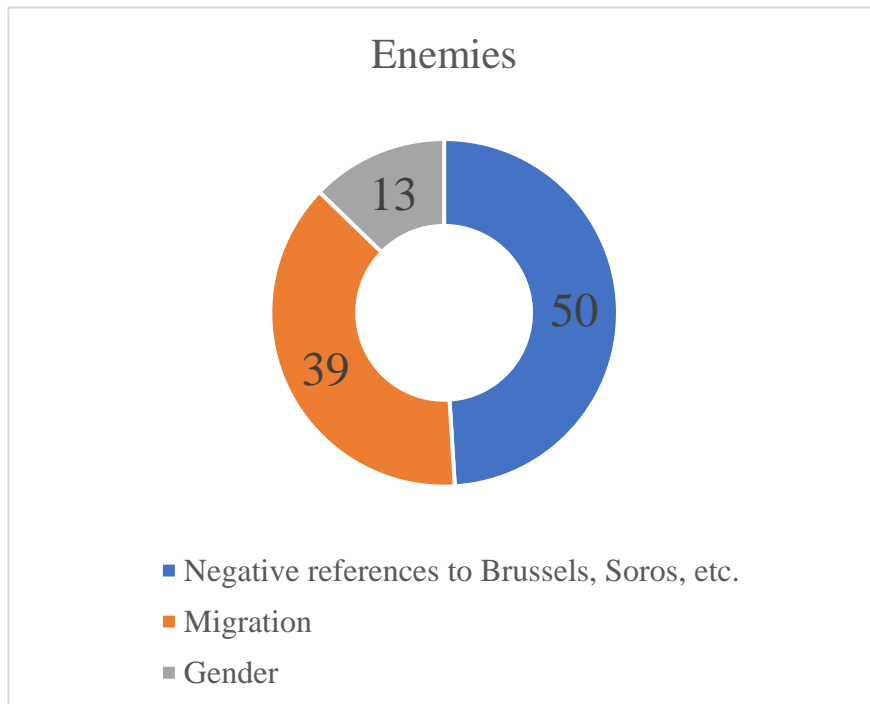


Figure 3.3, Fidesz Values

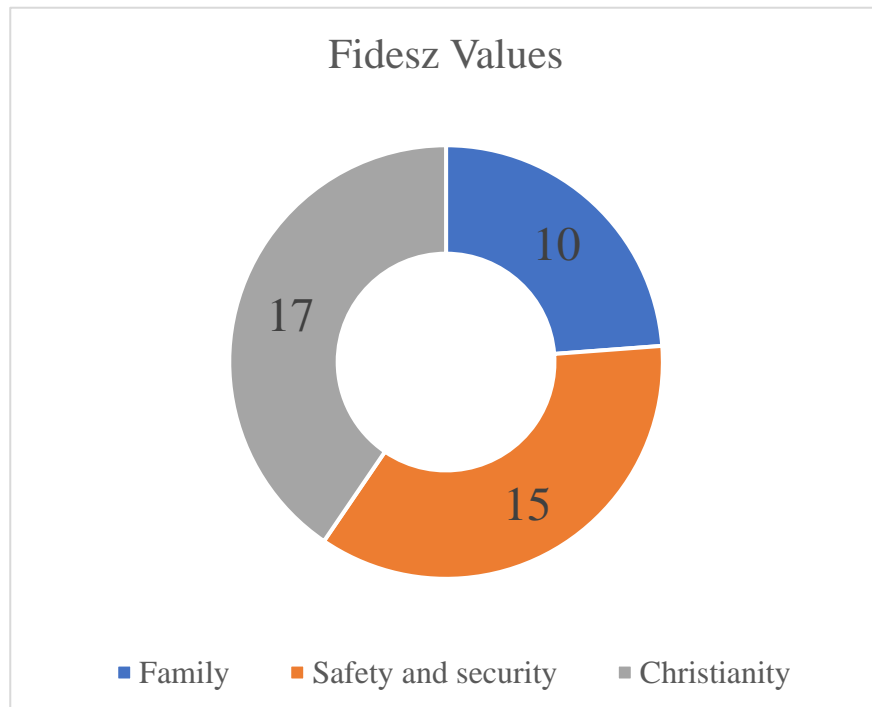
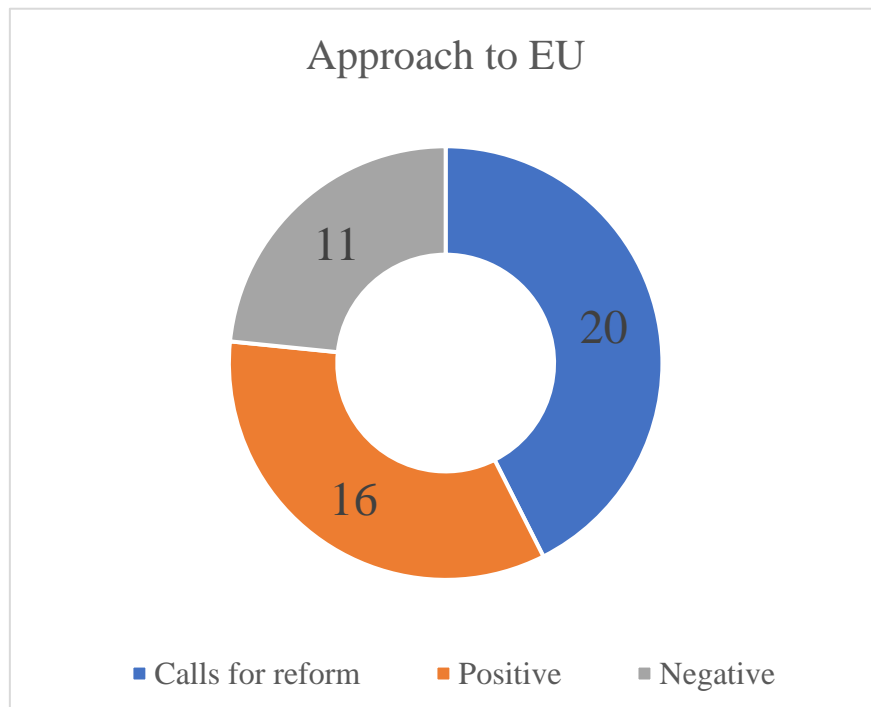


Figure 3.4, Approach to EU



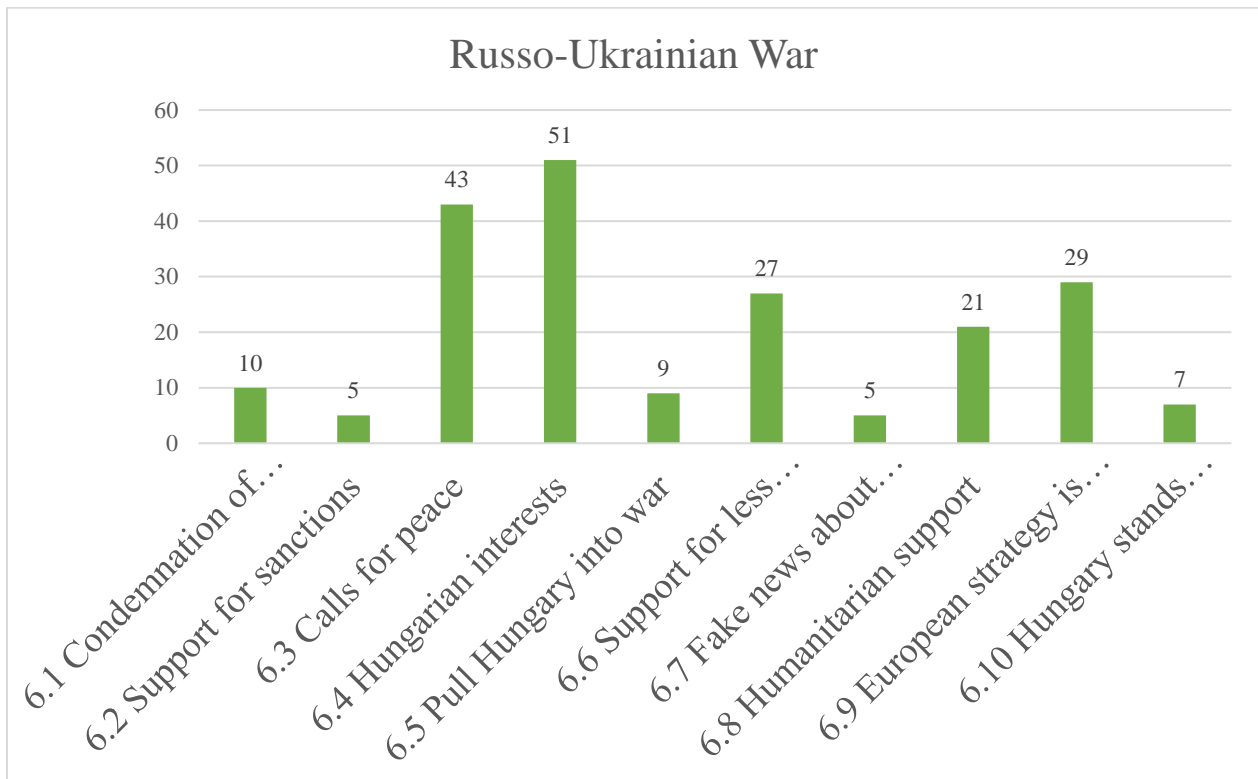
5.3 Approaches to Foreign Policy

Out of the three observed conflicts, the Russo-Ukrainian War was the most mentioned, and Szijjártó and Orbán referred to the conflict the most out of all the ministers. The change in rhetoric over time is noticeable and significant. The beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine witnessed Russia receive condemnation for its actions from Orbán and Szijjártó alike (Kereki & Szalai, 2022; Orbán, 2022a; Orbán, 2022b; Szijjártó, 2022b; Szijjártó, 2022e; Tóth, 2022). This is important to mention because Sata (2023) claimed that “Orbán is reluctant to condemn the Russian aggression”, and while this is true later on, in the very early stages of the conflict, Russia was condemned by Orbán for its actions (p. 10). Likewise, the ministers initially agreed on the need to sanction Russia in response to its actions, declared support for Ukraine’s right to defend itself, and pledged unity with the rest of the EU member states on this issue (Kereki & Szalai, 2022; Orbán, 2022a; Orbán, 2022b; Szijjártó, 2022a). However, this sentiment quickly shifted into calls for immediate peace negotiations, even within the early stages of the war (Kereki & Szalai, 2022; Orbán, 2022d; Orbán, 2022e; Orbán, 2022f; Orbán, 2022g; Szijjártó, 2022b, 2022g), as well as calls for less sanctions (Orbán, 2022c, 2022e, 2022f; Szijjártó, 2022e, 2022h). From the early stages of the war onwards, the rhetoric urging peace intensified and began to be combined alongside claims that sanctions and Europe’s overall approach to the conflict was failing (Szijjártó, 2022i, 2023b, 2023n, 2023r; Tóth, 2022; Orbán, 2022j, 2022l, 2022m, 2022n, 2023e). Thus, regarding this conflict, three dominant frames consistently reappear: peace, Europe’s strategy does not work, and Hungarian interests before all other interests.

These findings are consistent with the pattern elaborated on by Madlovics and Magyar (2023), particularly when they discuss how Orbán utilized “collective egoism” in order to link economic hardships directly to sanctions, and rally popular sentiment against additional sanctions (p. 270). However, the findings of this thesis do challenge a specific claim made by Madlovics and Magyar (2023) that “the regime did try to reduce the visibility of the refugees.” (p. 268). The government may have tried to literally reduce the visibility of refugees through certain actions, but from the perspective of communication, the results of this thesis show that ministers regularly boasted about Hungary’s humanitarian efforts aimed at supporting refugees fleeing the conflict (Orbán, 2022a, 2022c, 2022d, 2022j, 2023c; Sütő-Nagy, 2023; Szijjártó, 2022b, 2022e, 2023d, 2023f). Additionally, the ministers’ humanitarian approach to this conflict allowed for certain

statements to fulfill the necessary criteria to be coded as an EU-coinciding interpretation of human rights. For instance, in an English speech presented at the U.N., Szijjártó claimed that “Up to now, we have received more than a million refugees. Obviously, we ensure their full and equal access to our education and health care system.” (Szijjártó, 2023d, 1:27).

Figure 4.1 Russo-Ukrainian War



Ministers were likewise eager to shift the focus point of the conflict to Hungary and this is clear considering that this sub-code (6.4) was mentioned the most within the sources. This included statements emphasizing how certain actions, namely energy sanctions, are not in the interest of the Hungarian economy and that Hungary must remain as far away from the conflict as possible (Juhász, 2022; Kereki & Szalai, 2022; Orbán 2022a, 2022b, 2022c, 2022g, 2022j, 2022n, 2023c, 2023e; Szijjártó, 2022a, 2022e, 2023e). While this standpoint may be understandable from a realist perspective on international relations, it is certainly questionable in Hungary’s case. This is because Hungary is a member of both the EU and NATO. As a member of these organizations, it is expected that Hungary would continue to advocate for policies that are beneficial to the Hungarians, but it is also expected that Hungary demonstrate unity with these organizations, even if that requires certain concessions.

It must be considered, however, how other factors may be influencing the Hungarian Government's approach to this conflict. Madlovics and Magyar (2023) present a convincing argument claiming that the financial ties Hungary has developed with Russia over the years has forced Orbán to develop an “anti-Ukrainian and pro-Russian populist narrative” (p. 277). As a result, Madlovics and Magyar (2023) argue that the Hungarian Government is serving “Russian interests as a client autocrat in the EU” by vetoing sanctions and hindering other policies aimed at supporting Ukraine (p. 274). This is a possibility and Madlovics and Magyar (2023) present convincing arguments supporting this claim, however, this thesis was unable to find comments by ministers explicitly expressing support for Russia. Nevertheless, this may be a case where actions speak louder than words. Moreover, if Madlovics and Magyar's (2023) conclusions are correct, then the portrayal of Hungarian interests may merely serve as a front for the Hungarian Government to behave in ways that are acceptable to Russia.

Mentions of the other two conflicts were less present throughout the sources. Regarding the Azerbaijani-Armenian conflict, it was not possible to discover the opinions of officials when the second war began in September 2020. Nevertheless, opinions and perspectives were able to be extracted from the sources that did reference the conflict. Once again, the sources emphasize Hungarian interests, this time by accentuating Hungary's increasingly friendly relationship with Azerbaijan (Orbán, 2023a, 2023b). It is worthwhile to mention that while selecting sources for this thesis, specifically on Szijjártó's Facebook page there were numerous posts about Azerbaijan. However, they were not used for this thesis as they did not reference the Azerbaijani-Armenian conflict in question, but instead focused extensively on Azerbaijan's gas reserves and the potential for Hungary to expand in this area. Nevertheless, the sources that were used for this thesis were able to reveal certain perspectives on the conflict. The most revealing of which was Orbán's personal congratulations to Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev during a speech, stating:

I would like to take this moment to wish good luck to President Aliyev in his work to stabilize the region (Nagorno-Karabakh) and good luck to the efforts aimed at

rebuilding Karabakh. Congratulations, deeply respected President! ¹⁰ (Orbán, 2023g, para. 1)

This statement demonstrates the profound level of personal respect Orbán has for Aliyev and shows that, unlike other European leaders, Orbán does not view it as necessary to condemn Azerbaijan's most recent actions in the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Asides from this, calls for negotiations and peace were yet again prevalent across the sources (Szijjártó, 2021a, 2021b, 2023l, 2023s). From these statements, it appears that Hungary wishes to see the peaceful and immediate end to all conflicts. However, Szijjártó (2021a) did specify that “Hungary has always stood out for Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity”¹¹, which underpins the Hungarian Foreign Ministry’s declaration of Hungary’s support of Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity in the early stages of the conflict (Buzna, 2020). Furthermore, greater support was offered to Azerbaijan in comparison to Armenia. The only instances of support to Armenia were the Hungarian Military’s support in returning Armenian prisoners of war to Armenia (Szijjártó, 2021b), and financial support to the Armenian Government for Armenians who had to flee the Nagorno-Karabakh region (Szijjártó, 2023s), all of which is part of an effort to normalize frozen diplomatic relations between Hungary and Armenia. On the other hand, Szijjártó boasted about the Hungarian Government’s support in helping Azerbaijan rebuild the Karabakh region (Szijjártó, 2021a, 2023u). Although calls for negotiations and peace continued to reappear within statements, the Hungarian Government has clearly chosen to support Azerbaijan in this conflict.

¹⁰ Original sentence: És, Elnök úr, szeretném megragadni az alkalmat, hogy sok sikert kívánjak Alijev elnök úrnak a térség stabilizálása érdekében végzett munkájához és sok sikert a karabahi újjáépítési munkálatokhoz is. Gratulálunk, mélyen tisztelt Elnök úr!

¹¹ Original sentence: Magyarország mindig is kiállt Azerbajdzsán területi integritása mellett és a konfliktusok tárgyalásos megoldását pártoltuk.

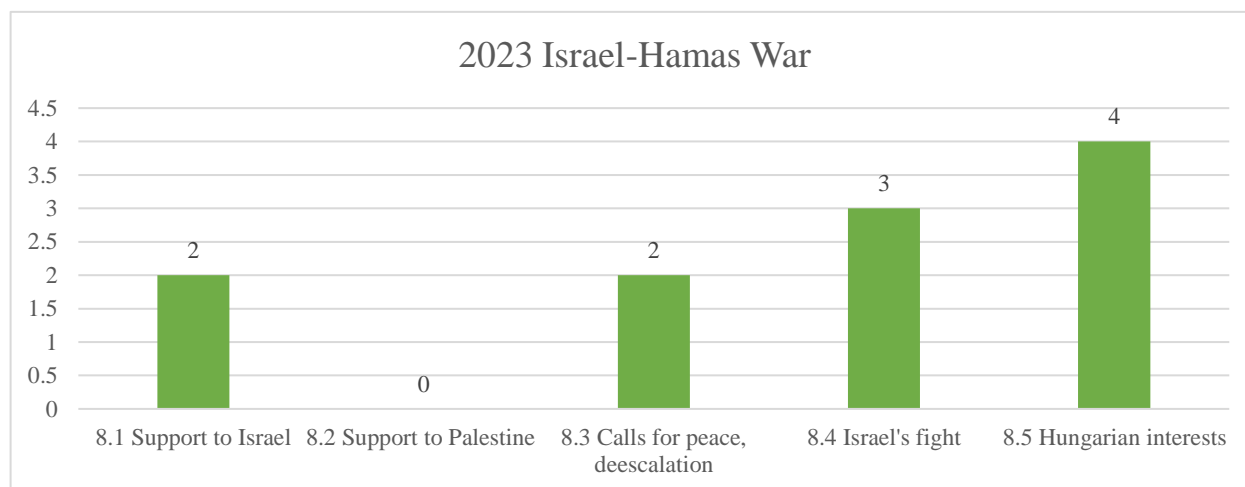
Figure 4.2, Azerbaijan-Armenia Conflict



Finally, the results of the coding pertaining to the 2023 Israeli-Palestinian War can be observed in Figure 3.3. Once more, Hungarian interests was the most communicated frame in this conflict. However, unlike the other two conflicts, Szijjártó mainly directed the focus of his statements to update the audience about the loss, injury, or kidnapping of any Hungarian citizens during the beginning of the crisis (Szijjártó, 2023o, 2023p, 2023q). Thus, in comparison to the two other conflicts, there was no emphasis about Hungarian economic interests, but the focus was solely on humanitarian and safety matters. Besides this, Szijjártó accentuated the support of the Hungarian government of Israel's right to defend itself (Szijjártó, 2023o, 2023p, 2023q, 2023r), alongside calls urging de-escalation of the conflict, so that it does not spill out into neighboring states (Szijjártó, 2023p, 2023q).

These three conflicts demonstrate that the Hungarian Government is attempting to adopt an individualistic and realist position on foreign policy matters. The issue with this stance on foreign policy is that it ultimately hinders the possibility of conducting foreign policy on an EU level, as compromises regarding Hungary's interests would ultimately have to be made at some points. Overall, the placement of Hungarian interests is the frequently reoccurring frame justifying the Hungarian Government's decision on issues directly related to CFSP.

Figure 4.3, Israel-Hamas War



5.4 The Hungarian Government's Strategy?

In light of these findings, it is now worth considering what the Hungarian Government's overall strategy with the EU may be. The expectations laid out within this thesis argue that the Hungarian Government distances itself ideologically from the EU as evidenced by its approach to values, continues to degrade the EU via the politicization of enemies, and continues to disrupt CFSP by portraying its foreign policy decisions as in the interest of Hungarians. Thus, these findings all point towards a scenario whereby the Hungarian Government increasingly distances itself strategically from all aspects of the EU. For example, it interprets EU values in EU-coinciding ways when it suits the interests of the government, but demonstrates a disregard for EU values in other scenarios. Likewise, CFSP is a useful tool when it serves the interests of the government, but otherwise Hungary will continue to disrupt the CFSP of the EU if it fails to suit its interests, and does so under the guise of protecting the interests of the Hungarian people.

Thus, having examined and analyzed these expectations in light of the new data collected, it can now be observed whether the distancing of the Hungarian Government from the EU can be situated into a more concise category. This will be evaluated through the aforementioned potential scenarios as laid out by Political Capital's (2023) report: Hungary exits the EU (Huxit), Hungary shifts to the periphery of the EU and abstains from greater integration, the status quo remains, Hungary returns to the EU (in a positive manner), or the EU becomes overtaken with governments and parties sympathetic to the Hungarian Government (Political Capital, 2023, pp. 31-33).

Regarding the first scenario, it is very unlikely that the Hungarian Government will leave the EU anytime soon. While there were various statements criticizing the pace and direction of EU integration, “Brussels”, and the current actions EU institutions are taking against Hungary, there were no statements within the investigation that raised the possibility of a “Huxit”. In fact, Orbán (2022i) made it explicitly clear that he “continues to see Hungary as a part of the European Union in the future”¹² (para. 7). The Political Capital (2023, pp. 31-32) report and Madlovics and Magyar (2023, pp. 271-276) likewise conclude that a Huxit is a very unlikely scenario. Considering these conclusions alongside the new pieces of evidence, Hungary will undoubtedly continue to remain a part of the EU for the foreseeable future.

The current Hungarian Government returning to the EU as a positive, integrationist actor anytime soon also appears to be unlikely considering the data collected and analyzed in this thesis. The results of this investigation show that the communication of ministers towards EU integration, aside from security and defense integration, remains negative and is accentuated by the ministers’ clear misinterpretation of EU values. Likewise, the continuing politicization of enemies, combined with the broadening of who/what is considered as an enemy, further dismantles the possibility of this scenario.

A likely scenario is one in which the Hungarian Government shifts to the periphery of the EU and attempts to opt out from greater integration in the future, while continuing to enjoy certain benefits of EU membership. The Commission’s recent decision to free up some of the funding for Hungary foreshadows the possibility that Hungary will eventually receive the rest of its funding, perhaps indicating that the financial element to Kelemen’s (2020) authoritarian equilibrium may be returning. This may result in a situation to develop whereby the EU continues to provide funds to Hungary, even though some necessary reforms to solve the rule of law and democratic deficit crisis may remain absent. This could lead to the scenario expanded upon by Bozóki and Hegedűs (2018) whereby Hungary would continue to move into authoritarianism within the EU if the EU were to no longer function “as a political community of liberal democracies based on mutual values and interests” (p. 1182). While the situation does not appear to be this dire at the moment, the possibility of such a situation cannot be ruled out.

¹² Original sentence: “mi továbbra is az Európai Unió belül képzeljük el Magyarország jövőjét”

The status quo is likely to remain as well. Regarding domestic politics, this thesis is unable to provide concrete predictions within that area considering the scope of analysis. However, prior to and after the elections, the ministers observed employed intense and charged language against opposition figures, as elaborated upon in section 5.1 and 5.2. Despite these unfounded, and occasionally outrageous claims, Fidesz was able to win yet another two-thirds majority in parliament. This scenario also implies the development of a status quo in the relationship between the Hungarian Government and the EU, where the Hungarian Government continues to actively disrupt the functioning of the EU by, for instance, using its veto powers in CFSP as a negotiation tool.

Finally, predictions as to whether there will be a dramatic shift within the EU concerning the distribution of parties in the EP, as well as in governments across Europe, remains left to be seen. According to the Political Capital (2023, p. 33) report, this does not seem likely at the time being. This is a question that can receive a predictive answer through a thorough analysis of polls and voting trends within Europe, which is also out of the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, were such a shift towards Eurosceptic parties and governments to occur, the EU would likely undergo various transformations, some of which may resemble the reforms the ministers analyzed in this thesis actively called for.

Overall, in light of the new evidence this thesis has presented, out of five scenarios presented by Political Capital (2023), the status quo remaining, along with a shift of Hungary to the periphery of the EU appear to be the most likely strategic scenarios, which are also the conclusions reached by Political Capital (2023, pp. 32-33). However, it is necessary to consider other potential strategies. An alternative scenario that the results of this thesis can support is one in which Hungary remains in the EU and shifts towards authoritarianism, as outlined by (Bozóki and Hegedűs, 2018) and, instead of Hungary shifting closer towards the EU, the EU would shift closer to Hungary. In order for this to happen, the EU would need to be overtaken with governments and parties supportive of Hungary, as outlined by Political Capital (2023), and the EU would also need to fall into a state whereby there is a disregard for its norms and values (Bozóki and Hegedűs, 2018; Matthijs & Kelemen, 2015). Nevertheless, the question remains to be asked as to how Hungary could contribute to the creation of such a scenario.

Referring back to the concept of normative power Europe (Manners, 2002) and considering the ambiguity of norms and values (Mos, 2020), it is interesting to consider how these values are powerful tools that may be used to further anti-EU interests. For instance, in section 5.1, it was shown how ministers were able to interpret values in EU-coinciding ways when it served their interests, namely to prevent greater cooperation between the EU and Ukraine. It is interesting to consider how this logic may be expanded into other realms, and how the ambiguity of norms and values can be molded in ways that serve Fidesz' interests within the EU. Mos (2020) demonstrates how Orbán was able to use the ambiguity of values to legitimize the behavior of the Hungarian Government, but this logic can be expanded outside of Hungary's borders to other EU member states. In this sense, as long as values remain ambiguous, the Hungarian Government can continue to portray itself as adhering to those values. This, in combination with an ambitious policy to expand the EU to Hungary-friendly states (Huszka, 2017), may result in Hungary being able to gradually transform the EU into an alliance where it is no longer an outlier.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis has been able to provide insight on a variety of issues and topics. Having collected and analyzed data, and referring back to the main research question, *What does the communication of Hungarian Government ministers on EU values and CFSP issues reveal about Hungary's strategy regarding the EU?*, several conclusions can now be provided. Firstly, ministers within the Hungarian Government are interpreting values in EU-conflicting ways, which demonstrates the Hungarian Government's ideological shift away from the EU. The implications of this are profound, as this finding demonstrates that the Hungarian Government is heading in a direction opposite to what the EU would like to witness. Furthermore, instead of correcting its mistakes and understanding the fundamental values in the ways the EU would expect, the Hungarian Government is doubling-down on its own interpretations.

Secondly, the Hungarian Government continues to create and politicize enemies. Whether it be Brussels, opposition politicians, or refugees, there is always an enemy to blame for domestic and international issues. This politicization of enemies continues to rely heavily upon the portrayal of Brussels as an existential threat, alongside calls to reform the EU, thereby leading ministers to degrade the EU as a whole.

Finally, the perspectives of the ministers on foreign policy issues has shown that even the issues highly relevant within the CFSP of the EU, the ministers of the Hungarian Government continue to act as if the government is merely putting the interests of Hungary and Hungarians first. This approach to foreign policy demonstrates a lack of awareness surrounding the far-reaching effects of today's global conflicts, which necessitate a united response from the EU. Moreover, it illustrates how the Hungarian Government will continue to act as a disrupter within CFSP so long as it continues to portray Hungarian interests in opposition to the interests of the rest of the EU's member states.

All of these elements are evident of a shift away from the EU, although not an exit from the EU. It remains to be seen whether that shift will occur in a form whereby the Hungarian Government continues to opt out from greater integration, or whether the Hungarian Government is aspirational on transforming the EU from within. Based on the extensive rhetoric of officials affirming Hungary's place within the EU, while simultaneously urging for reforms, the latter is more likely.

Several next steps can be taken in this area for further research. A potential starting point could be an analysis into the use of values and the Hungarian Government's approach to different aspects of EU enlargement. Several questions could be raised, namely why does Hungary support grant candidate status to certain member states, but not others? This could help to further understand the motivations of Hungary in relation to other aspects of the EU. Additionally, it would be interesting to compare the rhetoric of Hungarian ministers, with that of other EU member states. This would allow the placement of the rhetoric of Hungarian ministers into perspective with other ministers and provide the opportunity for comparison.

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Appendix A

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Appendix B

Code	Sub-code and Code Specification(s)	Explanation and Example(s)	
1.0. Mention of EU Value	1.1. Human Dignity	1.1.1. EU-Coinciding	References, statements, and allusions to TEU Article 2 values are coded under their respective value and further categorized into EU-coinciding, neutral, or EU-Conflicting categories. This occurs for all 6 values mentioned in TEU Article 2 (Human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law, and human rights). See Appendix C for an extensive explanation corresponding to each value.
		1.1.2. Neutral	
		1.1.3. EU-Conflicting	
	1.2. Freedom	1.2.1. EU-Coinciding	
		1.1.2. Neutral	
		1.1.3. EU-Conflicting	
1.3.		
2.0. Nationalism	2.1. Mention and appeals to the Hungarian nation; presenting Hungarians and/or the nation as unique regarding culture, history, behavior, etc.; emphasizing the greatness of Hungary, Hungarians	This code incorporates references, mentions and proclamations of nationalism. Nationalist elements are frequently mentioned by Hungarian Government officials and therefore receives its own code instead of being listed as a sub-code under code 4.0. Fidesz values. Additionally, references to Hungarian minorities living in surrounding countries will be particularly important to observe considering the presence of Hungarian minorities in Ukraine.	
	2.2. Appealing to Hungarian minorities abroad in Ukraine, Slovakia, Romania, etc.		
	2.3. Equating Fidesz with the Hungarian nation		
3.0. Common Enemies	3.1. Negative comments about “Brussels”, Western-media, liberalism, leftists, Soros, etc.	The idea of common enemies are commonly reappearing frames in the discourse of government officials (Sata, 2023). The extent to which these “enemies” are mentioned, and the ways in which they are mentioned, reveals a significant deal about what Hungarian Government ministers perceive as threats. The three sub-code categories stem from the findings of Sata (2023), as well as the various national consultations the Hungarian government has initiated around these issues	
	3.2. Migration, migration policy, 2015 migration crisis, etc.		
	3.3. Gender, gender ideology, gender-politics, claims of indoctrination, etc.		

		(Pócza, 2022). Comments referencing the alleged evils of progressive liberalism, or theories supposing that the EU or some other actor wishes to take away the liberties of Hungarians are further examples of what can be coded under sub-code 3.1.
4.0. Fidesz values	4.1. Family, the importance of family, etc.	This code entails mentions of so-called “Fidesz values”. These are policy areas and ideologies that contain undeniable value elements. The three sub-codes are chosen to be included under the more general code because these three constantly reappear in the sources analyzed. An observation on which of these values adopts a position of greater accentuation sheds light on the priorities of the Fidesz-led government. Another possibility is that all three of the values appear in an equal manner, which would also provide impetus for analysis.
	4.2. Safety and security	
	4.3. Christianity, Christian culture, Christian democracy, Christian roots, etc.	
5.0 References to the EU/Europe	5.1 EU/Europe must reform; Hungary as a model for the future of Europe	This section codes for the perspectives of government ministers towards the EU and greater integration. Sub-code 5.1 codes for statements where an official calls for partial or total reform of an EU policy or the EU in general. Such statements are made evident through calls for a “Europe of nations”, which is essentially interpreted as a Europe where cooperation only occurs to limited degrees and funding continues to flow unconditionally (Madlovics & Magyar, 2023). Additionally, it is expected that officials will attempt to portray the Hungarian model of governance as a model for other EU countries to follow. This area is especially important to analyze as its occurrence may help support expectation.
	5.2. Generally positive references to the EU, general EU policy; support for greater integration in an area; emphasis of EU solidarity, etc.	
	5.3. Generally negative references to the EU, general EU policy; disapproval of further integration in an area; emphasis of EU weaknesses, etc.	

		Sub-codes 5.2 and 5.3 are more general comments expressing positive attitudes or negative attitudes towards greater EU integration and/or initiatives, respectively.
6.0. Russo-Ukrainian War and EU-Ukraine policy	6.1. Direct condemnation of Russia, Russian aggression	<p>This section is extensive and attempts to highlight the broader approach the Hungarian government has had in approaching the War in Ukraine.</p> <p>The aim is to firstly be able to observe any shifts in the discourse related to the war and to be able to explain potential reasons for such shifts. Secondly, the aim is to observe the reasons why the Hungarian Government continues to hinder support for Ukraine, and to observe whether the rhetoric of ministers is as isolationist as the approach of the government to the issue. Finally, coding for these elements will be useful for further comparison with the Hungarian government’s approach to other conflicts, namely the Israel-Hamas War and the recent incursion of Azerbaijan into Nagorno-Karabakh.</p> <p>6.4 is particularly interesting to observe as it relates directly to Expectation 3. This sub-code deals with remarks about the conflict where Hungary, Hungarian citizens, and general Hungarian interests are put to the forefront of the discussion about the conflict. For example, statements accentuating the impact of the conflict on the Hungarian economy or highlighting the “interest of Hungarians”, whatever such interests may entail, are coded under this sub-code.</p>
	6.2. Support and calls for stricter sanctions/action to be taken against Russia	
	6.3. Calls for peace (regardless of the costs)	
	6.4. Rationalist, nation-centered approach to the issue; observing the issue through the lens of power politics; putting Hungarian economic and political interests first; making the issue about Hungarians and Hungary	
	6.5. Claims that the West, Brussels, leftist, etc. want to drag Hungary into the war	
	6.6. Support and calls for less sanctions and action	
	6.7. References to “fake news” about Hungarian position	
	6.8. Offers of humanitarian aid and support to Ukraine, i.e., through the acceptance of refugees	
	6.9 European strategy does not work	
	6.10. Hungary stands with Ukraine, supports Ukraine’s territorial integrity	
7.0 Azerbaijan-Armenia Conflict	7.1. Congratulating Azerbaijan on its victories	The approach of officials to this conflict is coded in similar as other conflicts. It will be observed whether officials condemn a certain actor in the conflict. It will also be
	7.2. Accentuating the relationship between Azerbaijan and Hungary	

	<p>7.3. Condemnation of Armenia</p> <p>7.4. Condemnation of Azerbaijan</p> <p>7.5. Offering support to Armenia</p> <p>7.6. Offering support to Azerbaijan</p> <p>7.7. Calls for peace, negotiations</p>	<p>observed whether officials offer support to either of the actors within this conflict, as well as what type of support is offered (financial, military, humanitarian, etc.) These details will be revealed within the results and analysis section of this thesis.</p> <p>Likewise, it will be observed whether officials called/call for peace in this conflict, as the same occurs for the two other conflicts falling under the scope of analysis. Similar to code 6.4, sub-code 7.2 likewise focuses on accentuating Hungary's benefits in its relationship with Azerbaijan.</p>
8.0 Israeli-Hamas War	<p>8.1. Offering support to Israel</p> <p>8.2. Offering support to Palestinian groups and organizations</p> <p>8.3. Calls for peace, ceasefires, pauses in the fighting, or de-escalation</p> <p>8.4. Urging Israel to continue its fight, acknowledging right to self-defense</p> <p>8.5. Emphasizing Hungarian interests</p>	<p>These logic of these codes follow the same criteria as laid out in the codes covering the other two conflicts.</p>

Appendix C

Value	Explanation	Examples
Human Dignity	<p>Human dignity is concerned with the prohibition of torture and respect of bodily integrity (Boekestein, 2022, p. 441).</p> <p>EU-coinciding statements acknowledge the need to prohibit torture and respect the bodily integrity of all individuals.</p> <p>EU-conflicting values disregard these necessities and permit, or encourage, the torture of individuals or disregard of bodily integrity.</p>	No examples of this value appearing were found in the sources analyzed.
Freedom	<p>The value of freedom “embodies the rejection of tyranny and embrace of individual autonomy” (Boekestein, 2022, p. 441). Articles 10-12 CFREU include the freedom of expression, assembly, thought, religion, and conscience is present. Additionally, the value of freedom is linked to the freedom and right to private life, the protection of personal data, freedom of movement of persons and economic rights (Boekestein, 2022, p. 442; European Union, 2010, pp. 393-394).</p> <p>EU-coinciding understandings of freedom underpin the aforementioned characteristics of freedom. For instance, if a minister comments on the right of citizens to conduct their life in the way they see fit, this is considered to be an EU-coinciding understanding of this value.</p> <p>EU-conflicting understandings of freedom are those which either deny the aforementioned characteristics, or place limits on these characteristics. For instance, if a minister discusses how people are free to do what they wish, but then</p>	<p>EU-coinciding:</p> <p>Orbán: “Hungary is a free country. As an adult, people are free to decide how they wish to live their lives”</p> <p>Original: "Magyarország szabad ország, felnőttként mindenki úgy él, ahogy akar" (Kereki & Szalai, 2022, para. 24)</p> <p>This statement respects the rights of people to live how they wish to live. Moreover, this specific statement does not place restrictions on a person’s freedom in anyway.</p> <p>EU-conflicting:</p> <p>Orbán: “If someone knows, accepts, and claims the common language, history, and culture as their</p>

	<p>proceeds to attach a limit on this behavior (i.e., you can say this, but cannot say that), then this is an EU-conflicting understanding.</p>	<p>own, then they become a complete part of the nation and are therefore free.”</p> <p>Original: “Ha valaki ismeri, elfogadja és magáénak vallja a közös nyelvet, történelmet és kultúrát, akkor a nemzet teljes jogú része, s ezáltal szabad.”</p> <p>The reason this statement is considered to be EU-conflicting is because it directly attaches the meaning of freedom to nationalism. This is not a prerequisite for freedom within the CFREU. (Orbán, 2023d, para. 7)</p>
Democracy	<p>Democracy entails free, fair, secret, and regular elections. Inherent to these criteria is the notion that elections have the capacity to facilitate a change in government (Boekestein, 2022, p. 442). In other words, it is not considered as democratic to merely have secret and regular elections, if these elections are held in unfair conditions benefitting a specific political party or candidate. For the sake of the specificity of this thesis, a further condition is added to these criteria which is the respect for democratic institutions.</p> <p>A section is coded as EU-coinciding if it appears to adhere to European understandings of the given value. For instance, if the mention of democracy adheres to an undeniable and clear adherence to the values of democracy, it can be considered as EU-coinciding. Similarly, this means the acceptance of elections as legitimate and as a means of people to express their free will in choosing politicians.</p>	<p>EU-Coinciding:</p> <p>Orbán: “Out of democracy can grow liberal, conservative, Christian-democratic, even socialist governments. No one has ever qualified democracy before because democracy is the basis from which governments with different worldviews can grow and then compete with each other”</p> <p>Original "Demokráciából kinőhet liberális kormányzat, konzervatív, kereszténydemokrata kormányzat, sőt szociáldemokrata kormányzat is. A demokráciát magát soha senki nem minősítette korábban, hiszen a demokrácia az alap, amiből a különböző világnézetű kormányzati politikák kinőnek, s aztán versenyeznek egymással" (Kereki & Szalai, 2022, para. 28)</p>

	<p>A section is coded as EU-conflicting if it deviates from typical European or “liberal” understandings of the value in question. Yet again referring to the value of democracy, this could entail calls for an overhaul of existing democratic institutions, the failure to acknowledge the legitimacy of European democracy, deliberate attempts at manipulating voters’ free choice, populist understandings of democracy, etc. Additionally, EU-conflicting statements occur when the opposition (in this case to Fidesz) is labelled in unfounded ways, with the attempt to delegitimize their campaign program and portray them as evil opponents.</p>	<p>This statement acknowledges the rights of citizens to make free choices during elections. Simultaneously, the statement acknowledges the legitimacy of the European Parliament elections, hence legitimizing democratic processes.</p> <p>EU-Conflicting:</p> <p>Orbán: “Democracy is a definition in itself. It means the rule of the people.”</p> <p>Original: "A demokrácia egy önálló fogalom, a nép uralmát jelenti." (Kereki & Szalai, 2022, para. 27)</p> <p>While this statement is not incorrect per se, it does deviate from typical understandings of liberal democracy, towards a more populist definition that disregards the protection of minority rights. Democracy is more complicated than mere rule by the people.</p>
Equality	<p>Equality concerns equality between men and women, non-discrimination on the basis of immutable characteristics, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, age, disability, etc. In addition, equality requires equal treatment of all before the law, as well as respect for different minorities within society (European Union, 2010, pp. 395-397).</p> <p>EU-coinciding statements must understand and affirm these characteristics. If an official affirms the equality of a</p>	<p>EU-coinciding:</p> <p>Orbán: “At the best time, for the first time in our history, a woman is the President of Hungary.”</p> <p>Original: “A legjobb pillanatban lett – először történelmünk során – éppen egy nő Magyarország köztársasági elnöke.” (Orbán, 2022g, para. 12)</p>

	<p>minority group within society under the law, that is sufficient.</p> <p>EU-conflicting interpretations yet again attaches certain conditions to equality. Furthermore, the exclusion of certain groups or people from receiving equal treatment is viewed as a flawed and incorrect notion of equality. Equality must be applied without any limitations or exclusions.</p>	<p>The reason this is an EU-coinciding interpretation of equality is because it acknowledges the importance of implementing equality throughout all aspects of life, even at the highest levels of government. Moreover, it implies that women and men alike have equal opportunities.</p> <p>EU-conflicting:</p> <p>Orbán: “And we will not give up our bravest plan either, that the financial situation of families with children should be better than of those who do not have children”</p> <p>Original: “És nem adjuk fel a legmerészebb tervünket sem, hogy a gyermekes családok anyagi helyzete is jobb legyen, mint azoké, akik nem vállalnak gyermeket.” (Orbán, 2023c, para. 9)</p> <p>This is an EU-conflicting interpretation of equality because it clearly aspires to create (financial) inequality between different groups in society.</p>
Rule of Law	<p>Rule of law refers to the respect and adherence to judicial independence and impartiality (Boeckstein, 2022, p. 442). Inherent to this definition is the separation of powers, impartiality of legal decisions, fair trials, etc. Additionally, the rule of law is also interpreted here as an acceptance and understanding of EU law, alongside acknowledgements of EU legal precedence over national law and the legitimacy of EU legal institutions. Additionally, references to “European</p>	<p>EU-coinciding:</p> <p>Tuzson: “The Constitutional Court has a task regarding this, of course in an independent manner”</p>

	<p>values” are also coded under this sub-code, as the importance of values in relation to the legal system of the EU was previously elaborated upon.</p> <p>EU-coinciding interpretations of this value thus acknowledge the importance of the separation of powers, independent judiciary, etc. Simultaneously, an EU-coinciding interpretation would acknowledge the supremacy of EU law over national law and the legitimacy of CJEU court rulings. Coinciding statements may also include clear attempts aimed at strengthening the rule of law within Hungary.</p> <p>EU-conflicting statements attempt to downplay the importance of the separation of powers and independence within the judiciary. Statements attempting to delegitimize or minimize the importance of EU legal institutions and proceedings are also considered to be conflicting with EU understandings of this value. Additionally, attempts to politicize judicial proceedings, or portray such proceedings as merely political tools are also labeled as conflicting.</p>	<p>Original “Feladata van az Alkotmánybíróságnak is ezzel kapcsolatban, természetesen független módon” (Ternovác, 2023, para. 7)</p> <p>This is an EU-coinciding statement because it clearly acknowledges the need of courts to function independently.</p> <p>EU-conflicting:</p> <p>Gulyás: “Today, this is no longer a legal question, seeing as Brussels no longer has any sound legal objections. We even found solutions to the requirements that were pulled out at midnight. Only a political decision will be the final compromise.”</p> <p>Original: “Ez ma már nem jogi kérdés, hiszen jogilag semmilyen megalapozott felvetése sincs már Brüsszelnek, a hajánál fogva előrangotott követeléseikre is találtunk megoldást. Kizárólag politikai döntés a végleges megegyezés.” (Sütő-Nagy, 2023, para. 6)</p> <p>This statement is EU-conflicting because it views the current EU procedures against Hungary which concern the rule of law as purely political.</p>
Human Rights	Human rights encompass the entirety of the CFREU, making it by far the broadest value to define and interpret (Boeckstein, 2022, p. 443). However, for the purposes of this thesis certain rights are brought to the forefront. As a result, it is useful to emphasize certain rights that are	<p>EU-coinciding:</p> <p>Orbán: “Adjusted to population, we have accepted to most refugees, and those who need help, we provide it. We will help Ukrainian refugees”</p>

	<p>categorized solely under this value and remains absent from other values. These include the right for private and family life, the right to marry and found a family, and the right to asylum. Alongside these rights, the value of human rights is interpreted as respect for the decisions of others, so long as those decisions do not harm others.</p> <p>An EU-coinciding statement understands the importance of protecting these rights. Additionally, these rights are to be understood as applicable to all.</p> <p>An EU-conflicting statement would entail the adoption of a discriminatory position against a person's human rights. In other words, acknowledging the necessity of human rights in one area or for one group of people, while clearly disregarding them in another area or for another group of people, is interpreted as EU-conflicting. Furthermore, the minimization of human rights is also interpreted as EU-conflicting.</p>	<p>Original: "Létszámarányosan a legtöbb menekültöt mi engedjük be, és akit kell, el is látunk. Segíteni fogjuk az ukrán menekülteket." (Orbán, 2022j, para. 5)</p> <p>This is an EU-coinciding interpretation because it acknowledges the responsibility states have to accept and protect refugees.</p> <p>EU-Conflicting:</p> <p>Orbán (the original language of this quote is English): "So we are able to make a difference: who is a migrant, they are coming from the South, stopped, fence; and who is a refugee. It's two different words in the Hungarian language. Migrants: stop. Refugees can get all the help." (Orbán, 2022d, para. 10)</p> <p>This is an EU-conflicting definition of human rights because, while a legalistic definition between illegal immigrants and refugees can be made, the clear distinction made here is one based on geography. This also implies that discrimination and grouping into these categories occurs on the basis of geography.</p>
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