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Evolution of Preferences at Hungarian Electorate towards Bidimensional “Left – Right” Structure (1990 to 2013)

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**EVOLUTION OF PREFERENCES AT HUNGARIAN
ELECTORATE TOWARDS BIDIMENSIONAL
“LEFT – RIGHT” STRUCTURE (1990 TO 2013)**

Abstract:

The article presents Hungarian electorate’s preferences in the time of transition and democratic consolidation beginning in 1990. The preferences are confronted with results of parliamentary elections held in 1990, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006 and 2010. Author tries to show how the left and right preference division developed on the basis of socioeconomic cleavages. The evolution of Hungarian electorate preferences has moved toward bidimensional “left – right” structure since the elections in 1998, yet first symptoms appeared in 1994 when post-socialist party MSzP won the elections. Since then only this party and rightist Fidesz were able to succeed and create Hungarian governments.

Key words:

Hungarian electorate, preferences, political parties

Introduction

More than twenty years of democratic consolidation caused great changes in the Hungarian society. Instead of an ideal paradise Hungarians received hard real life conditions. Of course, socialism, especially in the eighties of the XXth century, was slowly deepening in a huge crisis, but at least it guaranteed security. When the socialistic state collapsed eventually, suddenly more independence was given into the people’s hands. Hungarians began to shape the image of their country as well as their own fates. One of the tools, which was used to create a new situation, was the parliamentary election. From 1947 to 1985 all parliamentary elections were falsified. It was done to show social support to the ruling communist party, even though not all Hungarians wanted this party to rule as the only legal party in their country. So, one can say that

parliamentary elections have been revealing real electoral attitudes and preferences only since 1990.

The contemporary situation on the Hungarian political scene is not just a phenomenon, as many foreign journalists and researchers could perceive it. It is a result of previous pretransitional history as for the last twenty years of democratic transformations; consolidation efforts gave an outcome of socially deep-rooted beliefs, attitudes and imaginations about the ideal shape of Hungary. This article tries to present social preferences revealed in six different parliamentary elections in Hungary: 1990, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006 and 2010. Then it is aimed to analyze the causes of such attitudes and effects of the changes of electoral support. The author tries to explain the problem of popularity of two political camps: the right and left one and shows how and why the Hungarian electorate preferences have been changing for last two decades.

A wider perspective on Hungarian electoral problem

To find an answer to the question of the shape of electoral preferences in Hungary from 1990 to 2013, one has to put this problem to broader sight. It is necessary to see not only the Hungarian reality but as well all Central-East European perspectives. From the past Hungary has been a part of Central Europe with some similar cultural patterns as other countries of the region. In the Habsburg empire dependent nations strengthened the bonds with themselves, even though they were strong before. After the First World War Hungary and other new countries emerged on the map of Europe. But after that only Czechoslovakia was able to guarantee democratic procedures inside its political system. Hungary, Poland and other Eastern European countries decided to receive authoritarian systems. Some experiences from that period are still vivid in the Hungarian society nowadays.

4 June 1920, upon the Treaty of Trianon, Hungary lost two-thirds of historical lands and two-thirds of the people who had lived in Hungary before the war. Many Hungarians were cut off their motherland. The effect of that past event is present today and politicians use the case of Hungarian minority in neighboring Slovakia or Romania as a way to gather more support. In the interwar era Hungary was a rural country and the Catholic Church retained wide powers in the education, political parties were small and weak. In such conditions after a short period of democratization, Bela Kun's forced communist regime in 1919. Yet finally it was replaced by the authoritarian one introduced by Miklós Horthy, which lasted to the end of the Second World War [Crampton 2005: 75-93]. These experiences were slightly defrozen after 1990. Some parties appealed to the interwar period and an idea of a strong-right governed country

without political pluralism. But the strongest influence in the Hungarian electorate attitudes came from postwar socialistic periods, which were characterized as the radical left. After the Second World War Central and Eastern Europe became soviet sphere of influence. Socialism built a new culture, which is close to some extent even today to some Hungarians. So, if one wants to find the reasons of difference of Hungarian voters attitudes today, it is necessary to remember about the fact of historical genesis of some societal cleavages.

Apart from pretransformation historical background, the analyze of Hungarian electoral attitudes has to take into account more recent mechanisms connected with system change and the new one development. From these points of view position of Hungarian society in contemporary politics can be described by the process of democratization. Democratization is not only law and procedures but as well people who internalized these institutions. But even if we say that the formal prerequisites for democracy are fulfilled in Hungary, it is more difficult to asses how deep patterns of democratic behaviour have been attained by Hungarians. Hungary as other Central-European countries began their race to democracy in 1989/1990. That is why one can try to find some similar facts and scenarios in the developing situation from 1989 to contemporary days.

When it was obvious that the totalitarian model of the socialistic state cannot survive any more in the realities of the eighties of the XXth century, political elites in Hungary started to implement further changes in economy and politics. Not only Hungary decided to reshape socialism, but as well Poland followed them in a similar way. A distinctive factor between these two countries was the strength of opposition to the ruling party. While in Poland it was a big movement, in Hungary it was just a margin of society. Even Czechs and Slovaks gathered themselves in broad social anticommunist oppositional movements. It showed how deep socialistic elites were able to get social support due to their steps in Hungary. But anyway, that what occurred afterwards was the Hungarians acceptance of democracy as well as in other neighboring countries.

There are several theoretical models, which conclude Central and Eastern European efforts to democracy. When socialism collapsed, new emerging powers supported by society decided to shift political systems from socialism to democracy. Not all Central and Eastern European countries succeeded in it. Moreover, the countries that were successful did not follow the same path to it. If we constrain the spectrum of postsocialist countries to the leaders of changes, we can see Hungary in this group. The beginning period of changes in Hungary is classified by different authors as transformation [Huntington 1991: 125] or as a result of negotiations [Wiatr 2006: 72-74]. Although the names are

different, the clue is the same: both elites and opposition decided to negotiate conditions of the changes.

It is worth mentioning that Hungary is the only country in Central Europe that survived a trial of socialistic system liberalization before stepping on the way of democratization. But after that, it undertook a similar process to the Polish and Czechoslovak processes of transition, which were burdened with double task of changing the political and economic system. At the same time other public spheres began to change their shape as democratic transformation and consolidation were under way [von Beyme 1996: 6-30]. All the processes were accompanied by social changes. Sudden collapse of the previous system made people loose stability. It led to broad dissatisfaction and heavy costs. The social attitudes were reflected as an outcome in the elections.

Social cleavages as basis for electoral attitudes in Hungary

The contemporary dimension of Hungarian electoral support for different political options originated partly from the period, which preceded the last two decades. It is obvious that some social attitudes result from social cleavages which are connected with the previous regime. Social cleavages are divisions between political parties and social classes, religion, regions, urban areas and rural ones and interest groups. They are significant because generally they determine party affiliation and show how to appeal to each group. Socialism tried to erase conflicts among groups of interest, yet when it passed it occurred that the conflicts were only hidden behind a so called “social unity”. They existed but could not be revealed during socialism. Generally in Hungary social cleavages after 1989 were not defrozen from the interwar period. It means that there were not many conflicts that were important for the society before socialism and they were still so vivid in the transition during and after 1989 [Rivera 1996: 177-195]. But some of them divided Hungarian society and created some social attitudes toward political parties in transition time and later on. One of such cleavages was between Catholic church and the state. Socialistic elites thought that they dominated human behaviors. Atheistic morality was to eliminate all Christian values, but it occurred that the Catholic Church survived communism and became a huge support in the civil society building process. In 1990 more than half of the Hungarians said they were Catholics after socialism collapsed. This number is even bigger and equals 74% according to a survey presented by Szanda Balázs [2002: 417]. This situation had to influence politicians’ appeals as well as citizens’ choices. Second cleavage that appeared in new transitional conditions and was present before communism was the conflict between urban – rural areas. Hungarian Democratic Forum (Hungarian: Magyar Demokrata

Fórum, MDF) was a leading oppositional movement which was against socialism. In transition it represented rather liberal, modern urban opinions. But another oppositional party was more liberal and gathered urban electorate, too. This was Alliance of Free Democrats – Hungarian Liberal Party (Hungarian: Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége – a Magyar Liberális Párt, SzDSz). A party with huge tradition represented the interest of rural electorate at the beginning of the nineties of the XXth century: Independent Smallholders, Agrarian Workers and Civic Party (Hungarian: Független Kisgazda, Földmunkás és Polgári Párt, FKgP). They won the last democratic elections after the Second World War in 1945. In 1988 this party was legalized and it appealed to peasants. So cleavage between urban and rural regions was taken by FKgP from one side and MDF and SzDSz from the other one.

New political situation in Hungary after 1989 was characterized by new social cleavages that influenced electoral attitudes. They appeared in transition time and revealed social distinction and various internal conflicts. First social difference which divided Hungarians was pro or anti reformativ attitude. Not only in Hungary, but in other postcommunist countries first transitional election was a plebiscite which decided about future changes. People voted for more dynamic changes, but the group of people who did not want so deep reforms started to grow as time went by. And election in 1994 gave rather negative mark to the quick and violent reforms. It is remarkable that in the transition conflict between employers and employees was not grave. In Hungary it almost did not reveal itself in 1990. Its significance was arising in the nineties when free market became a core of economical reforms. There was no relevant political party which could vow to secure employees' rights. The Hungarian Socialist Party (Hungarian: Magyar Szocialista Párt, MSZP) was rather busy with internal and structural reorganization and fight to survive in new conditions. Although ethnic cleavage was not so important twenty years ago, today it is one of the problems that divide some part of Hungarian society. First of all, 90% of all inhabitants are Hungarians and almost 5% are the Romani. The latter group is discriminated and live on the margin of social life. From the other side, some nationalistic Hungarians accuse the Romani of bad situation in the country. The Romani have not been assimilated into Hungarians which strengthens the conflict [Szuhay 2011: 86-102].

Evolution of Hungarian electoral attitudes. From scattered positions to bipolar options

The failure of communist elite in 1990 made a new political rivalry appear. Throughout transition and transformation times this rivalry was becoming

more and more structuralized. Chaos of first years was replaced by a new socio-political deal with clear distinction of electorate support. Of course, this model is dynamic and changes, but some general qualities can be described if we take a look back and analyze situation from the very first election in 1990 to the last one in 2010.

Basic stage of the process of electoral preferences aggregation in Hungary began before the collapse of socialism and was connected with deep changes which liberalized previous regime. Behind the Iron Curtain, Hungary was the only country that allowed other organizations than ruling communist party or its supports to exist. In 1989 it was possible to legalize some political organizations that opposed communism. It was an outcome of long discussion and fight between power elites and opposition. The elites agreed to the changes because the more reformist wing won and the more radical one had to step back. Rezső Nyers and Imre Pozsgay were leaders of reformists inside the communist party. From 1989 MDF, SzDSz and Fidesz could act legally. They were the three main oppositional movements that were established in 1987 (MDF) and 1988 (SzDSz, Fidesz). But the wave of 1989 legalization enabled other parties to appear. They were historical parties that vowed for presocialist regime experiences. This group consisted of: FKgP, Christian Democratic People's Party (Hungarian: Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt, KDNP), Hungarian Social Democratic Party (Hungarian: Magyarországi Szociáldemokrata Párt, MSZDP). Hungarian opposition differed from the Polish or the Czechoslovak ones not only because it was organized in parties and organizations before 1989/1990 and heavily scattered but could not rely on huge social support as Solidarity did in Poland, Civil Forum and Society against Violence in Czechoslovakia. One of the reasons of this situation was the relation between society and the elites in Hungary. After the revolution of 1956 János Kádár decided to gather social support for socialism and not cause great revolt as it happened in 1956. His evolutionary program consisted of economic reforms that aimed at making social life condition more comfortable [Romsics 2007: 70]. During this wave he wanted to receive Hungarians' loyalty. János Kádár's reward was social withdrawal from politics to private sphere. He was able to get social support to build socialism. That is why many Hungarians were not interested in oppositional movements as it was in Poland or Czechoslovakia.

To understand the social and political situation in Hungary in liberalization and transition times it is necessary to present the evolution of the communist party itself and its relation with oppositional organizations. Crisis in the economy and politics in the eighties of the XXth century made Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (Hungarian: Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt, MSzMP) aware of the necessity of solving the problems with the participation of other

than prosocialist forces. But before this MSzMP tried to reorganize themselves inside. June, 1987 after eighteen years prime minister György Lázár was replaced by Karoly Grósz who became General Secretary of the leading party one year later. Then Miklós Németh took position of prime minister. M. Németh belonged to a reformist group. Apart from him, two other prominent party members created the core of reformists: Rezső Nyers and Imre Pozsgay. Reformists vowed for negotiations with opposition while radical wing of MSzMP did not want to allow opposition to present its points of view. Finally reformists won.

Because Hungarian opposition was scattered that is why oppositional activists decided to discuss their opinions before talks with communist elites. Oppositional roundtable took place from 22nd to 30th March 1989 and was inspired by the Polish model. All oppositional groups agreed that they would be in unison and would not talk with communists individually. Then communist – opposition negotiations began. They lasted from June 13th to September 18th, 1989. The main aim of negotiations was devoted to a peaceful and democratic transition. There were some controversies. The communists wanted to share the burden of managing the economy, but the opposition refused to take on the task. The opposition did not want to be accused of the crisis by the society and was reluctant to talk about economy. Negotiations broke down lots of times. Two most contentious issues were the electoral system and the presidency. Both sides wanted to secure support in following parliamentary and presidential elections. Communists opted for a voting for president in a popular election that would presumably elect its popular reformist leader Imre Pozsgay. They wanted presidential election before parliamentary one. MSzMP was able to bring round MDF to this idea. But other opposition parties like Fidesz or SzDSz pressed for a weak presidency based on the assumption that Pozsgay would be elected. Smaller parties opted for presidential elections made by parliament. Finally Fidesz and SzDSz did not sign the negotiation agreement and initiated a referendum on four issues: on the dissolution of the party militia, the return of party assets, the elimination of the party from the workplace and whether presidential or parliamentary elections should be held first. On the crucial question of the election sequence Fidesz and SzDSz won and parliamentary elections would take place as first one [Ripp 2002: 3-39].

The outcome of negotiations was the division in the oppositional camp. MDF took a dominant position and tried to marginalize SzDSz and Fidesz. But in communist camp division took place as well. In October 1989 party congress dissolved MSzMP. New Hungarian Socialist Party (Hungarian: Magyar Szocialista Párt, MSZP) was made up by reform wing members while Hungarian Communist Workers' Party (Hungarian: Magyar Kommunista Munkáspárt) was created on December 17th 1989 by radical communist as a successor party of the MSzMP [Bayer 2003: 174-176].

The emergence of a multiparty system made it possible to take different attitudes by the electorate and vote for programs that suited citizens the best. But as it was said before, the first election in 1990 was a plebiscite, which was to answer if Hungarians want to farewell socialism, and introduces changes toward democracy or want to reform socialism itself. Could the first election aggregate electoral preferences in a more aware and solid way? Probably not.

The First decade after the collapse of socialism was a period of clarification of the electorate preferences. New social cleavages began to determinate the surface of political rivalry. People found themselves in a new situation with a wide variety of political parties which wanted to represent interests of some group of citizens. Parties had to assign their priorities in order to get support of a specific group of people. Although failure of socialist state, the leftist ideas were still vivid among society. But there were new political options that could be interesting and gather social support. Generally we can state that main surface of rivalry was put on the left and right dimension of political conflict. There was no one clear representative of each option in transition because the socialist camp was divided into MSzP and MKM and on the right side some parties included rightist ideas in political programs.

Initial right – left conflict of interests was influenced by transitional qualities as well as by specific Hungarian ones. Generally the leftist option consists of: social welfare programs, religious freedom and the separation of church and state, higher or more progressive taxes, environmentalism, trade protectionism, expansion of government into new areas, trade unions and industry regulations and social change or social justice, willingness to access to international organizations. While on the right side you can find following options: the reform of government-funded welfare programs, traditional or religious values, allowing private institutions to replace government services, lower or flatter taxation, international free-trade agreements, limiting the scope of government and reducing regulations on industry. This ideal division on right and left problems touches three dimensions that influence electoral choices. There are political, economical and axiological spheres. These types of thinking can aggregate electoral preferences and eventually place parties inside or outside parliament.

If one takes a look on political parties that emerged in liberalization period and in transition, one can easily find lack of consequence of the political parties programs. SzDSz and MDF tried to place themselves on central position on the political scene. SzDSz was a liberal party with a pro European option but in economy it referred to the social market instead of pure liberal one. MDF represented national and conservative opinions but in economical program there were solid socio-liberal ideas of free market. From an economical point of view MDF was even more social than SzDSz, but in politics it was placed on

the right position [Szarvasz 1995: 123]. The third of oppositional parties that was created in liberalization time was Fidesz. This party represented the liberal and social option. Parties that represented a rightist programs were: FKgP and KDNP while on the left side there was mainly MSzP. FKgP and KDNP which were both historical parties but in 1989 they had almost an entirely new cast. Their character was reestablished because there were totally new times. They vowed for national character of economy and underlined traditional values. MSzP had to face more difficulties than other parties. It had to cope with the socialist luggage of crisis and its consequences. So the political program must have been not only refreshed but deeply changed. It reflected modern social democratic ideas but MSzP was still perceived by Hungarian electorate as responsible for huge political, social and economical devastation.

Ryszard Herbut states that in transition and early transformation times in Central Europe two main political conflicts dominated political rivalry. They gathered electoral preferences in economical and axiological dimensions. Voters had to answer if they wanted more or less state interference in economy and if they prefer traditional and closed values or open and pro European ones. Such distinction placed main political parties on two crossed axes: first with axiological dimension (bottom represented by traditional values and top by liberal values), second one with economical dimension (left side represented by economic statism and right side by total free market). Ryszard Herbut presents a more complex set of political differences among electorate than a bidimensional distinction between the right and left side. There are four groups of parties that represent four different types of ideas. The groups of parties were: liberal, liberal and traditional, traditional with state interference and liberal with state interference. In Hungary only two groups were represented because they could count on social support. They were liberal and liberal and traditional one. The first group consisted of: MSzP, SzDSz and Fidesz while the second one of: MDF, KDNP and FKgP [Herbut 1998: 146-152].

Anyway, both right – left distinction scheme or the four groups show that in the beginning of transition in Hungary the electorate was polarized and two main surfaces of preferences were dominant. They were liberal or socioliberal and national - conservative ones. Liberal (socioliberal) parties like SzDSz, Fidesz had few common qualities: economy restructurization, lower state participation in economy, foreign capital attraction. MSzP which tried to describe its identity was a bit milder and was not in favour of revolutionary changes but rather opted for an evolution. Yet the main program elements of MSzP were similar with SzDSz ones like the social program introduction of pro European values, the building of a civil society. The national – conservative group opted for traditional values in society and rather liberal ideas in economy.

Past experiences were important for these parties and were treated as a basic cause to divide the Good from the Bad. The Bad were those who participated and supported socialism while the Good were those who cut themselves off from the previous system.

First stage of polarization of Hungarian electorate preferences on “right and left” segments

More than twenty years of Hungarian democratic consolidation can show us how politicians' decisions created social attitudes towards parties and how it was reflected in parliamentary voting. Contemporary Fidesz domination is a simple outcome of these twenty years. From a broader perspective one can state that Fidesz is ruling, but it has to be aware of other parties' strength. There is one party which was as much strong as Fidesz through last years. I mean MSzP. There are two stages of electorate preferences polarization in Hungary. The first one started in 1990 and ended about ten years after, when MSzP and Fidesz won their first elections: MSzP in 1994 and Fidesz in 1998. The second stage is more mature one and it was opened by second MSzP victory in 2002 and has lasted through consecutive socialists victory in 2006 and second Fidesz victory in 2010.

First free election to parliament took place on the 25th of March and the 8th of April in 1990. The electoral system was formulated in 1989, during the roundtable talks. In Hungary there is one-chamber parliament. The basic principles were regulated by the amendments to the 1949 Constitution and by election law from 1989. The elections should have been held every four years in April or May. The number of members of Parliament was 386. During roundtable talks Hungarians decided to use a mixed-member system with three levels of votes' allocation: electing 176 representatives from majoritarian single-seat constituencies and 152 representatives from multi-seat regional districts and a state proportional list representation with 58 representatives. There were possible two rounds. If the first round in a single-seat constituency was declared valid, it must have been determined if it was conclusive or not. For the first round to be conclusive, one of the candidates must have had received more than half the votes cast and the turnout must have overcome 50% [Kubas 2010 (1): 117-141].

54 political parties acted legally before 25th March, but only 28 of them were able to register in order to take part in the election. The turnout of 1990 elections was 65% in the first round and 45% in the second one. But in the first round only 5 of 176 single-seat constituencies elected their representatives. MDF had a huge success in the second round. In single-seat constituencies

this party got 109 seats. But the mixed system equalized other parties' worse results due to more seats for them from a state proportional list. The number of invalid votes was on average in two rounds and two types of districts 134 122. If we compare this result to average turnout of two rounds (5 068 639 / more than 55% of overall turnout) it occurs that 2.65% of voters gave invalid votes.

Table 1. Results of 1990 election

	Single-seat districts	Multi-seat regional districts	State proportional list	Total	Electoral support (average number of votes/ % of votes)	Parliamentary representation %
MDF	114	40	10	164	1 200 305 / 23.7	42.49
SzDSz	35	34	23	92	1 066 702 / 21.5	23.83
FKgP	11	16	17	44	552 777 / 10.9	11.4
MSzP	1	14	18	33	519 946 / 10.3	8.55
Fidesz	1	8	12	21	337 529 / 6.6	5.44
KDNP	3	8	10	21	302 398 / 6	5.44
Others	7	-	-	7	151 199 / 3	1.81

Note that there were four additional parliament members who belonged to party coalitions (SzDSz – Fidesz – KDNP and KDNP - Fidesz).

Source: Own calculations based on: [Czyż, Kubas 2010; Nohlen, Stöver 2010].

The strongest conflict was between MDF and SzDSz. These two parties wanted to represent the electorate preferences that opposed postcommunists. In the first round there was no major difference in votes which MDF and SzDSz got. Yet the overwhelming success of MDF in single-seat constituencies in the second round was an effect of the MDF, KDNP and FKgP agreement which stated that if there was no candidate from one of those parties they vowed to vote for a candidate of the one that had its candidate in the second round. Additionally mixed voting system caused the growth of the difference between MDF and SzDSz in parliamentary representation grew to 18.66% although total difference of netto votes between was only 2.2%. Three parties: MSzP, Fidesz and KDNP weren't successful in single-seat constituencies at all. They could not catch direct support from local electorate. Their position was strengthened by votes from proportional lists: regional and state. It is remarkable that MSzP was ranked fourth with the support of 10.3%. It meant a total failure. Electorate blamed MSzP for crisis caused by communists and new MSzP was unable to cut off from the previous regime. From 1990 to 1994 MDF made a coalition with FKgP and KDNP.

If you want to understand Hungarian electorate preferences in 1990, you need to know that there was a set of different motivations that led to the final outcome of votes and seats in the parliamentary election. The set consisted of

support for democracy, opinion on free market economy, role of state in social and economical life. The New Democracies Barometer from 1991 surveyed Hungarian evaluations of the new regime and the old communist regime and social and demographic characteristics. It was interesting to read that half of the citizens gave positive marks to the communist regime while the other half gave negative ones. This attitude was not reflected in the election of the 1990's results. And the results showed that there was a correlation between the positive attitude towards the communist regime and statism. Those citizens who preferred democratic values believed they are more responsible for economical security than officials and politicians. About 60% of citizens were in favor of statism to 40% of those who preferred more individualism and freedom [Sula 2005: 80 -81].

The period between two first elections was a very hard time. Chaos and harsh reforms as well as political fights caused growth of negative social opinions towards those who governed. In this situation people believed that the opposition to MDF, FKgP and KDNP coalition could bring security and wealth. The only strong opposition at that time were the socialists. The polls showed that they could regain power after four years. The second election took place on the 8th and the 29th of May 1994.

Table 2. Results of 1994 elections

	Single-seat districts	Multi-seat regional districts	State proportional list	Total	Electoral support (average number of votes/ % of votes)	Parliamentary representation %
MSzP	149	53	7	209	1 735 474 / 31.6	54.14
SzDSz	16	28	25	69	1 035 920 / 19	17.88
MDF	5	18	15	38	641 966 / 11.7	9.84
FKgP	1	14	11	26	450 949 / 8.25	6.74
KDNP	3	5	14	22	397 719 / 7.26	5.7
Fidesz	0	7	13	20	388 730 / 7.1	5.18
Others	2	-	-	2	160 952 / 3	0.52

Source: Own calculations based on: [Czyż, Kubas 2010; Nohlen, Stöver 2010].

Although the number of parties elected to the parliament was the same as in 1990, the layout of received electoral support was deeply different than previously. Dissatisfied electorate did not want to support MDF and its two coalitional partners. Moreover, voters did not support other oppositional movement from transition time: SzDSz. On the contrary voters supported postcommunists. It was not a surprise because the same scenario happened in Poland in the 1993's election. MSzP received absolute majority. Previous election's winner MDF ended in a complete failure and received 19% of votes to 23,7% in 1990.

This difference is maybe not so substantial, but if we compare 114 members from single-seat constituencies in 1990 to only 5 in 1994, the difference is clear. So in direct election MDF lost its popularity heavily. Although SzDSz was almost as much popular in 1990 as in 1994, yet mixed voting system made this party lose 25% of seats. What is striking is that MDF result was approached by three smaller parties: Fidesz, KDNP and FKgP in the number of votes and parliamentary representation. Two coalitional parties: KDNP and FKgP received worse results than in 1990 and paid for four years of governance.

The turnout in the first round was 68.9% and in the second one 55.1%. The number of invalid votes was on average in two rounds and two types of districts 79 366 and was lower than in 1990. If we compare this result to the average turnout of two rounds (5 480 685 / about 62%) it occurs that 1.45% of voters gave invalid votes. This result was almost half times lower than in 1990.

MSzP could make one-party cabinet because it had absolute majority in the parliament. But this party wanted to secure social legitimization and show that it can cooperate with oppositional parties. That is why MSzP invited SzDSz to the government coalition. There were several important issues in 1994-1990's politics, but two of them were the most urgent: economic reforms and accession to European institutions. In 1995 minister of finance Lajos Bokros announced a catalogue of restrictive fiscal policy which was aimed at preventing the threat of national bankruptcy (a mechanism of gradual devaluation of the forint, social benefits were limited, introduction of tuition fees, nominal wages were slowed down). Economic rates were better after Bokros package, but Hungarians did not accept such huge costs of transformation. One could observe social dissatisfaction and loss of social support for ruling coalition. Foreign policy was successful as Hungary joined NATO in 1997.

Inside the party system there were two important moments. Although one of them happened in 1993, its final outcome happened in 1998 and the period from 1994 to 1998 was a preparatory time. I mean the birth and development of the Hungarian Justice and Life Party (Hungarian: Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja, MIÉP) which was a radical nationalist party. This party gathered extreme right electorate which opted for anti-Semitism, was against the Romani or did not want Hungary to access European institutions.

After worse results in the 1994's election Fidesz decided to put more effort to make its position better. That is why in 1995 Fidesz joined Hungarian Civic Party (Hungarian: Magyar Polgári Párt, MPP) and was called Fidesz-MPP. But it was not the only change, Fidesz changed its political position from liberal to conservative and started to vow to more rightist electorate [Czyż, Kubas 2011: 71 – 73, 120, 122].

Third parliamentary election was on 10th and 24th May, 1998.

Table 3. Results of 1998 elections

	Single-seat districts	Multi-seat regional districts	State proportional list	Total	Electoral support (average number of votes/ % of votes)	Parliamentary representation %
Fidesz	105*	48	10	163	1 212 541 / 26.7	42.22
MSzP	54	50	30	134	1 389 275 / 30.6	34.72
FKgP	12	22	14	48	605 960 / 13.4	12.44
SzDSz	2	5	17	24	404 619 / 9	6.22
MDF	2	-	-	2	data unknown	0.52
MIÉP	-	3	11	14	248 849 / 4.6	3.63
Independent	1	-	-	1	37 848 / 0.8	0.25

* 50 seats from 105 were won by coalition Fidesz-MDF.

Source: Own calculations based on: [Czyż, Kubas 2010; Nohlen, Stöver 2010].

This time it was Fidesz-MPP which won the election though after first round MSzP got more seats. But overall success of Fidesz-MPP was caused by two other right parties: FKgP and MDF which decided not to forward candidates in the constituencies where there was a strong Fidesz-MPP candidate. This situation showed how the right parties' coalition was created without any previous agreement. The Fidesz-MPP success was possible due to the disappointment to Hungarian electorate, which was an effect of harsh MSzP reforms. MSzP lost almost one million of votes and 75 seats in the Parliament. FKgP received a very good result if you compare it to the 1994's election: 150 000 votes more and overall 48 seats to 22 in 1994. SzDSz ended in failure. It had to pay for ruling with MSzP but the cost was very high. In 1990 and 1994 SzDSz got more than 1 million votes and in 1998 it did not even receive 500 000. Radical nationalist party MIÉP received 14 parliamentary seats, but due to its orthodox position it had been isolated through 1998-2002 period by other parliamentary parties. The 1998 elections showed growth of rightist opinions in Hungarian electorate (Fidesz-MPP) with even strong support for radical MIÉP.

The turnout in the first round was 56.26% and in the second one 57.1%. The number of invalid votes was 56 256 and was lower than in 1990 and in 1994. 1.24% of voters gave invalid votes. Due to lower electorate participation in 1998 the outcome of invalid votes was only lower about 0.2% comparing to 1994.

To sum up the first stage of Hungarian electorate polarization of political preferences it would be interesting to answer a question about the reference of declared preferences to the type of voting on political parties. This correlation is presented in Table 4. The survey from 1998 shows the correlation between declared opinions (left or right) and the mode of voting.

Table 4. “Left” preferences versus “right” preferences by reference to the mode of voting

	Supporters of Left	Supporters of Right	Neutrals
MDF	13	34	53
SzDSz	30	12	58
FKgP	11	14	75
MSzP	60	3	37
Fidesz	14	26	60
KDNP	11	20	69

Source: [Körösényi 1998: 114].

Voters who preferred leftist option recognized their party the best because 60% of votes given to MSzP originated from people who supported leftist issues. But it is necessary to add that in 1990-1998 period typical rightist party like FKgP or KDNP received a small recognition from people with rightist preferences (14% and 20%). Fidesz is not much better although he won election in 1998 (26%). Unfortunately the survey does not indicate MIÉP results which could put more light on the left versus right electorate division. In that period it was MDF which could count on right votes the most often (34%). Yet this research cannot state if left or right electorate preferences influenced voting for left or right parties. Moreover it would be difficult to state if liberal or conservative preferences influenced voting on liberal or conservative parties as well if we analyze the following data (Table 5).

Table 5. “Liberal” preferences versus “conservative” preferences by reference to the mode of voting

	Supporters of liberalism	Supporters of conservatism	Neutrals
MDF	11	44	45
SzDSz	46	11	43
FKgP	13	23	64
MSzP	31	21	48
Fidesz	34	7	59
KDNP	19	25	56

Source: [Körösényi 1998: 114].

SzDSz as the most liberal party in that time in Hungary was able to gather 46% of support of people who opted for liberalism. Fidesz which was perceived in that time as liberal received 34% of liberal oriented electorate. Social-liberal MSzP was third with 31%. MDF which represented right program could count on 44% votes from conservative electorate. Two other rightist parties: KDN and FKgP had respectively 25% and 23% votes from conservative electorate. It is striking that MSzP was supported by 21% votes from conservative

oriented electorate. Yet the most amazing data shows that in almost all parties (without SzDSz) the biggest part of support came from the neutral electorate. And it meant that the positive identification of Hungarian electorate towards political parties did not exist in the period of first stage. If not, it must have been a negative identification. Hungarians voted not for but against. Some authors say that negative identification is a basic factor of voting in Central and Eastern Europe after the collapse of socialism [Rose, Mihler 1998: 218]. The same opinion is presented by the fourth survey made by New Democracies Barometer which stated that 39% of Hungarians identified themselves with political parties' programs and 70% of them said they would never give their vote to one or more chosen parties [New Democracies Barometer IV (1995)].

Herbert Kitschelt says that there are three variables that constitute electorate attitudes in Central European countries: education, profession and employment in a specific economic sector. Additionally communist regime made Hungarians be a very homogenized society and after 1990 the process of diversification was slowly growing. H. Kitschelt divided members of Central European societies into seven groups regarding economical and educational status. Yet generally the members could be assigned to the winners and losers of transformation. The first group voted for more liberal and less social parties, yet the losers opted for more social parties [Kitschelt 1999: 229-294].

Second stage of polarization of Hungarian electorate preferences on "right and left" segments

The second stage of polarization of the Hungarian electorate preferences began with the fourth parliamentary election which took place on 7th and 21st April, 2002. Fidesz-MPP made pre-electoral coalition with MDF and eventually won the election. It is worth mentioning that MDF without that coalition would be outside the parliament. Main stream of rivalry was between Fidesz-MPP and MSzP and although the latter was second it was MSzP which ruled the country for following four years. After revealing the result of 2002 election it occurred that only four parties entered the parliament and Fidesz-MPP with MDF could not make a cabinet. So it was MSzP with SzDSz which decided to make a coalition and governed Hungary. You could observe concentration of rightist electorate around Fidesz-MPP. Two other rightist parties: FKgP and MIÉP did not enter the parliament partly because some votes were caught by Fidesz-MPP.

The turnout in the first round was 70.53% and in the second one 73.51%. The number of invalid votes was 59 880 and was lower than in 1990. If we compare this result to the average turnout of the two rounds (5 680 545 / about 72%) it occurs that there were 1.05% of invalid votes.

Table 6. Results of 2002 elections

	Single-seat districts	Multi-seat regional districts	State proportional list	Total	Electoral support (average number of votes/ % of votes)	Parliamentary representation %
Fidesz-MPP	95	67	26	188	2 319 835 / 41	48.7
MSzP	87	69	31	178	2 262 259 / 39.8	46.11
SzDSz	2	4	13	19	3 47 033 / 6	4.92
MSzP-SzDSz	1	-	-	1	41 461 / 0.7	0.25

Source: Own calculations based on: Czyż A., Kubas S. (2010), Doświadczenia węgierskiej transformacji ustrojowej – od Jánoša Kádára do Viktora Orbána, p. 85, http://www.valaszts.hu/ujweb/index_en.htm_ (10.07.2011) and Nohlen D., Stöver P. (2010), Elections in Europe: A data handbook, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hungarian_parliamentary_election,_2002 (23.02.2013).

There were several important issues during second MSzP-SzDSz coalitional governance and one of them was vetting. There were two parliamentary committees which investigated vetting problems. One was headed by MDF while the other by SzDSz. Another issue was connected with the USA intervention in Iraq and Hungarian agreement on supporting the Americans. Fidesz-MPP and MDF were against that action. One of brightest successes of governmental coalition was Hungarian access to EU which happened 1st May, 2004. But the June election to the European Union Parliament brought some disappointment to socialist coalition because Fidesz-MPP received about 1 500 000 votes and 12 seats in European Parliament while MSzP about 1 000 000 votes and only 9 seats. The 2004 election affirmed leading position of Fidesz-MPP [Kubas 2010 (2): 40]. Rights of Hungarians who lived outside the country in neighbouring countries were a very hot political issue. The rights guaranteed by previous coalition with Fidesz-MPP were now diminished by social-liberal coalition. All the problems that arose in 2004 made prime minister Péter Medgyessy to resign and Ferenc Gyurcsány was elected on his post.

Fifth parliamentary election took place on 9th and 23rd April, 2006. Electoral campaign was focused on personal rivalry between Fidesz leader Viktor Orbán and MSzP leader Ferenc Gyurcsány. *Eventually MSzP was able to repeat a victorious success from 2002 and was the first Hungarian party which could make a government with SzDSz twice in a row.* The turnout in the first round was 67.83% and in the second one 64.39%. The number of invalid votes was 49 352 and was lower than in all previous elections from 1990. If we compare this result to the average turnout of two rounds (5 455 214/ 66,11%) it occurs that 0.9% of votes were invalid.

Table 7. Results of 2006 elections

	Single-seat districts	Multi-seat regional districts	State proportional list	Total	Electoral support (average number of votes/ % of votes)	Parliamentary representation %
Fidesz - KDNP	68	69	27	164	2 271 110 / 41.6	42.49
MSzP	98	71	17	186	2 256 009 / 41.3	48.19
SzDSz	3	4	11	18	346 179 / 6.3	4.66
MSzP-SzDSz	6	-	-	6	154 619 / 3	1.55
MDF	-	2	9	11	255 698 / 5	2.85
Others	1	-	-	1	18 054 / 0.3	0.25

Source: Own calculations based on: [Czyż, Kubas 2010; Nohlen, Stöver 2010].

Just after the election media revealed a speech given by prime minister in a private meeting with socialist politicians in May, 2006. Ferenc Gyurcsány stated that economic rates were low and society was cheated. Otherwise, the Hungarians would not support MSzP in the election and socialists could loose. Despite public outrage, the prime minister refused to resign, and a series of demonstrations started calling for the resignation of F. Gyurcsány. He did not do that. Hungary was in a critical situation and asked international institutions like European Union and International Monetary Fund for support. Then the government proposed a reform package but it was refused in a referendum in 2008. Government reconstruction made SzDSz to leave the coalition and in 2009. Ferenc Gyurcsány was replaced by Gordon Bajnai who became a prime minister after a parliamentary passage of constructive motion of no-confidence against F. Gyurcsány. In 2009 Hungarians elected their representatives to EU Parliament. Fidesz won 14 seats with 1 632 309 votes and it was more than in 2004. While MSzP lost half of votes and received support from only 503 140 voters and it gave 4 seats.

Last parliamentary election was on 11th and 25th April, 2010. Prelectional surveys showed that Fidesz would win, but the real result was a bit surprising because Fidesz received the absolute majority of votes: 52.75%. And it ensured 2/3 of seats on the parliament. It meant that Fidesz formed one-party cabinet. The turnout in the first round was 64,38% and in the second one 46,66%. The number of invalid votes was 59 880 and was lower than in 1990. If we compare this result to the average turnout of two rounds (5 122 501 / about 55.52%) it occurs that 0,79% of votes was invalid.

Table 8. Results of 2010 elections

	Single-seat districts	Multi-seat regional districts	State proportional list	Total	Electoral support (average number of votes/ % of votes)	Parliamentary representation %
Fidesz–KDNP*	173	87	3	262	3 335 220 / 53	67.88
MSzP	2	28	29	59	1 316 789 / 21	15.28
Jobbik	-	26	21	47	996 851 / 15.8	12.18
LMP	-	5	11	16	427 313 / 6.8	4.15
Independent	1	-	-	1	12 452 / 0.2	0.25

* 1 member was elected as a candidate of coalition Fidesz – KDNP - Vállalkozók Pártja.

Source: Own calculations based on: [Czyż, Kubas 2010; Nohlen, Stöver 2010].

MSzP ended the 2010 election with a huge failure what resulted in taking the 59 oppositional parliamentary seats to 186 in 2006 and 178 in 2002. The reason of such a bad outcome was social criticism of worsening economy. After 2010 election MSzP became just a shadow of the Fidesz growing strength. Yet it was SzDSz which was punished the most severely by the Hungarians because it did not get any parliamentary seat. MDF followed SzDSz example. There was a new party which was able to win some parliamentary seats. It was Politics Can Be Different (Hungarian: Lehet Más a Politika, LMP). LMP is a liberal and green party which was founded in 2009. The party aims are: environmental protection, sustainable development and the fight against corruption in the current political elite. Other new party in the 2010-2014 parliament is Jobbik with its radical right program.

The consolidation of the Hungarian political right side has been seen since the second half of the 90-ties XXth century. Fidesz changed its character and moved from liberal to conservative position. It was able to absorb other small right parties, groups and politicians. FKgP and KDN were in dissolution in 2002 which was mainly due to Fidesz strengthening. Then MDF lost its position to Fidesz as well. From the other side Jobbik gathered a more radical right electorate. MSzP which dominated in the last decade, had to loose to Fidesz eventually. But the development of the second stage of polarization of electorate preferences on the right and left segments has been clear since 1998. MSzP and Fidesz have received more than 70% of all parliamentary seats since 1998 (73.6% in 1998; 88.6% in 2002; 91.91% in 2006 and 83.41% in 2010) [Tankó 2011: 199].

The most spectacular achievement of Fidesz was the new constitution passage in April 2010. These new rules strengthened Fidesz and the right option in Hungarian law. Fidesz dominated many social, economical and political spheres of public life what was criticized by internal and foreign society. But public support for main political parties in Hungary shows that Fidesz is

still on the first place among decided voters. This situation has been permanent for almost 80 months. The number of undecided voters is high and equals even 57% in some surveys. Although support for Fidesz has been diminishing, the difference between this party and the second one which is MSzP is still undisputable. Then there is Jobbik with support about 5 – 11% and LMP with support of 3 – 11%. The surveys did not include institutions which were not parties like DK or Together 2014. There is a table with percentage support for main Hungarian parties. This table is based on surveys prepared by three main Hungarian polling institutions: Tárki, Medián, Szonda Ipsos.

Table 9. Results of polls: the decided voters support for main Hungarian parties (May 2011 – November 2012)

	2011 (May - June)			2011 (August - September)			2012 (January)			2012 (June)			2012 (October - November)		
	I	T	M	I	T	M	I	T	M	I	T	M	I	M	T
Fidesz	23	27	33	24	24	33	16	18	26	17	18	21	19	22	19
MSZP	13	12	15	13	10	14	11	11	15	15	14	15	16	10	14
Jobbik	7	8	5	7	10	11	8	11	10	9	11	10	8	10	9
LMP	4	3	8	3	3	5	4	4	4	6	11	6	4	3	3
Undec.	51	44	36	49	51	35	57	50	41	49	48	44	50	37	47

I – Ipsos Szonda; T - Tárki, M – Medián.

Source: [<http://uk.reuters.com/article/2012/11/28/uk-hungary-poll-idUKBRE8AR0WX20121128> (28.02.2013)]

Another survey reflects different data on support for parties without division on decided or undecided voters. Among citizens who declared their participation in 2014 parliamentary elections Fidesz is an undisputable leader. Ipsos Szonda stated that if election would take place 23rd May, 2012 between 35 and 40 percent of the asked electorate was inclined to vote. A strong dominance of Fidesz on political scene is reflected by about 40% of Hungarian's voters support. The second party after the leading Fidesz is MSzP with about 30%, then nationalistic Jobbik with about 15%. The fourth position belongs to LMP with about 5% of support. This survey includes non-parliamentary institutions like DK or Together 2014. Yet DK can count on rather marginal support 1-5% while leftist Together 2014 is too new to state how big its support can be. Nézőpont survey presents lower results of support for political parties and institutions, but ranks are the same.

Table 10. Results of Ipsos Szonda and Nézőpont polls: the voters support for main Hungarian parties and political organizations among electorate declared to vote (May 2012 – February 2013)

	May, 2012		Oct./Nov., 2012		December, 2012		February 2013,	
	Ipsos	Nézőpont	Ipsos	Nézőpont	Ipsos	Nézőpont	Ipsos	Nézőpont
Fidesz	37	33	40	33	40	31	43	36
MSzP	28	10	31	12	32	15	28	11
Jobbik	19	10	17	9	14	13	16	10
LMP	8	5	7	3	6	2	6	2
DK	5	2	3	1	2	1	2	1
Together 2014	-	-	-	-	10	7	3	6

Source: [www.politics.hu and <http://nezopointintezet.hu/mufajok/kozvelemeny-kutatas/> (28.02.2013)].

Today’s Fidesz dominance means that right option creates public sphere of social life. Socialists are weak and cannot oppose this situation. MSzP position was weakened by LMP success in 2010 elections. Now we can observe a trial of unifying leftist electorate out of MSzP surveillance. Former leftist prime minister Gordon Bajnai founded a socialist movement Together 2014 (Hungarian: Együtt 2014) which aims at winning 2014 election. But it is too fresh to estimate its final result. Support for individual leaders of political parties affirmed Fidesz’s strength and shows that Viktor Orbán can count on 37%, Attila Mesterházy (MSzP) and Gábor Vona (Jobbik) both 6% while Gordon Bajnai on 15% [Bajnai-Mesterházy csörte].

Let us see the evolution of electorate turnout which reflects support for the main democratic tool - parliamentary elections. Participation in the first round is generally higher without elections in 1998 and 2002. Hungarian turnout is similar to two other countries of Visegrad Group: Czech Republic and Slovakia and is about 60% and it is higher than in Poland [Kubas 2010 (2): 37].

Table 11. Turnout data from parliamentary elections

Year of parliamentary elections	First round (%)	Second round (%)
1990	65.1	45.5
1994	68.9	55.1
1998	56.3	57
2002	70.5	73.5
2006	67.8	64.4
2010	64.4	46.7

Source: [Czyż, Kubas 2010: 94]

The number of invalid votes has been gradually declining since 1990 from 2.65% of total given votes in the very first elections to 0.79% in the last one. The Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance survey from 2003 ranked Hungary 98th regarding percentage of invalid votes given in parliamentary elections which is one of the best results among 110 countries. In the region Poland was 30th , Slovakia 79th and the Republic of Czech 104th [Parliamentary elections - Invalid votes].

Table 12. Invalid votes in Hungarian parliamentary elections

Year of parliamentary elections	Number of invalid votes	% of invalid votes in total votes
1990	134 122	2.65
1994	79 366	1.44
1998	56 665	1.24
2002	59 880	1.054
2006	49 352	0.9
2010	50 227	0.79

Source: [Nohlen, Stöver 2010],

Resume

Contemporary postsocialist period has brought many issues which shape Hungarian electorate opinions and attitudes. But interwar period and time of socialistic state had some influence on those opinions and attitudes, too. More than two decades after the socialism regime collapsed one can observe strengthening of two political camps which support two major parties: Fidesz and MSzP. These two parties vow to two ideologies: conservative and socialistic. Hungarians have revealed their electoral preferences in six parliamentary elections and five times they pointed at MSzP or Fidesz as ruling party.

There are two stages of creating contemporary image of Hungarian electorate. The first one began in 1990 when MDF took power in first free election, but it had to give up in 1994. Hungarians decided to come back to social version of politics and supported MSzP. In 1998 rightist Fidesz won and the first stage ended. The second stage is marked by two consecutive MSzP victories (2002, 2006) and overwhelming success of Fidesz in 2010 which introduced new conservative Constitution and many changes to the existing political system.

One can state that the evolution of Hungarian electorate preferences has moved toward bidimensional “left – right” structure. Other political options were or are too weak and they cannot dominate public life. Yet, they exist. This means orthodox rightist parties such as MIEP in the past or Jobbik today, liberal SzDSz or LMP, traditional FKgP or KDNP. Electoral preferences

polarization made public and political life divided on those attached to traditional values, history of great Hungary, religion and those who support civilization and cultural changes with more tight cooperation with EU.

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