

Abstract

Hungary is a country with a dual reputation, as an exemplar for democratic backsliding in Europe, but also as an ideological hub for conservative political thought. This research examines conservative media framing of democratic backsliding in Hungary under Viktor Orbán, focusing on how different types of democratic transgressions, or challenges to democracy, are portrayed by the media from 2011 to 2022. A frame analysis is conducted on U.S. conservative media to determine if there is variance in the framings of four different democratic transgressions. The findings show that conservative media does in fact frame violations of the law, violations of democratic norms, violations of ideals and power-consolidating changes to democratic institutions differently. These findings indicate a complex relationship between conservative ideology and the portrayal of democratic backsliding, suggesting that conservative media may prioritize ideological alignment over democratic principles. Furthermore, the impact and growing popularity of “national conservatism” on the frame results is considered. This study contributes to scholarly understandings of how conservative media sources portray democratic decline to ideologically aligned audiences and highlights the influence of transnational political movements on democratic standards.

Keywords

Hungary, Viktor Orbán, Democratic Backsliding, Media Framing, Democratic Transgressions, National Conservatism, Frame Analysis, Conservative Politics