

30 years and 8 elections in Hungary

Introduction

In the present study, we would like to briefly analyse the results of the eight parliamentary elections held in the thirty years since the change of regime - focusing primarily on party list data. Compared to previous studies on the analysis of election data, our paper may be a novelty (Mészáros et al. 1995, 1999, 2005, 2006, 2007) in that we do not treat the data of the eight elections separately, but as one.

Since 1990, eight parliamentary elections have been held, where one could vote on party lists and individual candidates. In the eight elections, from 110 party lists one could vote for 95 parties and 8,247 individual candidates. If we sum up the votes cast on the party lists in the eight elections (see Figure 1), we can immediately draw a trivial conclusion: few parties and politicians have achieved significant results.



Figure 1: Total votes cast on party lists between 1990 and 2018, by party

We see a similar picture if we sum up votes for candidates by their parties. Interestingly, party preferences - based on the aggregated data of eight elections - follow a power distribution. The “visible” parties are the ones that got into Parliament at some point, while the “invisible” majority failed. Therefore, we focus on party list results of parties in Parliament. Let us first look at the election results of the parliamentary parties (Table 1).

Table 1: Party list votes, 1990-2018

| | 1990 | 1994 | 1998 | 2002 | 2006 | 2010 | 2014 | 2018 |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| KDNP | 317183 | 379523 | 116055 | | 2272979 | 2706292 | 2142142 | 2607990 |
| Fidesz | 439481 | 379344 | 1263584 | 2306763 | | | | |
| MDF | 1213825 | 633770 | 139915 | | 272831 | 136895 | | |
| FKGP | 576256 | 476272 | 617779 | 42338 | 838 | | 8040 | |
| MIEP | | 85737 | 248814 | 245326 | | 1286 | | 8623 |
| Jobbik | | | | | 119007 | 855436 | 1017550 | 1090751 |
| LMP | | | | | | 383876 | 268840 | 402347 |
| SZDSZ | 1050452 | 1065889 | 353260 | 313084 | 351612 | | | |
| MSZP | 534898 | 1781504 | 1446051 | 2361997 | 2336705 | 990428 | 1289311 | 681454 |
| DK | | | | | | | | 307492 |

Based on the data, we will examine whether, as a structural effect of the parliamentary election system, the Hungarian party system is gradually moving from a multipolar to a bipolar system. A few more years may provide a better informed answer (the outcome of the 2022 election may be decisive in this regard), but we can already discern some trends based on the known data. Clearly, Fidesz (and its “all-time” coalition partner) occupies the right wing of the political landscape. We also see that some parties disappeared from the political scene (MDF, FKGP, MIÉP, SZDSZ) and some new parties also appeared (Jobbik, LMP, DK). Today, the unanswered question is what is on the other side, whether there is (or will be in the future) another bloc. To illustrate the processes, we display the data on the graph below (Figure 2).

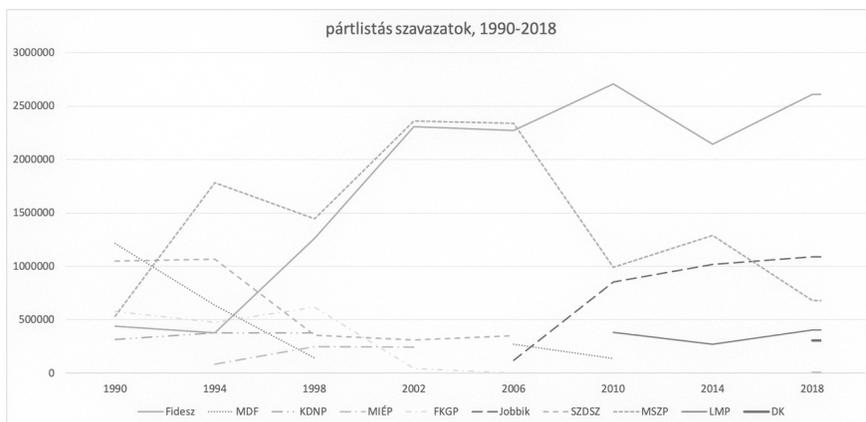


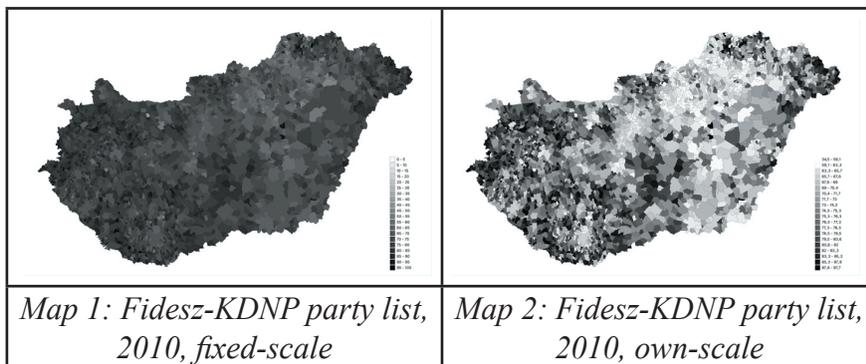
Figure 2: Party list votes, 1990-2018

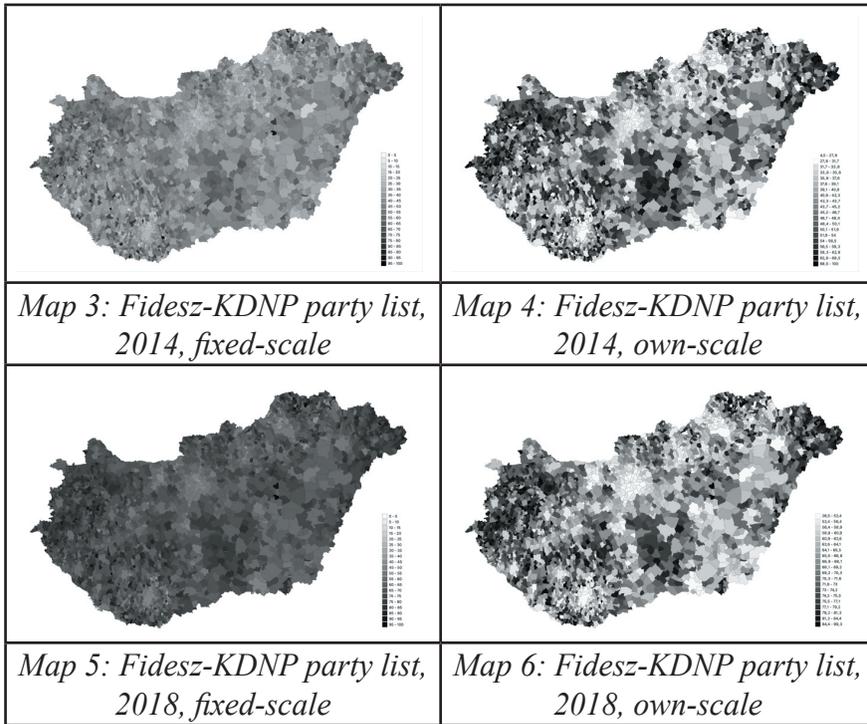
The figure shows the rise of Fidesz, first on the right between 1998-2010 and then across the entire political spectrum in the 2010s. The graph also shows the disappearance of the regime change parties and the emergence of new formations. It is also striking how the MSZP pushed itself as the other bloc during the 1994 and 1998 elections, and so between 1998 and 2010 there were two dominant parties in Hungarian political life. Fidesz successfully integrated right-wing voters and was able to retain them as shown in our previous studies (Mészáros et al. 2006, Mészáros & Solymosi 2007, Mészáros et al. 2007). However, the consequences of the changes brought about by the 2010 elections cannot yet be clearly established today. With the formation of the central force in 2010, the existing de facto bipolar political party structure ceased to exist. The situation of the MSZP, which had occupied the left-wing until then, was shaken, and new

parties appeared on both sides of Fidesz. The 2014 and 2018 elections did not substantially change the situation.

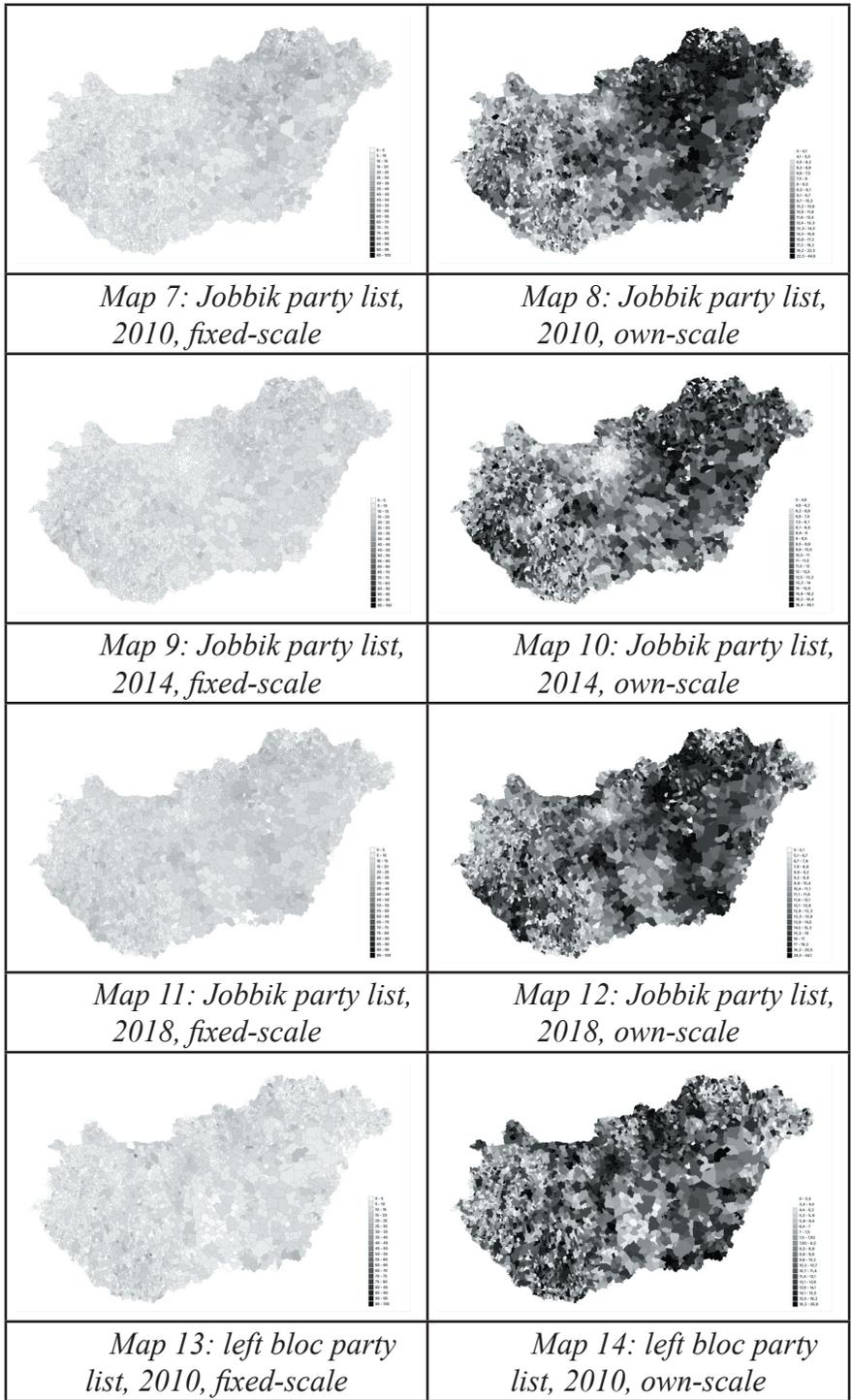
In order to give a brief assessment of what happened in the 2010 elections, it is worth looking at some maps, which show the distribution of the party list results by displaying the municipal vote ratios on two scales. We use a fixed scale on the maps on the left. For the maps on the right, we generate our own scale from the smallest to largest number of votes on the given party list. Fixed-scale maps are suitable for comparing individual party lists and successive elections, and own-scale maps show regional differences in votes cast for a party list.

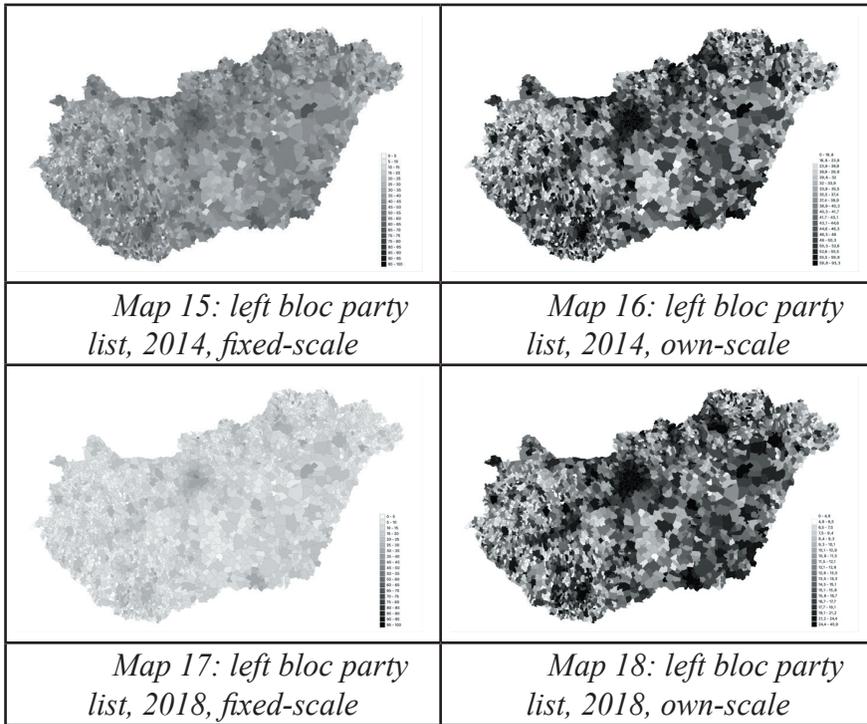
Let us first look at the results of Fidesz-KDNP in the three elections (2010, 2014, 2018). The fixed-scale maps show the voting superiority with which Fidesz-KDNP won these three elections. This superiority was the basis for the central force strategy. For our analysis, however, it is more interesting to look at the own-scale maps, which show where the ruling party improved or fell back during this period. It performed well in all three elections on the western border, on the northern edge of Nógrád and Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, on the eastern border of Hajdú-Bihar and Szabolcs-Szatmár, in the southern parts of Baranya, Somogy and in the center of Danube-Tisza Interfluve. On the other hand, it did worse in the big cities (especially in Budapest) and their catchment areas, but it is also striking that Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Heves, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok, Csongrád and Békés counties designate an area where the ruling party is weaker.





Jobbik, a political entity to the right of the central force, would become a party of national importance in 2010, but of course it would lag far behind Fidesz-KDNP. This is shown by the three fixed scale maps. We can learn more about how Jobbik was received by looking at our own scale maps. In 2010, the difference between the eastern and central and western parts of the country is spectacularly large, which seemed to decrease in 2014, but by 2018 it would be clear that there was a stronger Jobbik sympathy in the Békés, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok, Heves cluster. It is also worth mentioning how much Budapest and its surroundings and the Lake Balaton region would reject Jobbik in 2014, while this rejection was not so strong before or after. Other regions would appear to show more consistent sympathy in 2018 - Tolna-Baranya, the southern part of the Danube-Tisza region, and the North Borsod district is also interesting. (see Mapes).





Initially, only MSZP was located to the left of the central force formed after 2010, but other parties soon appeared on that side, which made it difficult to form a real counterweight within the party electoral system. On the fixed scale maps showing the combined results of parties competing with each other on the left, the “left” sympathy of some larger cities can already be seen. It can be seen with even more contrast on the own-scale maps (here the supposed ‘left bloc’ consists of DK, Párbeszéd, Együtt 2014 and Momentum). In addition to the metropolitan left, it is also worth highlighting the increasingly significant sympathy of the Balaton region in this direction.

Evaluating the results of each party list, we have repeatedly pointed out that correlations can be drawn between certain types of settlements and certain party sympathies, which seems worthwhile to examine. To this end, we developed settlement categories based on the size of the settlement and examined the relationship of these categories to the number of votes cast for the parties. Table 2 shows the basic characteristics of the settlement categories (total population and number of settlements in each category).

Table 2: The sizes of the settlement categories

| Range | Year | Total population | Number of settlements | Year | Population | Number of settlements |
|---------------|-------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|-------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| -1000 | 1990 | 787128 | 1696 | 2018 | 762907 | 1797 |
| 1000-2000 | 1990 | 926829 | 646 | 2018 | 899157 | 622 |
| 2000-4000 | 1990 | 1153833 | 418 | 2018 | 1081124 | 394 |
| 4000-10000 | 1990 | 1153858 | 191 | 2018 | 1174243 | 197 |
| 10000-20000 | 1990 | 1136923 | 80 | 2018 | 1222235 | 88 |
| 20000-40000 | 1990 | 1047889 | 37 | 2018 | 950089 | 34 |
| 40000-100000 | 1990 | 919361 | 15 | 2018 | 911599 | 15 |
| 100000-400000 | 1990 | 1210986 | 8 | 2018 | 1019116 | 7 |
| 400000- | 1990 | 2018035 | 1 | 2018 | 1752286 | 1 |

The relationships between the results of the three party formations examined and the settlement categories are shown in the following tables (see Tables 3, 4, and 5). We can see the strongest and most spectacular correlation in the case of Fidesz-KDNP. In contrast to the 1998 elections, when there was no correlation, a pattern intensified since 2002 whereby the Fidesz-KDNP party preference becomes stronger as the population of the settlement decreases. During the four years of the first Fidesz government (or as a result of it), this pattern of preference became the sustained image of Fidesz (see Table 3).

If we want to examine the long term trends in this dimension, we have to retrieve the data of MSZP again so that we can say something about the left. Having said this, based on the data, we cannot make such a strong statement as we could for Fidesz. Although there may have been a slight shift from the 1990s, when the willingness to vote for the left increased in larger settlements, this correlation is neither as strong nor as lasting as we saw in the case of Fidesz.

In the case of Jobbik, we can say even less. We can only read from the data that the party was never able to achieve serious success in Budapest. Otherwise, no appreciable relationship can be discovered between the Jobbik voters and settlement size. (Table 5)

A more in-depth analysis, beyond the scope of this essay, could still seek (and find) additional, important and interesting correlations between party preferences and other variables. To illustrate the potential of long-term analyses, we present another table that quantifies the relationship between the size of per capita income tax payments and Fidesz votes (Table 6).

Given the previously mentioned relationship between Fidesz sympathy and settlement size, it is no longer surprising that we notice the development of an inverse relationship between one of the important indicators of municipal economic power, per capita PIT payments, and the number of votes cast for Fidesz.

Table 3: Fidesz-KDNP vote share by settlement size

| | 0- 1000 | 1000- 2000 | 2000- 4000 | 5000- 10000 | 10000- 20000 | 20000- 40000 | 40000- 100000 | 100000- 400000 | 400000- 1000000 |
|------|------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1990 | 6,9 | 7,3 | 7,4 | 7,7 | 8,3 | 9,5 | 9,7 | 8,8 | 11,5 |
| 1994 | 7,0 | 7,2 | 6,8 | 7,1 | 7,2 | 7,2 | 7,5 | 8,0 | 6,2 |
| 1998 | 27,6 | 27,0 | 26,7 | 27,0 | 28,2 | 28,2 | 31,1 | 32,2 | 26,5 |
| 2002 | 51,7 | 47,7 | 46,1 | 43,7 | 42,0 | 39,5 | 39,0 | 40,5 | 31,6 |
| 2006 | 51,1 | 47,6 | 46,4 | 44,6 | 42,4 | 40,1 | 39,7 | 40,0 | 35,1 |
| 2010 | 62,5 | 58,3 | 56,5 | 54,8 | 53,2 | 49,9 | 50,3 | 50,5 | 46,3 |
| 2014 | 52,8 | 49,4 | 48,6 | 46,4 | 44,0 | 41,5 | 40,2 | 39,8 | 38,5 |
| 2018 | 59,5 | 56,4 | 54,0 | 51,5 | 47,4 | 44,6 | 43,7 | 42,4 | 38,1 |

Table 4: MSZP vote share by settlement size

| | 0-1000 | 1000-2000 | 2000-4000 | 4000-10000 | 10000-20000 | 20000-40000 | 40000-100000 | 100000-400000 | 400000-4000000 |
|------|--------|-----------|-----------|------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1990 | 9,1 | 9,4 | 9,0 | 9,9 | 11,4 | 10,7 | 12,0 | 11,0 | 12,9 |
| 1994 | 28,6 | 30,7 | 30,8 | 31,5 | 34,0 | 33,1 | 35,8 | 33,8 | 35,2 |
| 1998 | 29,2 | 31,0 | 31,2 | 31,1 | 32,4 | 32,9 | 33,8 | 33,7 | 33,1 |
| 2002 | 35,7 | 38,9 | 40,0 | 41,3 | 42,4 | 43,8 | 43,8 | 44,1 | 44,1 |
| 2006 | 38,5 | 41,3 | 42,0 | 43,0 | 43,6 | 44,8 | 44,4 | 45,1 | 43,8 |
| 2010 | 14,4 | 15,1 | 15,3 | 16,5 | 18,1 | 20,6 | 21,9 | 20,8 | 25,3 |
| 2014 | 17,2 | 18,9 | 19,7 | 21,9 | 24,7 | 27,1 | 29,6 | 29,3 | 36,8 |
| 2018 | 7,7 | 8,6 | 9,0 | 10,1 | 11,2 | 12,5 | 13,6 | 14,8 | 18,1 |

Table 5: Jobbik's vote share by settlement size

| | 0-1000 | 1000-2000 | 2000-4000 | 4000-10000 | 10000-20000 | 20000-40000 | 40000-100000 | 100000-400000 | 400000-4000000 |
|------|--------|-----------|-----------|------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| 2006 | 1,9 | 2,0 | 2,1 | 2,1 | 2,3 | 2,3 | 1,9 | 1,7 | 2,9 |
| 2010 | 17,0 | 19,6 | 20,2 | 19,7 | 18,9 | 17,7 | 15,3 | 15,0 | 10,8 |
| 2014 | 24,0 | 25,3 | 24,8 | 24,3 | 22,8 | 21,9 | 19,8 | 20,1 | 12,1 |
| 2018 | 20,1 | 21,8 | 22,3 | 22,6 | 22,0 | 21,7 | 20,1 | 19,5 | 12,9 |

Table 6: The correlation between the per capita PIT contribution and votes cast for Fidesz

| Election _year | 1990 | 1994 | 1998 | 2002 | 2006 | 2010 | 2014 | 2018 |
|-------------------|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Correlation | 0,13 | 0,04 | 0,31 | 0,04 | -0,02 | -0,22 | -0,17 | -0,27 |

If we include the votes cast for individual candidates in our analysis, we notice another important phenomenon: voters are increasingly in favour of a political party rather than individual candidates. Of course, there are always cases where there is a significant discrepancy between the size of the votes cast for the party list and the party-supported candidate in a constituency, but if we break down the votes for party lists and individual candidates during the whole period, we can make some observations (Table 7).

Table 7: Variance between party list and party candidate votes, 1990-2018

| | 1990 | 1994 | 1998 | 2002 | 2006 | 2010 | 2014 | 2018 |
|------------|------|------|------|------|-------|------|------|------|
| FIDESZ | 41,0 | 29,4 | 14,5 | 8,0 | 6,4 | 5,8 | 3,1 | 3,5 |
| MSZP | 21,2 | 7,9 | 9,8 | 7,5 | 8,7 | 11,5 | 4,2 | 57,3 |
| Munkáspárt | 13,6 | 11,8 | 12,4 | 11,9 | 28,4 | 33,8 | 11,3 | 36,8 |
| MDF | 12,9 | 13,3 | - | 8,0 | 76,6 | 42,8 | | |
| SZDSZ | 30,6 | 13,3 | 32,6 | 46,6 | 99,7 | | | |
| MIÉP | | 23,3 | 15,4 | 19,6 | 17,3 | 98,0 | | 29,8 |
| KDNP | 14,3 | 20,3 | 26,7 | | 6,4 | 5,8 | 3,1 | 3,5 |
| Jobbik | | | | | 17,3 | 7,2 | 4,4 | 29,0 |
| FKGP | 17,0 | 11,9 | 11,8 | 65,7 | 127,5 | | 55,0 | |

In the case of Fidesz, it is clear how the difference between the votes cast for the party list and for the candidates decreases from election to election. In 1990, there was still a large variance between the two types of data, which is understandable since at that time most of the parties and the vast majority of candidates were unknown to the electorate. Over time, however, the party's strong brand suppressed the individuality of the candidates, i.e., in this case, the proposition bears up that voters primarily chose the party, not the candidates.

For other parties, the picture is less clear. Until 2006, the MSZP followed a pattern similar to Fidesz, but after that a larger variance appears. It will be even more difficult for other parties to show a strong trend in this respect. This can be explained on the one hand by the - often changing - position of the parties within the party system,

especially with the search for a place in 2018 on the opposition side, and on the other hand by the internal cadre policy of the parties. An interesting addition to the latter is the data set below, which shows the number of candidates nominated by the parties over the entire period (Table 8).

Table 8: Number of candidates nominated by parties, 1990-2018

| Party | Number of candidates |
|------------|----------------------|
| MDF | 711 |
| MSZP | 645 |
| KDNP | 624 |
| FKGP | 610 |
| SZDSZ | 570 |
| Fidesz | 565 |
| MIÉP | 489 |
| Munkáspárt | 438 |
| Jobbik | 373 |
| LMP | 244 |
| DK | 142 |

We must, of course, evaluate the data in the light of the fact that not all parties took part in all the elections, but there are still visible differences in the cadre policies of the parties. The sharpest contrast can be observed between the strategies of MDF and Fidesz. MDF did not participate in all elections, yet still fielded more candidates than Fidesz, which took part in all eight elections with far fewer cadres than the other parties. This is even more special in light of the fact that the party ran with a coalition partner for most of the period. Admittedly, in the 1998 election, where MDF was on the list with Fidesz, there were many cadres who were more attached to Fidesz than to MDF, while before 1998 and after, MDF sought its candidates in its own back yard.

Among the candidates, there were those who ran in multiple elections, but the majority only tried their hand once (see Table 9).

Table 9: How many elections did the candidates run in, 1990-2018

| Number of candidacies | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|-----------------------|---|----|----|----|-----|-----|------|------|
| Number of candidates | 3 | 10 | 40 | 90 | 172 | 399 | 1041 | 6492 |

The three representatives who were nominated in all eight elections were Mihály Varga, Lajos Kósa and László Helmečky. The former two entered the Parliament at each election, the latter only became a member once (in 1998), but he was the candidate who most frequently changed parties: he was independent, then Fidesz, MDF, Centrum, the 2014 left-wing coalition, and finally a candidate for DK. Among the seven-time candidates, there is only one MSZP politician, the others are Fidesz.

If we view the last thirty years as a single period, we can see who among parliamentarians spent most time in Parliament. There are five politicians (Table 10) who have been Members of Parliament since the first free elections after the change of regime: Viktor Orbán, László Kövér, Zsolt Németh, Lajos Kósa and Mihály Varga (who entered Parliament three-month later in 1990).

Table 10: Term of office of Members of Parliament, 1944-2020 (04/12/2020)

| | | |
|----|-----------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | József Bognár | 44 yrs 10 m 23 d |
| 2 | László Pesta | 44 yrs 8 m 18 d |
| 3 | Rezső Nyers | 44 év 8 hó 6 nap |
| 4 | Antal Apró | 43 év 11 hó 14 nap |
| 5 | Sándor Barcs | 42 év 8 hó 15 nap |
| 6 | János Kádár | 42 év 4 hó 24 nap |
| 7 | László Nánási | 40 év 10 hó 25 nap |
| 8 | Sándor Gáspár | 39 év 1 hó 25 nap |
| 9 | Gyula Kállai | 37 év 8 hó 20 nap |
| 10 | János Gosztonyi | 37 év 8 hó |

| | | |
|----|--------------------|-------------------|
| 23 | Lajos Kósa | 30 év 6 hó 14 nap |
| 24 | Viktor Orbán | 30 év 6 hó 14 nap |
| 25 | László Kövér | 30 év 6 hó 14 nap |
| 26 | Zsolt Németh | 30 év 6 hó 14 nap |
| 27 | Ferenc Erdei | 30 év 5 hó 2 nap |
| 28 | Ferencné Cservenka | 30 év 4 hó |
| 29 | Mihály Varga | 30 év 3 hó 13 nap |
| 30 | István Sarlós | 30 év 2 hó 16 nap |
| 31 | Károly Németh | 29 év 7 hó 23 nap |
| 32 | Tibor Bartha | 29 év 7 hó 23 nap |
| 33 | György Aczél | 29 év 3 hó 27 nap |

If we form a new indicator by combining total duration of parliamentary membership with age, then five Fidesz politicians will be at the top of the list. (Table 11).

Table 11: Term of office of Members of Parliament, 1990-2020 (04/12/2020)

| | | |
|---|--------------|-----|
| 1 | Mihály Varga | 54% |
| 2 | Lajos Kósa | 53% |
| 3 | Zsolt Németh | 53% |
| 4 | Viktor Orbán | 53% |
| 5 | László Kövér | 50% |

Although the importance of a politician is not indicated by the time of parliamentary membership, it is still symbolic. If we look at politics not at the level of party votes, nor at the level of organizations, but at the level of individuals, it is clear that Fidesz and its politicians have made the greatest impact on the three decades since the change of regime.

Summary

In our study, we wished to present some elements, which we consider important, of the eight elections over the last 30 years. It is clear from the data that Fidesz has become the dominant political force of the recent period and thus it is Fidesz politicians who have been able to exert significant influence on political life for the longest time. Duverger's first law (the one-round majority system tends to form a two-party system) has only been partially upheld in the recent period, i.e. the right has been organized into a quasi-one-party bloc, while the "left" has not yet bent to the law. One of the most important questions of the coming period will be what kind of party system will develop in Hungary in the long run, and which voter segments each political bloc will be able to stably address and embed themselves in the given social fabric.

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