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Political Styles During the 2022 Election Campaign in Hungary

The method of researching political style¹

(Politikai stílusok a 2022-es magyarországi választási kampány során. A politikai stílus kutatásának módszere)

Abstract

Political style is a key multimodal resource through which political actors construct authority and meaning, yet research often isolates single modalities, overlooking how verbal and visual cues interact in digital campaigning. This study develops a multimodal approach to political style and applies it to the Facebook communication of two central figures in the 2022 Hungarian parliamentary election: Péter Márki-Zay, the opposition's joint prime ministerial candidate, and incumbent Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. Drawing on Robert Hariman's typology of realist, courtly, republican, and bureaucratic styles, the analysis operationalizes indicators suitable for multimodal content analysis and integrates them with insights from social semiotic theory. The findings reveal sharply contrasting stylistic profiles: Márki-Zay primarily employs republican and bureaucratic elements, whereas Orbán's communication is dominated by courtly, bureaucratic, and realist modes. These results show that political style emerges as a hybrid configuration shaped by institutional position, challenger versus incumbent, and demonstrate the value of multimodal methods for analyzing contemporary political communication.

¹ Certain parts of this study have previously appeared in the following publication: Lovász, Dorottya: Márki-Zay Péter politikai stílusa. A politikai stílus kutatásának módszere. Politikatudományi Szemle 2024/2. 81-105.o.,

Keywords

political style, Péter Márki-Zay, Viktor Orbán, multimodality, social semiotics, social media

Absztrakt

A politikai stílus olyan kulcsfontosságú multimodális erőforrás, amelyen keresztül a politikai szereplők felépítik tekintélyüket és jelentéseket hoznak létre, ám a kutatások gyakran egyetlen modalitást vizsgálnak, figyelmen kívül hagyva, hogyan hatnak egymásra a verbális és vizuális jelek a digitális kampányokban. Jelen tanulmány egy multimodális megközelítést mutat be a politikai stílus vizsgálatára, és alkalmazza azt a 2022-es magyarországi országgyűlési választás két meghatározó szereplőjének – Márki-Zay Péter, az ellenzék közös miniszterelnök-jelöltje, valamint Orbán Viktor hivatalban lévő miniszterelnök – Facebook-kommunikációjára. Robert Hariman realista, udvari, köztársasági és bürokratikus stílusokra épülő tipológiájából kiindulva a tanulmány olyan indikátorokat operacionalizál, amelyek alkalmasak multimodális tartalomelemzésre, és ezeket a társadalmi szemiotika elméleti meglátásaival integrálja. Az eredmények élesen eltérő stiláris profilokat mutatnak: Márki-Zay kommunikációját elsősorban köztársasági és bürokratikus elemek jellemzik, míg Orbán kommunikációját az udvari, bürokratikus és realista módok dominálják. A kutatás rámutat, hogy a politikai stílus hibrid konfigurációként jelenik meg, amit jelentősen alakít az intézményi pozíció – kihívó vagy hivatalban lévő –, és egyben demonstrálja a multimodális módszerek értékét a kortárs politikai kommunikáció elemzésében.

Kulcsszavak

politikai stílus, Márki-Zay Péter, Orbán Viktor, multimodalitás, társadalom szemiotika, közösségi média

Introduction

Style is a concept with several meanings in political science. While in the ancient Greek rhetorical tradition, it was understood as speech appropriate to the occasion², in voter behavior theory and gender studies it has been

² Fortenbaugh 2007.

treated as a factor influencing party choice³. Leadership studies often identify leadership style with effective political action⁴, while semiotic approaches define it as a combination of verbal and nonverbal signals⁵. These varying perspectives share a fundamental assumption: style is an essential element of politics and a powerful tool of persuasion.

Robert Hariman's *Political Style: The Artistry of Power*⁶ offers a novel viewpoint to political style by integrating rhetorical and semiotic approach through four ideal types, realist, bureaucratic, courtly, and republican, demonstrated via literary texts. However, Hariman's framework remains limited to textual analysis, overlooking the increasingly multimodal nature of contemporary political communication, particularly on social media platforms. Extending his model to include visual modes, such as still images, video, and body language, is both necessary and timely, given the central role that multimodality plays in today's political discourse. This paper seeks to bridge this gap by exploring how Hariman's typology can be adapted to analyze political communication in the hybrid textual and visual environment of social media.

The aim of this exploratory research is twofold. First, it operationalizes indicators from Hariman's four political style categories and adapts them into a typology suitable for identifying political styles in contemporary multimodal communication. Second, it applies this adapted typology to the case of Péter Márki-Zay, challenger to Prime Minister Viktor Orbán in the 2022 Hungarian parliamentary elections, and to Viktor Orbán himself, through the analysis of content published on their official Facebook pages. The analysis focuses specifically on two types of sources: text and still images. Although the original introduction referenced visual communication broadly, including moving images and body language, this study is limited to static visual and textual content. Future research will address additional modalities to further extend Hariman's framework.

The method of analysis is deductive content analysis using a social semiotic approach. The dataset consists of Facebook posts from 11 January 2022 to 30 April 2022, covering the official campaign period and its immediate aftermath.

In the first part of the paper, I review the main approaches to political style in the literature, followed by a presentation of Hariman's typology and methodology. I then describe the research design and present the results

³ Ankersmit 1996.; Pels 2003.; Hargrave & Blumenau 2022.

⁴ Mumford et al., 2001, 2007, 2008.

⁵ Charteris-Black 2007, 2011.

⁶ Hariman 1995.

of the analysis. The study concludes by identifying the dominant and secondary political styles in Márki-Zay's campaign communication and outlines future research directions. The analysis suggests that political styles function as ideal types and often appear in mixed form. Márki-Zay's communication was primarily characterized by the republican style, with notable elements of the bureaucratic and courtly styles, and minimal evidence of the realist style.

When applying the same framework to Viktor Orbán, the analysis found his communication to be dominated by the courtly style, supported by strong realist elements and supplemented by selective bureaucratic cues. Only limited traces of the republican style appeared. Together, these findings reinforce the utility of Hariman's typology even in the context of hybrid, multimodal social media communication, albeit with necessary adaptations and expansions.

Political Science and Style Research

According to the classical school of rhetoric, style meant a set of rhetorical conventions, including the choice of appropriate words⁷. The most important aspect was the selection of a style that was appropriate to the occasion to achieve the greatest possible impact on the audience⁸. Although the rhetorical tradition still has a significant influence on the study of political style today, two other approaches are more characteristic of style research in contemporary political science. One seeks to identify different leadership styles, which have mainly public policy connotations⁹. The other research direction is the semiotic approach, which, as a science of sign interpretation, investigates the origins, social embeddedness, and sign-making of political leaders' communicative gestures¹⁰.

Leadership studies look at governance and management styles. These researches explore the patterns of behavior that appear to be most effective in a given policy situation¹¹. The governance style is closest to public policy analysis. On the one hand, they discuss the use of public policy instruments and, on the other hand, the effectiveness of the utterances and gestures of influential public policy actors¹². To delineate leadership styles, there have

⁷ Fortenbaugh 2007.

⁸ Charteris-Black 2014.

⁹ Mumford et al. 2007.

¹⁰ Charteris-Black 2007, 2011, 2014.

¹¹ Charteris-Black 2017.

¹² Richardson et al. 1982.

been several attempts in the literature. In Burns'¹³ transactional and transformational models of leadership, the leader's goal is to achieve collective action. Vroom and Yetton's¹⁴ autocratic, consultative, group, and delegation models of leadership examine the exclusive or shared nature of decision-making. Mumford and co-authors'¹⁵ model describing charismatic, ideological, and pragmatic leadership styles (CIP model) suggests that a charismatic leader provides an identity to followers, while an ideological leader acts on the pre-existing identity of his/her constituents. A pragmatic leader is characterized by his/her rationality and respect for institutions¹⁶. Leadership research perspective analyses the relationship between style and leadership in the context of public policy and governance. The analyses identify a particular political action as style, but their definition has little connection with the common meaning of style or with the identification of style as the politician's charisma.

This research is critical of the public policy approach of leadership studies because it takes Robert Hariman's perspective and sees the worlds of politics and aesthetics as intertwined. There are more than just public policy tools to win voters, so communication style cannot be neglected when examining a particular political actor. Otherwise, we can only say something about a political actor in terms of his public policy functions, while completely ignoring his character and charisma. However, the latter two factors may nowadays have a greater impact on the electorate than a politician's ability to govern¹⁷.

In the semiotic tradition, the concept of style is nowadays more commonly understood as a category of aesthetics or consumption¹⁸. In this interpretation, an important basic assumption of political stylistics is that political actors use other means than texts to win voters, such as their voice, dress, or body language. Multimodality, which refers to the combination of two or more modes of communication to create meaning¹⁹, is becoming a basic premise of political communication. The multimodal turn has been caused by mediatization, i.e. the increasing role of media in society and politics²⁰. As a consequence of mediatization, physicality has become as important in politics as texts²¹. This research uses social semiotics to

¹³ Burns 1978.

¹⁴ Vroom & Yetton 1973.

¹⁵ Mumford et al., 2001, 2007, 2008.

¹⁶ Boda 2020:153., Kiss 2015., Kiss & Szabó 2018.

¹⁷ Benjamin & Shapiro 2009.

¹⁸ Kiss 2017a.

¹⁹ Jewitt et al. 2017.

²⁰ Mazzoleni & Schulz 1999.

²¹ Grabe & Bucy 2009.

analyze different modes of stylistic communication together, thus mainly relating it to the rhetorical and semiotic tradition.

The Approach and Method of Robert Hariman

Robert Hariman argues that modern social science and art are related²². However, a distinction must be made between aesthetics in the ordinary sense, the concept of art, and Hariman's approach. Hariman introduces the concept of aesthetics through the philosopher John Dewey's theory. Dewey uses the concept of *aesthetic experience* to criticize the art-bound approach to aesthetics. He moves aesthetics from the world of art to the social realm. The individual's experience of beauty in life is not limited to the arts. He looks for rhythmic and harmonious experiences in his own life that evoke a sense of beauty, an experience that can be evoked even by the style of a politician²³. This aesthetic experience is called aesthetic reaction.

Hariman uses the concept of style to link art and politics. Style is essentially a persuasive technique involving the artistic composition of gestures, linguistic elements that embellish writing and speech, and visual and audiovisual effects. Just as a painter chooses the right paint, colors, and composition for his work, a politician hierarchizes and applies his persuasive tools to win voters. Both processes are artistic and creative. Since politics is situational, the exercise of political style becomes an arena for political creativity. Accordingly, Hariman defines political style as follows:

Political style is a set of rules for speech and conduct guiding the alignment of signs and situations, or texts and acts, or behavior and place; informing practices of communication and display; operating through a repertoire of rhetorical conventions depending on aesthetic reactions; and determining individual identity, providing social cohesion, and distributing power²⁴.

Hariman's detailed definition of style shows that for him, style is not just about communication. The four styles he defines are a kind of political landscape. His innovative approach paved the way for research into the relationship between the politician and the citizen. Like how a politician

²² Hariman 1995.

²³ Dewey 1934.

²⁴ Hariman 1995. 187.

becomes a celebrity and draws on the style world of the electorate to achieve greater political success.

As persuasion techniques are not only examined at the level of words, political styles also distinguish between preferred and less preferred ways of communication. Each political style organizes the available modes of communication into a hierarchy of its choosing. In Hariman's *Political Style: The Artistry of Power*, Hariman distinguishes between four different political styles: realist, courtly, republican, and bureaucratic.

The realist style strives for a simple text structure and the description of reality without diction. The style is also characterized by the speaker's role as teacher and interpreter of events, providing the reader/observer only with the position of receiver. This interpretative constraint distances the world of politics and the world of texts. The speaker becomes the only link between the texts and the real world, saying that power is not textual and that politics is something to be done²⁵. In the political theory of the realist style, the essence of politics is action. And action is embodied in the representation of elements of the military world. In this style, politics and military art share common ground: the political leader must be not only a politician but also a strategist. And in war, there are no moral rules, anything goes. A political leader in the realist style is not immoral, but a politician who is flexible in his approach to morality. Morality here is not the aim of political action, but rather a means to an end that can be shaped at will.

The source of political power in the courtly style is the myth of superiority, which elevates kings above their subjects. In this political style, power is a myth, and the existence of the ruler is transcendental and therefore non-rational²⁶. Here the essence of politics is appearance, spectacle. The preferred form of communication is body language, gestures, physical proximity. The political leader is only partially accessible to his subjects, and his body parts, his taste, are specialized. The political system in this style is highly hierarchical, so communication is always top-down and one-way. There is, no room for debate or discourse in a sea of gesticulations. Political leaders here communicate only by revelations which it is in the vital interest of their subjects to interpret correctly because their survival in the system depends solely on it²⁷.

While the realist assumes that power is outside political discourse, the republican finds the source of power in successful public speech and

²⁵ Hariman 1995.

²⁶ Hariman 1995.

²⁷ Hariman 1995.

debate²⁸. In this style, the essence of politics is the discussions. Thus, writing and interpreting written texts, speaking, and debating are given a prominent role²⁹. The need to express oneself binds the representatives of the republican style, who belong to the elite in their political community, and debate the affairs of the state as chosen ones. The agreement that ends the debate is the ultimate goal of communication. In the republican style, the maintenance of the state comes before personal political success. The republican statesman is moral. Unlike the politician of the realist style, his calculations are not directed towards his private interests, but towards the maintenance of the republic and its many ideals and ethical norms³⁰.

In the bureaucratic style, hierarchy, as in the courtly style, is of paramount importance in the relations of governance: it is a hierarchy of organizational units, departments, and persons. Hierarchy is a source of power and also embodies a state of hopelessness: at the top of the pyramid is a superior rule-maker whose *modus operandi*, ideas, and aims are unknown and incomprehensible to mere mortals. The hierarchy here does not build on the fixity of the sovereign but derives from rule-making. The bureaucratic style thinks of politics as a matter to be settled, as a standardized, predictable process. Politics can be learned, as rules can be understood. The political leader here is a hard-working, faceless individual who, like the courtly style, is unattainable but not sacralized. Writing is the most important form of communication in this style, speech takes a back seat. The writing is traceable and impersonal. One form of power in this system is control over texts³¹.

Method, Research Design and Presentation of the Sample

Method

The research examines the Facebook communication of two central figures in the 2022 Hungarian parliamentary election: Péter Márki-Zay, the opposition coalition's candidate for prime minister, and Viktor Orbán, the incumbent prime minister. Both politicians were selected because they were highly visible, continuously communicating actors during a clearly defined and intensive campaign period. Therefore, the timeframe of the analysis

²⁸ Hariman 1995.

²⁹ Hariman 1995.

³⁰ Hariman 1995.

³¹ Hariman 1995.

spans from 11 January 2022, the official announcement of the parliamentary elections, to 30 April 2022, the date marking the post-election assessment. The campaign period provides an ideal setting for examining political style, as it produces a high volume of analyzable communication within a short timeframe.

For both politicians, the textual components of their Facebook posts and the images accompanying them serve as the primary basis for identifying stylistic indicators. Action-related elements were derived from further multimodal analysis of this material. For Péter Márki-Zay, a total of 809 text posts and 844 images were coded. For Viktor Orbán, a total of 333 text posts and 199 images were coded. One of the reasons for choosing Facebook as a data source is that the data available on the platform is free and legal to download, and Facebook is the most important platform for political communication in Hungary today, both for politicians³² and voters³³.

However, social media, and Facebook in particular, have specific characteristics that can influence the way political actors communicate and thus influence their style. The affective publicity created on Facebook aims to elicit emotional reactions and feelings from users, rather than focusing on conveying information about the politician's agenda³⁴, thus leaving room for populist or emotion-centered discourse. Furthermore, Facebook's algorithms can bubble users based on their previous online activity, which can prevent them from accessing a range of content³⁵. Finally, user affordances provided by online spaces, which are tools that are not consistently used in a way that is different from the physical world (for example, pressing the like button can have multiple meanings)³⁶, can complicate the style and image management of a political actor.

Research design

An important basis for the approach used in this research is that political communication research is not only about reading political texts, but also about interpreting several other modes of communication, such as images, actions, and visuals³⁷. In practice, this means that in order to present Márki-Zay's and Orbán's political style, not only texts, but also other sources of

³² Merkovity et al. 2021.

³³ Newman et al. 2020.

³⁴ Bene 2019.

³⁵ Bene 2019.

³⁶ Bene 2019.

³⁷ Kiss 2017a.

information, such as political actions and images, are part of the analysis. An approach that fits the multimodal approach is social semiotics. Social semiotics, unlike semiotics, is not concerned with structures and semiotic rule systems³⁸. The social semiotic researcher is more interested in people's sign-making activities the processes of meaning-making and the historical and social contexts of these processes³⁹. A semiotic resource is a set of rules, but not in the way that general semiotics understand it. Here, the system of rules is a crutch embedded in a social and cultural context, with the help of which the individual interprets and produces signs⁴⁰. These semiotic resources help us make sense of the world around us. Part of this is not just textual elements, the resources are symbolic, metaphorical and can manifest as visual elements and these signs do not have an ultimate meaning.

In our case, social semiotics is a qualitative method of analysis. The key concept of the approach is modality⁴¹. The term modality derives from linguistics and illuminates the means of meaning-making in a given communicative action. Thus, multimodality means that an individual uses several communicative devices, such as appearance, sound, dressing, etc., to create meaning⁴². The novelty of social semiotics is that it does not use modality in a purely grammatical sense, and thus aims to examine the communicative acts around us not in isolation, but in context, together with other communicative modes.

The empirical study aims to further reflect on the Hariman typology and illustrate its applicability. In Hariman's theory, political styles are not mutually exclusive. Styles are patterns that can occur together in many combinations. While one style may be more dominant in a given text, situation, or period, no one style is a perfect representation of the nature of political power⁴³.

In creating the typology, I looked for mutually exclusive elements that help to define the basic style of a politician. I interpret Hariman's categories as ideal types, assuming that politicians play on several registers but have dominant elements. It may also be that certain periods - such as campaigning - or communication channels - such as Facebook - lead politicians to mobilize a specific stylistic toolkit. I have broken down the styles into categories that can be defined using qualitative research

³⁸ Vannini 2007.

³⁹ Hodge&Kress 1988.

⁴⁰ Kiss 2016. 2.

⁴¹ van Leeuwen 2005.

⁴² Jewitt et al. 2017.

⁴³ Kaufer–Hariman 2008.

methods. The components of each style are listed in Table 1, which helps to identify political actions that are most closely related to each style.

The code book was fully consistent with the table with the style indicators I defined⁴⁴. For the realist style, I separated three indicators, those of *simplicity and realism*, *strategic thinking*, and *action-orientation*. In the realist political style, action rather than speech is the most important form of communication. It is simple and brief, avoids pathos and frills, is forward-looking in its thinking and, most importantly, is concerned with demonstrating the effectiveness of its policies through tangible results. The courtly style is the *role of appearance highlighted*, *mimicry*, *sovereign in the first place*, and *sovereign physicality*, *availability* is captured by indicators. The central communicative element in the courtly style is the spectacle. The representative of the courtly style is a leader who places himself at the top of the hierarchy, who is a good imitator, and encourages others to imitate him. His taste and body are given a prominent role. A special sub-species of celebrity. Indicators of the republican style include *equality of citizenship*, *community*, *debate*, *then consensus*, and *moralizing*. The most important means of communication in the republican style is speech. The purpose of communication is to create and maintain a political community. Here, politics is based on moral foundations. It is characterised by long, platitudinous texts, symbolic, non-realist acting. Debate is important not for its own sake but for the sake of creating agreement. Finally, in the bureaucratic style, I have isolated indicators of *impersonality*, *predictability*, *regularity*, and *rigidity*, of *the sovereign as an administrator* and of *institutionalism*. The bureaucratic political leader does not put himself first, but the institutions (rules, laws, organizational units) instead of himself. Consequently, he gives the impression of an impersonal but predictable leader with a systematic character.

For text posts, I coded only the verbal content, while for images containing embedded text, I coded both the visual material and the textual elements. For action-related indicators, I examined the communicative gestures underlying the posts, identifying and coding patterns of political action that could be inferred from either modality. I designed the categories of the codebook so that indicators from all three modalities, text, image, and action, were represented within each category.

To validate the usability and accuracy of the codebook, I applied the Krippendorff intra-coder reliability test. Intra-coder reliability indicates how consistently a single coder is able to apply the same coding scheme. The method involves the researcher re-coding the same material at a later point

⁴⁴ See Appendix 1 for details.

in time and then comparing the results. If the repeated coding closely matches the original, the coding process can be considered stable and reliable⁴⁵.

This form of reliability is particularly relevant when only one coder is involved in the research. In such cases, it is not possible to assess inter-coder reliability, as there are no additional coders against whom coding decisions could be compared. Intra-coder reliability, however, provides a means of exerting some degree of control over the quality of the coding and demonstrates that the coder's decisions are not random or ad hoc⁴⁶.

The method nevertheless has significant limitations. One of these is that it does not allow for the control of the coder's own assumptions or biases, as there is no external perspective to confirm or challenge the coding decisions. Another limitation concerns potential ambiguities within the coding scheme: if categories are not sufficiently clear, a single coder may not detect these issues, whereas discrepancies between multiple coders would more easily reveal them. For this reason, intra-coder reliability is important, but it does not replace inter-coder reliability when the involvement of multiple coders is possible⁴⁷.

For Péter Márki-Zay, I conducted the reliability test on 10% of his posts (83), selected using a random number generator. I coded these posts twice: first on 20 March 2023, and again on 4 November 2023. The resulting values indicated high validity and reliability of the codebookⁱ. All coding for Márki-Zay's dataset was completed individually within one week, between 27 March and 2 April 2023.

For Viktor Orbán, I repeated the reliability procedure on a randomly selected 10% subsample (33 posts). I coded this subset twice as well, first on 1 October 2025, and the second coding conducted in 10 October 2025 to ensure temporal robustness and consistency of the indicators. The results again confirmed the strong internal reliability of the codebookⁱⁱ. All coding for Márki-Zay's dataset was completed individually within one week, between 20-25 October 2025.

Based on this, the study examines the Facebook posts of Péter Márki-Zay and Viktor Orbán to illustrate the practical applicability of the developed style indicators, and seeks answers to the following questions:

(RQ1) Can the political style of Péter Márki-Zay be described using Robert Hariman's style categories?

⁴⁵ Hayes–Krippendorff 2007.

⁴⁶ Hayes–Krippendorff 2007.

⁴⁷ Hayes–Krippendorff 2007.

(RQ2) Which political style best characterises Péter Márki-Zay's communication on Facebook?

In parallel, the study also analyses the Facebook communication of Viktor Orbán, applying the same multimodal style indicators:

(RQ3) Can the political style of Viktor Orbán be described using Robert Hariman's style categories?

(RQ4) Which political style best characterises Viktor Orbán's communication on Facebook?

To explore the dynamics between challenger and incumbent, the study also formulates a comparative question:

(RQ5) How do the political styles of Márki-Zay and Orbán differ in terms of their dominant and secondary stylistic patterns, and what do these differences reveal about the relationship between stylistic choices and institutional position?

Comparative Analysis of Two Political Styles: Péter Márki-Zay and Viktor Orbán

Below, I present to what extent the four previously discussed styles (realist, courtly, republican, and bureaucratic) characterize the communication of Péter Márki-Zay and Viktor Orbán. The styles are ideal types, meaning that elements of each style can be found in both politicians' communication. For those styles where I detected an indicator along the visual dimension, I included an illustrative photograph representing the visual world most characteristic of that style and provided an analysis of it.

According to Table 2, Márki-Zay's communication was primarily characterized by the republican style, which is also reflected in the fact that I identified elements of this style most frequently in the textual materials. The second most frequent style was the bureaucratic, followed by the courtly style. Elements of the realist style were the least characteristic of Márki-Zay. According to Table 3, Viktor Orbán's communication was most strongly characterized by the bureaucratic and courtly styles, followed by the realist style, while the republican style appeared least frequently.

When discussing each style, I also present the number of indicators belonging to that style found in the sample and their proportions within it. In the analysis of the sources, it was common to find multiple indicators within the same source. This explains, for example, why in Márki-Zay's case

I identified twice as many indicators of the republican style as there were text posts in the sample itself.

Styles/Dimensions	Visual (quantity)	Textual (quantity)	Action (quantity)	Total (quantity)
Realist	0	21	0	21
Courtly	184	282	562	1028
Republican	692	1615	210	2517
Bureaucratic	410	643	576	1627
Total (quantity)	1284	2561	1348	5193

Table 1. Summary diagram of the components of Péter Márki-Zay's political style. The number of sources examined for visuals was $n=844$, the number of sources examined for texts was $n=809$, number of sources examined for actions was $n=1653$.

Styles/Dimensions	Visual (quantity)	Textual (quantity)	Action (quantity)	Total (quantity)
Realist	31	368	76	475
Courtly	255	50	428	733
Republican	120	212	23	355
Bureaucratic	227	172	352	751
Total (quantity)	633	802	879	2314

Table 2. Summary diagram of the components of Viktor Orbán's political style. The number of sources examined for visuals was $n=199$, the number of sources examined for texts was $n=333$, number of sources examined for actions was $n=532$.

Elements of the Realist Political Style

Among the indicators of the realist political style are *simplicity and realism*, *strategic thinking*, and *action-orientation*. In Péter Márki-Zay's communication, all three indicators appeared very rarely, both in textual and visual materials. In the texts, I registered 21 occurrences, while in the images and actions there were none. In contrast, Viktor Orbán showed a much higher number of occurrences, most frequently in texts (368 occurrences), but also in actions (76) and visual materials (31).

The indicator of *simplicity and realism* could not be identified in Márki-Zay's communication, but it was frequently observed in Orbán's case (255

occurrences). For Orbán, this was manifested in short, factual sentences containing high-modality statements.

"Hungary is a good place to live and a good place to work!⁴⁸" (Orbán, Facebook post)

The indicator of *strategic thinking* was the most detectable among the realist style indicators in Márki-Zay's communication (19 occurrences), appearing in expressions evoking the world of war and struggle.

"With Mayor Gergely Karácsony we used to be rivals, now we are comrades-in-arms.⁴⁹" (Márki-Zay, Facebook post)

It also appeared in texts establishing causal relationships:

"Orbán's pro-Putin policies have failed and plunged the country into a livelihood crisis. That is why he does not dare to stand up in a public debate with me, that is why he does not dare to stand before you.⁵⁰" (Márki-Zay, Facebook post)

In Orbán's communication, I identified this indicator 0 times in images, 7 times in actions, and 34 times in texts. It appeared primarily in martial language and in explanatory, didactic posts, which were generally longer than his average Facebook messages, elaborating causal links in detail.

"(...) The decade ahead of us will be of a different nature than the one behind us. The decade of dangers is what lies ahead. There is war; as a consequence, prices are rising throughout Europe, clear signs of a serious energy crisis are appearing, European economies face tribulations, and we have not yet emerged from the age of pandemics. (...)⁵¹" (Orbán, Facebook post)

The indicator of action-orientation was identified 26 times in images, 62 times in actions, and 79 times in texts. In visual materials, Orbán was depicted in the act of performing his duties as prime minister. In the action dimension, this indicator appeared in centralized decision-making and communication, where Orbán was shown as the main source of information and ultimate decision-maker. In textual materials, I coded present-tense statements referring to concrete policy decisions that had tangible results.

⁴⁸ Source: Viktor Orbán's Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/100044628210344/posts/539269327570670>

⁴⁹ Source: Péter Márki-Zay's Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/100044294431020/posts/475858360567308>

⁵⁰ Source: Péter Márki-Zay's Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/100044294431020/posts/526916802128130>

⁵¹ Source: Viktor Orbán's Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/orbanviktor/posts/pfbid0Q5rJL5CshZzqpjcd4CEc7Wq4gjJtDoqAHeBuNrVdGhp7u4oS73j5FmG1o4wa4WAvl>

"After the 5% increase at the beginning of the year, we decided on an additional 3.9% pension raise. Thus, pensions will rise by a total of 8.9% this year. We take care of the elderly!⁵²" (Orbán, Facebook post)

PÉTER MÁRKI-ZAY					
Realistic style indicators and dimensions of analysis	simplicity and realism	strategic thinking	action-orientation	Total (quantity)	The average number of indicators found in each source
Visual (quantity)	0	0	0	0	0
Textual (quantity)	1	19	1	21	0,02
Action (quantity)	0	0	0	0	0
Total (quantity)	1	19	1	21	0,006

Table 3. Summary chart of the number of elements and modal proportions of the realist style in the communication of Péter Márki-Zay. The number of sources examined for visuals was n=844, the number of sources examined for texts was n=809, number of sources examined for actions was n=1653.

VIKTOR ORBÁN					
Realistic style indicators and dimensions of analysis	simplicity and realism	strategic thinking	action-orientation	Total (quantity)	The average number of indicators found in each source
Visual (quantity)	5	0	26	31	0,15
Textual (quantity)	255	34	79	368	1,1
Action (quantity)	7	7	62	76	0,14
Total (quantity)	267	41	167	475	0,44

Table 4. Summary chart of the number of elements and modal proportions of the realist style in the communication of Viktor Orbán. The number of sources examined for visuals was n=199, the number of sources examined for texts was n=333, number of sources examined for actions was n=532.

⁵² Source: Viktor Orbán's Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/100044628210344/posts/540345470796389>



Image 1: Example of the most common visual indicator of realist style: action-orientation. Source: the Facebook page of Viktor Orbán⁵³.

The photograph shows a meeting of the Nemzetbiztonsági Operatív Törzs (National Security Operational Staff), visually evoking the sphere of power, state action, and decision-making. Its function is not only documentary but also performative: it aims to present political leadership as competent, disciplined, and active. The Prime Minister sits at the center, leaning slightly forward, underscoring his role as the key decision-maker. The participants along the table turn toward him, their posture and gaze emphasizing hierarchy and institutional order. The spatial arrangement thus becomes a visual metaphor for centralized authority.

The postures, gazes, and distances between participants signal formal, controlled communication. The stillness, minimal facial expression, and muted blue-gray tones convey rationality and technocratic discipline. The red-white-green band with the name "Orbán Viktor" ties national identity to the leader's personal brand. Meanwhile, the classical portrait in the background adds a symbolic layer of historical continuity and state authority.

⁵³ Source: Viktor Orbán's Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/100044628210344/posts/506767507487519>

Elements of the Courtly Political Style

Among the indicators of the courtly style, *the role of appearance highlighted, mimicry, the sovereign in the first place, and the sovereign physicality, availability* are prominent. In this style, I recorded a total of 282 textual, 184 visual, and 562 action occurrences from Péter Márki-Zay, and 50 textual, 255 visual, and 428 action occurrences from Viktor Orbán.

For the indicator the role of appearance highlighted there were a total of 3 occurrences for Márki-Zay, all in texts. Here, the support of “appearance investments” emerged, such as the inauguration of a fountain or minor renovation works.

“Signing the procurement of playground equipment...⁵⁴” (Márki-Zay, Facebook post)

For Orbán, however, this was the most frequently occurring indicator (344 occurrences) in this style. In terms of images, I coded materials that build the leader’s appearance-maintaining image: wearing military uniform, attending cabinet meetings, or posing in hog-scalding attire (91 occurrences). In texts (20 occurrences), I coded mentions of symbolic actions; since Orbán is in government, most of his actions are actual governing gestures, so I found few instances of this indicator in his textual output.

“I asked Pope Francis to support our efforts made in the interest of peace.⁵⁵” (Orbán, Facebook post)

In actions, I likewise coded elements of symbolic politics, including the emphasis on the symbolic aspects of public policy decisions, such as actions in which he frames his political opponent as the bringer of misery, while portraying himself as the herald of peace and prosperity.

The mimicry indicator appeared 10 times visually and 90 times textually for Márki-Zay. Visually, Márki-Zay mimics Western European technocratic politicians or evokes a pro-Western, European Union-like discourse. However, the more striking phenomenon is how he verbally places the position of the sovereign outside the borders of the country.

⁵⁴ Source: Péter Márki-Zay’s Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/100044294431020/posts/4934913656603563>

⁵⁵ Source: Viktor Orbán’s Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/100044628210344/posts/536237741207162>

"As a NATO member, Hungary, aligning with the position of our military alliance, will not send troops to Ukraine."⁵⁶ (Márki-Zay, Facebook post)

For Orbán, this indicator appeared the least frequently (16 visual, 0 textual, 2 action occurrences). In images, I classified visual tools used to build the image of a reliable politician, meaning the classic suit-and-tie look, or, at one point, mimicking the attire of Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky, who has appeared in technical clothing since the outbreak of the war in both negotiations and among voters.

For Márki-Zay, the most frequently identified indicator was sovereign in the first place with 129 textual and 143 visual occurrences. In texts, this referred to first-person singular statements, for example:

"My person helped the campaign to the extent that we were better able to reach those conservative groups that were dissatisfied with Fidesz but would never have voted for left-wing candidates."⁵⁷ (Márki-Zay, Facebook post)

In images, this indicator manifested as the prime-ministerial candidate being placed in a prominent and central composition. In actions, I looked for campaign elements built around Márki-Zay as a single-person leadership figure. The structure of his textual posts (#MZP as the first element, his slogan second, the unity hashtag third, recurring in every post) and Márki-Zay's accessibility and unity-representing attitude showed the strong presence of this indicator in the sample (562 occurrences).

For Viktor Orbán, this meant 91 visual, 23 textual, and 176 action occurrences. In texts, first-person singular statements appeared here, similar to Márki-Zay, as well as utterances formulated from his own perspective.

"I will form a government that is capable of protecting Hungary during the dangerous decade ahead of us."⁵⁸ (Orbán, Facebook post)

In images, I coded materials that depicted Orbán as the largest element or the visual centre of the frame. In these pictures, the prime minister's body was usually not emphasised; only his face, sometimes looking into the camera, sometimes away, offering itself as the object of examination.

⁵⁶ Source: Péter Márki-Zay's Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/100044294431020/posts/501625674657243>

⁵⁷ Source: Péter Márki-Zay's Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/100044294431020/posts/534935211326289>

⁵⁸ Source: Viktor Orbán's Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/orbanviktor/posts/pfbid0DK9579UvY6f2vYNbTkvdChw6A8Q51tuJNcJEPHXAhofezaYScNG1hQX5eq5SX49y1>

For the indicator the sovereign physicality, availability of I recorded 31 visual and 90 textual occurrences for Péter Márki-Zay. In texts, Márki-Zay shared details of his personal taste, private opinions, and family experiences. In images, his hand and wedding ring, the blue ribbon worn on his chest, or his broken arm were captured. This indicator was not identifiable in his actions.

For Viktor Orbán, I found 57 visual, 7 textual, and 7 action occurrences. In Orbán's case, the emphasis on his personal tastes was less pronounced; family scenes played a greater role. This was reflected particularly in images, such as the infamous pink-sofa picture in which he sat with his wife and grandchildren. In terms of actions, the announcement of interviews and meetings appeared under this indicator.



Image 2: Example of the most common visual indicator of courtly style: sovereign in the first place. Source: the Facebook page of Péter Márki-Zay⁵⁹.

In the middle of the picture, we see Péter Márki-Zay, who stands out thanks to the lighting and the composition. His head is positioned vertically and horizontally in the center, reinforcing the central role of the sovereign. Integrated behind Márki-Zay is his campaign slogan, which takes the focus away from the central character due to its size and contrasting color. The image shows Márki-Zay in a static position, looking into the future from the viewer's perspective. He offers himself up for scrutiny to the viewer, an important compositional element in the picture, with foreground and

⁵⁹ Source: Péter Márki-Zay's Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/100044294431020/posts/509775540508923>

background. In this editorial method, the character is embraced, becoming an integral part of the community of the electorate.



Image 3: Example of the most common visual indicator of courtly style: sovereign in the first place. Source: the Facebook page of Viktor Orbán⁶⁰.

At the center of the image stands Viktor Orbán, emphasized by controlled lighting and balanced composition. His centrally placed head reinforces the stabilizing role assigned to him in the visual narrative. His calm expression and direct gaze project authority mixed with accessibility. The announcement of the annual address, placed prominently at the bottom, competes slightly for attention but ultimately frames the leader within a ceremonial, institutional context.

The image highlights his face rather than his full body, creating a controlled sense of intimacy and directing interpretation toward his persona. The interplay of foreground and background isolates him as the focal figure, while the subdued setting conveys stability. Through these editorial choices, the leader is not simply shown but symbolically affirmed as a central figure within the imagined community he addresses.

⁶⁰ Source: Viktor Orbán's Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/100044628210344/posts/491461869018083>

PÉTER MÁRKI-ZAY						
Courtly style indicators and dimensions of analysis	the role of appearance highlighted	mimicry	sovereign in the first place	sovereign physicality, availability	Total (quantity)	The average number of indicators found in each source
Visual (quantity)	0	10	143	31	184	0,21
Textual (quantity)	3	90	129	90	282	0,34
Action (quantity)	0	0	562	0	562	0,34
Total (quantity)	3	100	834	121	1028	0,31

Table 5. Summary chart of the number of elements and modal proportions of the courtly style in the communication of Péter Márki-Zay. The number of sources examined for visuals was $n=844$, the number of sources examined for texts was $n=809$, number of sources examined for actions was $n=1653$.

VIKTOR ORBÁN						
Courtly style indicators and dimensions of analysis	the role of appearance highlighted	mimicry	sovereign in the first place	sovereign physicality, availability	Total (quantity)	The average number of indicators found in each source
Visual (quantity)	91	16	91	57	255	1,29
Textual (quantity)	20	0	23	7	50	0,15
Action (quantity)	243	2	176	7	428	0,8
Total (quantity)	354	18	290	71	733	0,69

Table 6. Summary chart of the number of elements and modal proportions of the courtly style in the communication of Viktor Orbán. The number of sources examined for visuals was $n=199$, the number of sources examined for texts was $n=333$, number of sources examined for actions was $n=532$.

Elements of the Republican Political Style

Among the indicators of the republican style we include *equality of citizenship, communality, debate, then consensus* and *moralizing*. In the sample, I identified a total of 2517 occurrences of these indicators for Péter Márki-Zay. Of these, 1615 were textual, 692 visual, and 210 action-based. For Viktor Orbán, I identified a total of 355 occurrences, of which 120 were visual, 212 textual, and 23 action-based.

For Márki-Zay, the most frequently appearing indicator was equality of citizenship, with 508 textual and 120 visual occurrences. In the texts, the emphasis on civic virtues and prosocial ideas manifested itself in policy proposals such as Roma integration, gender equality for women, tax cuts, and support for the poor and vulnerable.

"Indeed, there is hope for a decent Hungary! Many of us have joined forces to build a just, upward-moving country from April 3 onwards."⁶¹
(Márki-Zay, Facebook post)

Visually, Márki-Zay expressed this indicator by appearing together with voters, shaking hands, talking, or taking photos with them. In terms of actions, it appeared in how he ensured direct accessibility to voters. He chose communication platforms that could increase his support, appearing numerous times on programs such as *Egyenes Beszéd*, on the radio, and at town hall meetings (99 occurrences).

For Orbán, this indicator appeared a total of 114 times: 53 in images, 62 textually, and 5 in actions. I coded textual occurrences when Orbán encouraged voting or promoted other forms of political participation. Visual occurrences included photos taken with voters. In terms of actions, this involved opportunities for live, in-person interaction.

"In 10 days there will be a crucial election. We count on everyone! Only Fidesz!"⁶² (Orbán, Facebook post)

The communality indicator appeared 324 times in texts, 279 times in images, and 107 times in actions in Márki-Zay's sample. In textual form, this indicator was expressed through the use of the first-person plural and references to the future.

⁶¹ Source: Péter Márki-Zay's Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/100044294431020/posts/474312250721919>

⁶² Source: Viktor Orbán's Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/orbanviktor/posts/pfbid0iAvWz8q3TVJNoXyzVWT7RNKi1KETr8nZUALn24zpeGCLpNJMzDK1YcAaHoBKgehFl>

"Of course they hide and cover things up, but justice will catch up with them: after the change of government, the guilty will be punished; we will hold accountable the most corrupt government in Hungary's thousand-year history!"⁶³ (Márki-Zay, Facebook post)

Visually, this appeared through frequent joint appearances with other opposition politicians. It was also common that on his own Facebook page he would feature others instead of himself, emphasizing the unity of the opposition and offering visibility to less-known or less-popular opposition figures. In terms of actions, the indicator appeared in gestures aimed at broadening the political arena, such as the establishment of institutions like the Kossuth Körök (*Kossuth Circles*) or the Ellenállás (*Resistance*), and in calls for citizens to engage in political activity: voting, counting ballots, doing activist work (107 occurrences).

For Orbán, I identified this indicator 59 times in images, 122 times in texts, and 18 times in actions. In the images, although Orbán appears with fellow politicians, they never have a central role and are not depicted as active participants, rather as an audience. In textual form, I coded first-person plural statements and references to government achievements with significant political relevance, such as pension increases. In the action modality, the expansion of the political arena was much less evident; Orbán only reached out to young people, but did not elevate any other political groups alongside him during the period studied.

"NATO Summit: we succeeded in enforcing Hungarian national interests!"⁶⁴ (Orbán, Facebook post)

The deliberation and subsequent consensus indicator appeared 370 times in text and 274 times visually for Márki-Zay. Verbally, this indicator appeared when Márki-Zay asked questions to his followers:

"Has it ever happened to you that a quote touched you deeply, as if it were speaking directly to you at exactly the right moment?"⁶⁵ (Márki-Zay, Facebook post)

Or when he issued calls to action: *"JOIN THE RESISTANCE!"⁶⁶* Visually, this was expressed by regularly featuring other opposition politicians on stage alongside him, often placing himself in the background. I did not

⁶³ Source: Péter Márki-Zay's Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/100044294431020/posts/478507596969051>

⁶⁴ Source: Viktor Orbán's Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/100044628210344/posts/518039926360277>

⁶⁵ Source: Péter Márki-Zay's Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/100044294431020/posts/533054404847703>

⁶⁶ Source: Péter Márki-Zay's Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/100044294431020/posts/533688708117606>

identify this indicator in actions. For Orbán, this was the least detectable indicator across the entire sample, only two textual occurrences were recorded.

Regarding the moralization indicator, Márki-Zay had 413 textual and 19 visual occurrences. In textual form, the lengthy, complex, and topic-driven nature of the messages reflected a highly intellectualized mode of speaking.

"In the absence of press freedom and due to resource inequalities, this election could not have been democratic. After it became clear that if the conditions do not change, the next election will yield the same result, the question is: what is our role now?"⁶⁷ (Márki-Zay, Facebook post)

In the visual modality, I coded images where the visual elements illustrated the themes appearing in the text, for example, he illustrated the rising price of meat with an image depicting a meat dish. In actions, the portrayal of a person devoted to politics appeared only in a few cases (4 occurrences).

"Tonight, Márton Gulyás's closing question was what I would stake on winning the election on April 3. I replied: my life."⁶⁸ (Márki-Zay, Facebook post)

For Orbán, I found 8 visual and 26 textual occurrences. In the images, I coded those that conveyed some moralizing message about the opposition, for instance through colours and composition portraying the opposition as untrustworthy or discredited. In textual form, the indicator included morally critical messages about the opposition alliance, sometimes involving explicit comparison.

"The stakes of this election are: peace or war. The left poses a serious risk to peace, while Fidesz is the guarantee."⁶⁹ (Orbán, Facebook post)

⁶⁷ Source: Péter Márki-Zay's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/markizaypeter/posts/543848597101617>

⁶⁸ Source: Péter Márki-Zay's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/100044294431020/posts/494116252074852>

⁶⁹ Source: Viktor Orbán's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/100044628210344/posts/522092305955039>



Image 4: Example of the most frequent visual indicator of the republican style: community. Source: Péter Márki-Zay's Facebook page⁷⁰.

Community is detectable in this image by the presence of the political leader in focus (Péter Márki-Zay) alongside another politician, András Jámbor. Joint appearances are common in politics, and handshakes are popular photo subjects as they symbolize agreement and alignment. In the image, the figure whose body is in a more open position appears in a more positive light and seems larger. This gesture aligns with the visual narrative. Although both figures are in sharp focus, András Jámbor is notably larger in the image, emphasizing his importance. Furthermore, Jámbor takes on an active role, as he is holding the microphone and speaking, while Márki-Zay assumes a listening position.

⁷⁰ Source: Péter Márki-Zay's Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/100044294431020/posts/475568667262944>



Image 5: Example of the most frequent visual indicator of the republican style: community. Source: Viktor Orbán's Facebook page⁷¹.

The joint appearance of the two politicians is not just a documentary moment but a ritualized act expressing the group's internal cohesion. Their shared posture, close physical proximity, and the jointly held sign function as condensed markers of a collective "we," creating the impression of a single political body. Hierarchy appears through spatial and postural differences: Orbán, positioned more centrally and leaning forward with an open posture and direct gaze, embodies leadership and communicative authority. Kocsis Máté, while confident, adopts a less open stance that signals subordinate yet active support. Holding one end of the sign, he complements rather than balances the central figure. The sign itself is the key semiotic element: a physical link between their bodies and a symbolic declaration of group loyalty.

⁷¹ Source: Viktor Orbán's Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/orbanviktor/posts/pfbid0BtiU72wGM1a4Q7hgDUEAnkWxRabYFoA5NGoL9qJJAVwdcPE9MqLz5bVFhc2W8JAoI>

PÉTER MÁRKI-ZAY						
Republican style indicators and dimensions of analysis	equality of citizenship	communality	debate, then consensus	moralizing	Total (quantity)	The average number of indicators found in each source
Visual (quantity)	120	279	274	19	692	0,82
Textual (quantity)	508	324	370	413	1615	2
Action (quantity)	99	107	0	4	210	0,12
Total (quantity)	727	710	644	436	2517	0,76

Table 7. Summary chart of the number of elements and modal proportions of the republican style in the communication of Péter Márki-Zay. The number of sources examined for visuals was $n=844$, the number of sources examined for texts was $n=809$, number of sources examined for actions was $n=1653$.

VIKTOR ORBÁN						
Republican style indicators and dimensions of analysis	equality of citizenship	communality	debate, then consensus	moralizing	Total (quantity)	The average number of indicators found in each source
Visual (quantity)	53	59	0	8	120	0,55
Textual (quantity)	62	122	2	26	212	0,63
Action (quantity)	5	18	0	0	23	0,04
Total (quantity)	120	199	2	34	355	0,33

Table 8. Summary chart of the number of elements and modal proportions of the republican style in the communication of Viktor Orbán. The number of sources examined for visuals was $n=199$, the number of sources examined for texts was $n=333$, number of sources examined for actions was $n=532$.

Elements of the Bureaucratic Political Style

Among the indicators of the bureaucratic style are *impersonality, predictability, regularity and rigidity, the sovereign is an administrator and institutionalism*. For Péter Márki-Zay, I recorded a total of 1627 occurrences, of which 410 were visual, 643 textual, and 576 action-based. For Viktor Orbán, I recorded a total of 751 occurrences, of which 227 were visual, 172 textual, and 352 action-based.

The indicator of impersonality (353 occurrences) appeared in Márki-Zay's material predominantly in visual content (276 occurrences). Impersonality here meant that Márki-Zay posted numerous images in which neither he (nor other relevant political allies) were visible, only objects, graphs, depictions of crowds, or group scenes. The indicator was not identifiable in the action dimension. In textual materials, impersonality (77 occurrences) referred to texts written in the third person singular.

"Péter Márki-Zay: live broadcast from Kecskemét.⁷²" (Márki-Zay, Facebook post)

In Viktor Orbán's case, textual occurrences were the most dominant (129), followed by action (93) and visual (23). In the texts, impersonality frequently appeared: Orbán's Facebook posts were often so brief and impersonal that it was not entirely clear to whom or what the given sentence referred.

"Three days at the border. Off to Belgrade!⁷³" (Orbán, Facebook post)

I did not identify the indicator of predictability, regularity and rigidity in the material of either Márki-Zay or Orbán, neither in text, image, nor action.

The sovereign is an administrator indicator appeared only twice in Márki-Zay's sample, both textual; it was not present in other dimensions. In Orbán's case, I recorded 6 visual, 1 textual, and 19 action-based occurrences. In the texts, information-dense, factual wording was coded here; in the action dimension, the rule-making mechanisms associated with his government.

The most frequently occurring indicator for both politicians in this style category was institutionalism. For Péter Márki-Zay, I identified 564 textual and 134 visual occurrences. In images, I looked for the shared opposition

⁷² Source: Péter Márki-Zay's Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/100044294431020/posts/1593276027696928>

⁷³ Source: Viktor Orbán's Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/100044628210344/posts/514257996738470>

logo; textually, the hashtag #egységbenmagyarorszáért (*#togetherforhungary*) and references to the opposition alliance. In the action dimension, this category included mentions of the Kossuth Körök (*Kossuth Circles*), Ellenállás (*Resistance*), and institution-like interpretations of the election itself (576 occurrences).

"WE WILL PROTECT THE OPPOSITION! We must develop a new understanding of being in opposition, which is not really opposition, rather, I would call it resistance."⁷⁴ (Márki-Zay, Facebook post)

For Viktor Orbán, I recorded 198 visual, 42 textual, and 240 action-based occurrences. In images, I looked for elements of the "Orbán Viktor brand," which appeared in every visual material analyzed. Textually, references to the government's work, to Fidesz, or to other institutionalized constructs, e.g., ÁR STOP (*price stop*) policies were coded here.

"We will protect Hungarian families! The fuel price STOP and the food price STOP will remain in place until July 1."⁷⁵ (Orbán, Facebook post)

In the action dimension, these included gestures that constructed Fidesz and the government as crisis-managing institutions.



Image 3: Example of the most frequent visual indicator of the bureaucratic style: institutional centrality. Source: Péter Márki-Zay's Facebook page⁷⁶.

⁷⁴ Source: Péter Márki-Zay's Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/100044294431020/posts/533688708117606>

⁷⁵ Source: Viktor Orbán's Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/100044628210344/posts/539914967506106>

⁷⁶ Source: Péter Márki-Zay's Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/100044294431020/posts/477071473779330>

On Márki-Zay's Facebook page, posts featuring images without human faces were extremely common. These images showcasing campaign design elements and the symbol of unity are signs of institutional centrality. In the selected image, the most important message draws attention to election day. The subsequent message, that a change will occur in the country with the ousting of Viktor Orbán is of lesser importance. To emphasize unity, the logos of all parties are positioned under the inscription "unity" and the tricolor. Turquoise represents purity and openness, white signifies integrity and cleanliness, while dark blue is associated with loyalty, quality, and innocence, as well as being the color of truth (Parikh, 2011). In politics, this combination of colors is quite rare; we more commonly encounter them in the logos of IT sector or healthcare companies.



Image 3: Example of the most frequent visual indicator of the bureaucratic style: institutional centrality. Source: Viktor Orbán's Facebook page⁷⁷.

The image's minimalist composition reduces the political message to a single, easily grasped meaning. The dark blue background—a conventional color of stability, discipline, and state authority—creates a sense of security, while its homogeneous, textureless surface conveys a "noise-free" message and a tightly controlled political framing. The central slogan, "ELŐRE MENJÜNK, NE HÁTRA!" ("Let's go forward, not backward!"), relies on a classic campaign dichotomy. "Forward" evokes progress and modernization, while "backward" suggests stagnation or a threatening past. The typographic emphasis on "NE HÁTRA!" in large white letters adds a strong

⁷⁷ Source: Viktor Orbán's Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/100044628210344/posts/497370975093839>

prohibitive force, visually rejecting the unwanted alternative and presenting an asymmetrical choice. The name and logo in the lower right corner anchor the message institutionally. The red–green color pair taps into national symbolism, positioning the slogan not just as a party line but as part of a broader national narrative. The restrained typography of the politician’s name supports rather than competes with the central message.

PÉTER MÁRKI-ZAY						
Bureaucratic style indicators and dimensions of analysis	impersonality	predictability, regularity and rigidity	the sovereign is an administrator	institutionalism	Total (quantity)	The average number of indicators found in each source
Visual (quantity)	276	0	0	134	410	0,48
Textual (quantity)	77	0	2	564	643	0,79
Action (quantity)	0	0	0	576	576	0,35
Total (quantity)	353	0	2	1274	1627	0,49

Table 9. Summary chart of the number of elements and modal proportions of the bureaucratic style in the communication of Péter Márki-Zay. The number of sources examined for visuals was n=844, the number of sources examined for texts was n=809, number of sources examined for actions was n=1653.

VIKTOR ORBÁN						
Bureaucratic style indicators and dimensions of analysis	impersonality	predictability, regularity and rigidity	the sovereign is an administrator	institutionalism	Total (quantity)	The average number of indicators found in each source
Visual (quantity)	23	0	6	198	227	1,14
Textual (quantity)	129	0	1	42	172	0,5
Action (quantity)	93	0	19	240	352	0,66
Total (quantity)	245	0	26	480	751	0,7

Table 10. Summary chart of the number of elements and modal proportions of the bureaucratic style in the communication of Viktor Orbán. The number of sources examined for visuals was n=199, the number of sources examined for texts was n=333, number of sources examined for actions was n=532.

Comparison of Péter Márki-Zay's and Viktor Orbán's Political Style

In analysing the communication of political leaders, four style dimensions: the realist, courtly, republican, and bureaucratic, offer a framework for identifying the structural patterns through which politicians construct their public self-representation and political role perception. In the present case, the political context bears particular significance: Péter Márki-Zay entered the national political arena as Viktor Orbán's challenger in the 2022 parliamentary election, meaning that their communication was shaped not only by stylistic differences but also by asymmetrical power positions. Orbán communicated from the perspective of an incumbent Prime Minister, while Márki-Zay operated as an opposition candidate; this asymmetry substantially conditioned the frequency, function, and interpretive meaning of the stylistic dimensions employed.

The realist style reveals sharp contrasts between the two figures. Viktor Orbán's communication is strongly characterised by realist elements: strategic narratives, crisis-oriented framing, and action-focused, high-modality statements. These features reinforce the image of a leader positioned at the centre of continuous crisis management and decision-making, a role inherent to his position as head of government. Conversely, realist elements appear only marginally in Márki-Zay's communication. Apart from occasional references to strategic thinking, his messaging does not rely on terse factual statements or the representation of executive action. This divergence reflects, in part, the structural constraints of Márki-Zay's position as a challenger without access to governmental authority, limiting his ability to employ realist, action-oriented rhetoric.

The courtly style is salient in the communication of both politicians, yet its content and political function differ markedly. In Orbán's case, courtly elements serve the construction of a leader-centred political order. Visual centrality, symbolic appearances, and the emphasis on physical presence reinforce a hierarchical, vertically organised vision of political authority. Although Márki-Zay also uses courtly stylistic elements, these construct a very different image: that of the accessible, personal, and emotionally proximate challenger. First-person statements, personal anecdotes, and direct, informal visual representations cultivate the impression of a charismatic yet non-hierarchical leader. Thus, while Orbán's courtly style consolidates authority, Márki-Zay's expresses relational closeness.

The republican style yields the most pronounced difference between the two politicians. In Márki-Zay's communication, the republican style is dominant. References to civic equality, communal participation,

deliberation, and moral reasoning form the core of his campaign discourse. The frequent use of the first-person plural, the emphasis on broad-based opposition unity, and the reliance on policy-oriented and value-driven argumentation all reflect a republican political language consistent with an opposition candidate seeking social mobilisation. By contrast, Orbán's communication contains only minimal republican elements. His references to community primarily serve identity-building rather than deliberative purposes, and moralising rhetoric emerges predominantly in delegitimising political opponents. In his case, the republican dimension is neither central nor constitutive of his political style, which is consistent with the long-term incumbency of a prime minister who does not rely on consensual or participatory language.

The bureaucratic style appears prominently in both politicians' communication but functions according to different political logics. For Orbán, bureaucratic elements are integral to the representation of institutionalised executive authority. References to state institutions, rule-making, and stabilising governance, along with impersonal, concise formulations, strengthen the narrative of a functioning, orderly state. Márki-Zay's bureaucratic style, by contrast, reflects the institution-building strategies of an opposition candidate. References to the umbrella organisation *Egységben Magyarországért (Together for Hungary)*, the *Kossuth Körök (Kossuth Circles)*, or the *Ellenállás (Resistance)* movement make the organisational and institutional dimensions of the campaign visible, offering a counter-institutional alternative in the absence of governmental authority.

Taken together, the stylistic profiles of the two politicians reveal not only distinct political characters but also fundamentally different communication logics shaped by their respective power positions. As a challenger, Márki-Zay constructs a deliberative, moral, and community-oriented political persona, drawing heavily on republican and participatory elements. Orbán, as an incumbent prime minister, relies primarily on realist, courtly, and bureaucratic styles, projecting the image of a decisive, stable, and institutionally embedded leader. The divergence between their stylistic configurations thus reflects both differences in political habitus and the structural asymmetries inherent in the electoral context.

Conclusion

This study examined the political communication of Péter Márki-Zay, the 2022 opposition candidate for Hungarian prime minister, alongside that of incumbent Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, using Robert Hariman's⁷⁸ (1995) typology of political styles, republican, bureaucratic, courtly, and realist. Applying a multimodal, social-semiotic approach to visual, textual, and action-based indicators from Facebook communication, the analysis demonstrates that the two politicians occupy strikingly divergent stylistic positions, shaped not only by personal preference but also by their asymmetrical power roles as challenger and incumbent.

Regarding RQ1, the findings confirm that Márki-Zay's communication can indeed be effectively described using Hariman's style categories, as all four styles appeared in his multimodal repertoire. Answering RQ2, the study finds that his dominant style is republican, characterised by civic engagement, deliberative framing, community-building, and moralizing discourse. Bureaucratic indicators, particularly impersonality and institution-building, constitute his second strongest stylistic domain, reflecting an attempt to construct an organisational alternative to the governing party. Courtly elements, especially the sovereign indicator, also appeared, though they primarily served to present him as an accessible and personally relatable leader rather than as a hierarchically elevated figure. Realist indicators were scarce, underscoring that Márki-Zay's communicative repertoire positioned him deliberately in contrast to the action-centred, crisis-oriented communication typical of the incumbent.

Orbán Viktor's communication displayed nearly the inverse pattern. In relation to RQ3, the findings show that Orbán's communication also fits Hariman's typology well; the four styles capture his multimodal performance with notable clarity. Addressing RQ4, the study reveals that Orbán's dominant styles were courtly and bureaucratic, supported by a substantial presence of realist indicators. The courtly style served to reinforce his symbolic centrality, authority, and embodied leadership, while the bureaucratic style manifested through institutionalised power, rule-based governance, and institutional branding. Realist elements, short, assertive statements, strategic framing, and depictions of executive action, further consolidated his image as a decisive, crisis-managing sovereign. The republican style, in contrast, appeared only marginally and primarily as a mobilising device rather than a deliberative or egalitarian political stance.

⁷⁸Hariman 1995.

Viewed together, the two style profiles reveal two contrasting models of political leadership: Orbán Viktor projects an institutionally embedded, symbolically elevated, and action-oriented sovereign, whose communication emphasises stability, hierarchy, and executive competence. Péter Márki-Zay presents a community-oriented, deliberative, and morally framed alternative, supplemented by selective bureaucratic and courtly elements that aim to construct credibility without reproducing the centralised personalisation characteristic of incumbency. As an explicit answer to RQ5, these stylistic differences demonstrate that challengers and incumbents draw on Hariman's styles in structurally distinct ways: challengers rely more heavily on republican and organisationally generative styles to mobilise and persuade, while incumbents reinforce authority through a fusion of courtly, bureaucratic, and realist elements.

These differences underscore how political style emerges from the interplay of personal strategy and structural position. Márki-Zay's hybrid style, combining republican, bureaucratic, and limited courtly elements, reflects the challenges of contesting a long-standing incumbent while attempting to mobilise a fragmented opposition electorate. Orbán's style, by contrast, demonstrates how incumbency stabilises and routinises the fusion of realist, bureaucratic, and courtly modes into a coherent, recognisable governing persona.

While the comparative lens strengthens the explanatory power of Hariman's framework, the study also highlights the limitations of the four-style typology in capturing the complexity of contemporary digital political performance. Both leaders exhibit hybrid characteristics, particularly Márki-Zay, suggesting that additional stylistic categories (e.g., populist, activist, feminine, revolutionary) may be required to account for emerging patterns in highly mediatized environments. Platform logics such as immediacy, emotionality, and visibility further transform traditional style repertoires and invite broader methodological innovations.

In conclusion, analysing Márki-Zay and Orbán side by side demonstrates that political style is not merely an individual aesthetic choice but a relational and strategic construct shaped by institutional positions, media ecosystems, and electoral incentives. A multimodal, comparative approach can therefore illuminate not only the stylistic identities of individual leaders but also the broader political and communicative structures within which these identities acquire meaning. In sum, this study demonstrates that a multimodal, aesthetic approach to political style can illuminate the strategic choices behind political leadership in today's hybrid media environment,

while also inviting broader empirical and theoretical work to assess how, and to what extent, these styles resonate beyond individual cases.

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Appendix

REALIST STYLE			
The preferred form of communication: action			
	VISUAL	VERBAL	ACTION
1. Simplicity and realism	A given politician presents himself as someone who does not pretend, or as someone who does not care about appearances.	Unadorned, high-modality texts. Emotionless.	Actions focus on concrete outcomes rather than symbolic or rhetorical gestures. The emphasis is on demonstrating effectiveness and practical problem-solving.
2. Strategic thinking	Flexibility, adaptability, forward-thinking, and vision-making.	Interpretative constraints, martial language, use of words related to sport and war, warfare. Showing cause and effect in the text.	The leader takes initiative, defines clear objectives, and implements policies with minimal negotiation or ceremonial consultation. Action is goal-oriented and strategic.
3. Action-orientation	The political leader depicts himself at work.	Few written texts are produced by a given political leader. When they are: verbs expressing action, statements in the singular first person, and present and future tenses.	The leader directs both policy and messaging, consolidating authority and ensuring coherent, coordinated action. Decision-making is top-down.
COURTLY STYLE			
The preferred form of communication: appearance/visuals			
	VISUAL	VERBAL	ACTION
1. The role of appearance highlighted	For a given political leader, how and how often he or she is portrayed is very important.	Images dominate and there is little text. When there is, it is more for recording symbolic actions.	Political action is framed not primarily as practical governance but as ritual, spectacle, or symbolic enactment. Decisions are presented as grand gestures loaded with meaning rather than as technical measures.
2. Mimicry	The way a political leader looks "reminds" the voter of someone. Either the voter himself, or someone else with power.	Turns of phrase, arguments that may have occurred elsewhere, repetitions, allusions.	Action involves constructing a center of authority, either embodied in the leader's person, delegated to chosen figures, or attributed to an abstract collective. The performance legitimizes power through symbolic elevation.
3. Sovereign in the first place	Political leaders are the most important in the image, the spectacle's center, and the community's center.	Emphasis on own point of view: singular first person and plural first person.	All political action reinforces the leader's centrality: events, narratives, and rituals revolve around their body, charisma, and presence. The leader becomes the core medium of political meaning.

4. Sovereign physicality, availability	Emphasis on the political leader's body parts, clothing, tastes, and sovereign physicality (buildings, spaces, bodies).	Description of the body and clothing of the political leader. Describing his taste. Informal way of speaking.	Action limits direct interaction, replacing accountability with spectacle. The leader appears in carefully curated images rather than open deliberative spaces.
REPUBLICAN STYLE			
The preferred form of communication: speech			
	VISUAL	VERBAL	ACTION
1. Equality of citizenship	Political leaders show themselves to the voters.	Singular first person, civic virtues and prosocial ideas, responsibilities, and their emotional underpinning.	Political actors select arenas where they can directly reach and engage the relevant community. The action aims at accessibility, shared deliberation, and horizontal communication.
2. Communality	The political leader presents himself or herself among other politicians or leaders or even has others present in his or her place since they represent him or her.	Use of plural. Future tense.	Politician seeks to broaden participation by inviting diverse groups, encouraging civic involvement, and opening up political arenas to new voices.
3. Debate, then consensus	The actors are all of the same quality, each leader takes the stage, and they all appear at the same time.	Questions, and prompts in the text. The accumulation of linguistic elements that form a dialogue.	Actions highlight shared identity, cooperation, and collective agency. The leader acts as a facilitator of community rather than a dominant figure.
4. Moralising	Visually represents the themes of his speech.	Intellectual texts and speeches.	The politician cultivates a public persona built around values, virtue, and civic-minded everyday practices. Action becomes an expression of moral leadership and communal ideals.
BUREAUCRATIC STYLE			
The preferred form of communication: writing			
	VISUAL	VERBAL	ACTION
1. Impersonality	It's not the visual that counts. The picture of the politician could be anyone. The political leader's clothes are unremarkable. They may or may not be a picture of the political leader.	Texts quoting a regulatory text. Imperative mode, total exclusion of private life and feelings from the texts.	Political action appears routine, procedural, and devoid of spectacle or dramatization. The emphasis is on the operation of institutions rather than on personal performance.
2. Predictability, regularity and rigidity	Austere, monotonous dress. Unspectacular stage pictures.	Informative, factual texts. In asymmetrical situations, the reader can	Political processes are framed as mechanical, rule-bound, stable, and emotionless. Action follows

		only be the receiving party.	pre-set procedures instead of charismatic intervention.
3. The sovereign is an administrator	The political leader is shown in symbolic scenes of legislation, lawmaking, government, and action.	Laws, procedures, regulations, and institutionalization of all human relations.	The leader remains physically absent; only decrees, documents, and institutional outputs appear. Political action is depersonalized and disembodied.
4. Institutionalism	The emphasis is on the specific institutions, not the person. Visually, this becomes a more important element in the spectacle.	Invoking the primacy of institutions in the text.	Problems are addressed by reorganizing, stabilizing, or expanding institutional structures rather than by dramatic individual action.

Appendix 1: Specific indicators of the four styles.

ⁱ Márki-Zay's case: The alpha values for the style indicators were as follows:

For the realist style, the indicators of simplicity and authenticity had $\alpha = 1.00$; strategic thinking had $\alpha = 0.82$; and action-orientation had $\alpha = 1.00$.

For the courtly style, the role of appearance highlighted had $\alpha = 1.00$; mimicry had $\alpha = 0.83$; the sovereign in the first place had $\alpha = 0.80$; and sovereign physicality, availability had $\alpha = 0.79$.

For the republican style, the indicator of equality of citizenship had $\alpha = 0.83$; communality had $\alpha = 0.80$; debate, then consensus had $\alpha = 0.82$; and moralization had $\alpha = 0.80$.

Finally, for the bureaucratic style, impersonality had $\alpha = 0.82$; predictability, regularity, and rigidity had $\alpha = 0.83$; sovereign as an administrator had $\alpha = 0.80$; and institutionalism had $\alpha = 0.85$.

ⁱⁱ Orbán's case: The alpha values for the style indicators were as follows:

For the realist style, the indicators of simplicity and authenticity had $\alpha = 0.83$; strategic thinking had $\alpha = 0.82$; and action-orientation had $\alpha = 0.8$.

For the courtly style, the role of appearance highlighted had $\alpha = 0.80$; mimicry had $\alpha = 1.00$; the sovereign in the first place had $\alpha = 0.80$; and sovereign physicality, availability had $\alpha = 0.83$.

For the republican style, the indicator of equality of citizenship had $\alpha = 0.79$; communality had $\alpha = 0.79$; debate, then consensus had $\alpha = 0.80$; and moralization had $\alpha = 0.80$.

Finally, for the bureaucratic style, impersonality had $\alpha = 1.00$; predictability, regularity, and rigidity had $\alpha = 0.90$; sovereign as an administrator had $\alpha = 0.90$; and institutionalism had $\alpha = 1.00$.