The Electorate, 1990-1998

by Gergely Karácsony and Gábor Tóka

Published in *Hungary: Government and Politics 1848-2000*, ed. by Mária Ormos and Béla K. Király. Highland Lakes, NJ: Atlantic Research and Publications, Inc. and Boulder, CO: Social Science Monographs, pp. 495-518.

In this chapter we review the voters' behavior in the parliamentary elections of 1990, 1994, and 1998.[1] As the reader will recall, these were not the only competitive elections in Hungarian history in which a large majority of citizens could vote. However, unlike, for instance, the elections of 1920, 1938, 1945 or 1947, the electoral contests of the 1990's took place in a political context characterized by widespread consensus on fundamental democratic values among the relevant political parties. For the first time ever, no relevant political player was intimidated or barred from participating in the elections, and citizens could reasonably expect both that the votes were to be counted fairly and that the democratic game was to continue indefinitely after the election.

The lawful revolution of 1988-1990 produced an unexpectedly stable institutional framework. The rules regarding executive-legislative relations, the checks and balances provided in the constitution, the electoral system, and the number and name of the major party alternatives remained largely unchanged throughout the 1990s. Despite disagreements about various details of the institutional framework, every relevant political camp retained a basic loyalty to the rules of the game as defined in the process of democratic transition.

This comprehensive elite consensus was manufactured at a price, though, which introduced a large dose of unpredictability into the new political system. Only in the 1990 election could ordinary citizens finally take center stage in the political process. By that time, nearly all fundamental traits of the constitutional framework were set. Only in a few exceptional moments - like the March 1989 demonstrations and the November 1989 referendum - could large groups of citizens make their voice heard on the evolving deal between the incumbent reform-communists and the opposition. Otherwise, the precious and delicate political compromise of the period was largely a matter of behind-the-doors deals between competing elite groups, none of which could really claim a mandate from the people.

No wonder that, when the curtain finally went up, a degree of fear or at least concern was present regarding the new central actor, the electorate. After the political demobilization and apathy of the communist period, the likely political behavior of the masses was among the big unknown parameters of democratization. This may also explain why scholars of the Hungarian transition devoted so much attention to voting behavior. It was, indeed, an open question how the voters would respond to the appeal of the parties that emerged from widely different cultural niches, but proved compromise-minded and pragmatic on almost all major issues of public policy. Will apathy and non-participation continue to characterize citizens' behavior? Or will they be swayed by promises of rough and

ready solutions, anti-democratic slogans, or rapidly appearing and disappearing demagogues? Above all, how will the voters react if the economic transformation supported by the advocates of democratization leads to a valley of tears?

In the followings we compare determinants of voter behavior in three elections in the 1990s. As we will see, neither total apathy, nor deep polarization by conflicting interests materialized. True, the stability of the Hungarian political system was assured mostly by the elite consensus surrounding the constitutional order. Yet, voters' behavior also contributed to the consolidation of the democratic order, in that their typical response to elite behavior was support for moderate alternatives.

The Pace of Electoral Change

At first sight it may seem that electoral change remained rather limited in the 1990s. Except for the replacement of the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP) with another small right-wing formation (the MIÉP) in the 1998 elections, the same six parties made it to the Parliament in all three elections. However, a rather different picture emerges if we look at the vote shares and political identity of the individual organizations.

The winner of the 1990 election, the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), has remained a broadly pro-market, Christian, and emphatically patriotic party throughout the entire period, but its vote share radically diminished. By 1998, the MDF could only enter the parliament due to a comprehensive electoral pact in the single-member districts with Fidesz-MPP, and collected less votes than MIÉP - the small fringe party of the radical nationalists who were expelled from the MDF in 1993.

The MDF-led governmental coalition of the 1990-1994 period was joined by the essentially Christian-socialist KDNP (Christian Democratic People's Party) and the agrarian-populist FKGP (Independent Small Holders' Party). Given their historical roots in the pre-communist past and their appeal to sectional interests, these parties were believed to possess a more solid political identity and more resilient electoral basis than the new parties that were the leading forces of the opposition during the transition.[2] Yet, the FKGP soon came to be dominated by a maverick party leader who led his party out of the governmental coalition in March 1992, and became subsequently ostracized by the rest of the Christian Right until after the 1998 election. The KDNP, in its turn, was sent into electoral oblivion by a protracted and scandalous leadership battle in 1996-97.

The party that was eventually best able to capitalize on the unpopularity of the MDF-led government was the legal heir of the former communist party, the MSZP.[3] Due partly to the highly disproportional allocation of seats under Hungary's mixed-member electoral system, the MSZP won an absolute majority of seats in the 1994 election, when the party tripled its vote.[4] As an impressive exception to many of the instabilities underlying the Hungarian party system, in 1998 the MSZP obtained almost exactly the same percent of the vote as four years earlier. Yet, a successful concentration of the right-wing votes in the single-member districts on the best-placed right-wing alternative deprived the socialists not only an overall majority in the parliament, but even their place at the cabinet

table.

The chief parliamentary opposition of the 1990-94 center-right government consisted of two monetarist, pro-market and secular liberal parties, the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ) and the Alliance of Young Democrats (FIDESZ), which both had strong pro-democratic credentials too. Of the two, the SZDSZ was the more ideological and radically anti-nationalist party from the beginning, and soon became the anti-pole of the Christian-national block on the party scene. From 1992 on, the party engaged in various forms of cooperation (including a governmental coalition between 1994 and 1998) with the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP), the reformist heir of the former communist party, but otherwise maintained its initial political identity. The FIDESZ developed in the opposite direction: it retained its anti-communism and pragmatism, but otherwise adopted the ideological and issue positions of the MDF's conservatives.

For the 1994 election, SZDSZ and FIDESZ still formed a liberal electoral alliance. But it was clear that the first would, in the case of such a choice, definitely prefer a coalition with the MSZP to one with the Christian-national parties, while the second would equally strongly prefer the other alternative. By 1995, FIDESZ was renamed Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Party (Fidesz-MPP), and became the leading force of the center-right, competing with the FKGP to become the most popular opposition force under the socialist-liberal government of the MSZP and the SZDSZ. This competition was convincingly decided in favor of the Fidesz-MPP in the 1998 election, which led to the formation of a Fidesz-FKGP-MDF coalition government.

The changing fortune and coalition preferences of the individual parties neatly reveal how volatile and unpredictable the party system actually remained. To quantitatively assess the magnitude of vote swings across the elections we calculated the so-called aggregate volatility of election results. This is obtained by summing the absolute value of the differences between each party's percentage share of the vote in two subsequent elections, and dividing the sum by two. Thus, the value of this index can vary from 0 (indicating that percentage distribution of votes between the parties remained entirely unchanged) to 100, with the latter obtaining if entirely different parties won all the votes in one election than the other.

Looking at the distribution of each party's list votes, Hungary registered a 28.3 point volatility on this index between the 1990 and 1994 elections. It should not come as a great surprise that this value is more than three times the 1945-1985 West European average.[5] After all, the relatively large number and novelty of the parties, as well as the extreme economic recession of the period should have facilitated a rather large swing anyway. However, the observed value is also large in comparison with most Latin American countries between the 1970s and 1990s. In those East European new democracies where the basic electoral institutions (the parties and the electoral system) where as stable as in Hungary, electoral volatility was generally lower, suggesting that the party loyalty of Hungarians was unusually weak indeed.[6]

Furthermore, while in new democracies the magnitude of inter-election vote swings usually declines as time passes by, the opposite happened in Hungary. For example, the 34.5 point 1991-93 volatility declined to just

about 20 between 1993 and 1997 in Poland, while in the Czech Republic the decline was from a 29.3 1992-96 volatility to 18.3 between 1996 and 1998. In contrast, between 1994 and 1998 the index value increased from the earlier 28.3 to 33.6 point in Hungary.[7]

The high instability of party preferences is also apparent when we look at data from panel surveys, i.e. repeated interviews with the same voters. For instance, the Hungarian Household Panel suggested that at most 16 percent - and most probably quite a bit fewer - of all citizens voted for the same party in the 1990 and 1994 elections.[8]

One possible explanation of this high electoral volatility is the relatively large number of parties. Obviously, the greater the supply of like-minded parties, the more likely that a voter can easily switch from one to another. What matters is, of course, not the number of registered parties whose whole membership may well be able to sit down on the same sofa but the number of relevant parties. This notion is best captured by the number of "effective" electoral parties, which can be calculated as one divided by the sum of each party's squared fraction of the vote. If two evenly sized parties capture nearly all the votes, then the value of this index is always around two, irrespectively of the number of tiny parties that also run. If, however, all parties obtain exactly the same number of votes, then the value of the index is exactly the same as the number of parties that entered the competition.

In the 1990 Hungarian election, the effective number of parties was 6.7, falling back to 5.6 in 1994 and 4.6 in 1998.[9] Both the magnitude and the gradual decrease of these values fit well the cross-national trend that was apparent in East Central Europe in the 1990s.[10] This, however, makes it even more puzzling why, despite the relative stability of the party system, the 1998 election saw such a high, and - compared to 1990-94 - increasing volatility of the votes. In search of a better explanation we now turn to examining the voters' party attachments.

The Strength of Party Attachments

Since institutional factors do not tell us why party-voter linkages were so feeble in Hungary in the 1990s, it is logical to look for an explanation in the voters themselves. Maybe the fault is with the strength of their emotional attachments to the parties. One way to see this is to look at the proportion of voters who "identify" with a party. Table 1 shows the relevant data from an international survey, which allows us to evaluate Hungary in comparison with both Western and Eastern European democracies. After the 1998 election just about one in three Hungarians said that they felt close to any political party. Among the ten other countries in the comparison, only Taiwan and Lithuania show similarly low figures as Hungary. Thus, the strength of party attachments in the Hungarian electorate, at least by the end of the 1990s, was low not only in comparison with long established Anglo-Saxon democracies, but even weaker than in Poland, the Czech Republic, or Romania.

Table 1: The incidence of party identification among citizens in cross-national comparison[11]

Country	Year of survey	Percentage of identifiers
Australia	1996	84
Czech Republic	1996	45
Hungary	1998	34
Israel	1996	63
Lithuania	1998	32
New Zealand	1996	56
Poland	1997	50
Romania	1996	45
Spain	1996	43
Taiwan	1996	33
USA	1996	57
Ukraine	1998	60
United Kingdom	1997	49

The development of these attachments over time also shows a parallel with the findings regarding electoral volatility. We examined in each election year how much Hungarians liked the party that they voted for. In February 1990, April 1994 and April 1998, national samples were asked to tell how sympathetic they found each of the major parties.[12] The responses were coded on a seven-point feeling thermometer scale, where 7 meant strong liking, and 1 a strong dislike of the party in question. Among those who planned to vote for one of the six main parties, the average rating of their "own" party was 6.4 in 1990, 6.7 in 1994, and 6.3 in 1998. Thus, the ageing of the party system brought about a weakening, rather than a strengthening of affective party-voter linkages, despite the fact that in the meantime the voters became presumably more aware of what the various parties stood for.

An interesting caveat arises if we look at how much the voters rejected other parties than the one they voted for. The same voters as those analyzed in the previous paragraph gave an average rating of 4.4, 3.3 and 2.9 to the other major parties than their own in 1990, 1994, and 1998, respectively. In other words, a lukewarm attitude towards all parties characterized them in 1990, but by 1998 they found their own party far more attractive than most relevant alternatives. This dominance of "negative", rather than "positive" partisanship in the development of party identification is apparently typical all over Eastern Europe. [13] Indeed, before 1990 only communist party-members went through a political socialization that could nurture positive identification with an existing party, and even in the mid-1990s they still had an above average chance to have such positive attachments. Most citizens had little else but

skepticism and distrust of parties to inherit from the communist period. Hence, the dominance of negative identification is often portrayed as a normal phenomenon in the former communist countries.

Be that as it may, behavioral indicators suggest that negative partisanship cannot compensate for positive identification. Consider Table 2, which shows the percentage of people who voted in national elections in the 1990s. Again, partisan fever does not seem to run particularly high in Hungarian elections, and after an increase in participation from 65 to 69 percent between 1990 and 1994, the 1998 election recorded the lowest value (57 percent) so far. Thus, the growth of negative partisanship apparently fell short of the motivating power of positive identifications.

Table 2: Turnout in cross-national comparison (in percentage of voting age population)[14]

Malta	96.2	Finland	68.5
Uruguay	91.4	Ireland	68.5
Iceland	87.5	St. Kitts and Nevis	68.4
South Africa	85.5	South Korea	67.9
Italy	85.2	Malawi	67.9
Czech Republic	84.4	Portugal	67.2
Belgium	84.1	Philippines	66.8
Sweden	83.2	Dominica	65.9
Australia	82.7	St. Vincent and G.	65.6
Mongolia	82.3	Grenada	65.1
Chile	81.9	***Hungary 1990***	***65.1***
Western Samoa	81.9	Trinidad and Tobago	64.5
Costa Rica	81.4	Canada	63.9
Denmark	81.1	Namibia	63.8
Andorra	80.9	Guyana	63.7
San Marino	80.3	Latvia	63.1
Mauritius	79.8	Micronesia	63.0
New Zealand	79.8	St. Lucia	62.8
Austria	79.6	Barbados	62.0
Bulgaria	79.6	Kiribati	62.0

(table continues on next page)

Table 2 (continued from previous page)

Greece	79.6	France	61.3
Slovenia	79.6	Solomon Islands	60.8
Palau	79.3	Luxembourg	60.5
Argentina	78.9	Benin	60.1
Israel	78.4	Lithuania	60.1
Spain	77.6	Sao Tome and Principe	59.6
Cyprus	77.3	***Hungary 1998***	***57.2***
Romania	76.1	Japan	56.6
United Kingdom	75.4	Estonia	56.0
Netherlands	75.2	Liechtenstein	54.7
Norway	74.5	Bolivia	50.0
Cape Verde	74.1	Venezuela	49.9
Monaco	73.2	Nauru	49.7
Germany	72.7	Poland	47.6
Vanuatu	71.9	Jamaica	44.1
Taiwan	71.1	United States	44.1
Panama	70.1	Botswana	43.7
Hungary 1994	***68.9***	Switzerland	37.7
Belize	68.7	Mali	21.1
Bahamas	68.5		

But what can explain the fluctuations over time that our data reveal in the activity and partisan attachments of Hungarian voters? Previous research suggests to us that the development of policy differences between the major parties provides the clue.[15] In the next section we highlight how this factor translated into political attitudes differences between the voters of the major parties.

Core Political Values and the Vote

In the course of the transition to democracy, the members of the incumbent ex-communist elite either adopted similar views to those of the mainstream opposition on communist legacies and the major economic and foreign policy issues, or were politically marginalized and sidelined. Among their opponents, radical nationalist and

Christian fundamentalist groups maintained a significant presence throughout the 1990s, but their electoral appeal and policy influence remained relatively weak. As a result, the differences between the policy offerings of the major Hungarian parties, especially regarding the economy and international relations, were less than spectacular, and arguably less pronounced than those in the Czech Republic and Poland, for instance.[16] A comparison of over ten East European new democracies also showed that attitude differences between citizens regarding the NATO, European integration, and the market economy were less strongly correlated with their party preferences in Hungary than in most other countries.[17]

Below we highlight some trends over time: how the voters' attitudes changed and how their relationship to the vote developed between the three elections. For simplicity, we concentrate on just two dimensions of politically relevant attitudes: religiosity (that roughly corresponds to conservatism on cultural issues) and support for capitalist market economy.[18] These two dimensions underlined opinions on many concrete issues that entered the political agenda for a shorter or longer while in the 1990s, and thus allow us to assess broad trends over time.

For the purposes of the present analysis we divided the voters into four groups: religious left, non-religious left, religious right, and non-religious right.[19] The first group can be seen as the most likely constituency for a Christian-social, the second for a social democrat, the third for a conservative and the fourth for a liberal party, respectively.

Table 3 shows the percentage of voters who fell into each group in the three election years - note that non-voters are excluded from the analysis. The key finding is that the attitude profile of the electorate changed radically between 1990 and 1994, but remained virtually unchanged afterwards. In 1990, nearly three-quarters of the voters had, according to our classification, "right-wing" predispositions on economic issues. Since most of them were also "non-religious", the most liberal-leaning of the four groups had an overall majority in the electorate. Between 1990 and 1994, however, the size of this non-religious right-wing group halved, and that of the religious right declined to barely more than a third of what it was before. In contrast, the size of the two left-wing groups increased, and the secular left constituency became a sizable majority among the voters. In both 1994 and 1998, the most likely "conservative" constituency (the religious right) accounted for a mere 5 percent of the active voters against 12 percent falling into the religious economic left and 28-29 percent displaying the predispositions of the non-religious right.

Table 3: Attitude profile of the voters, 1990-1998[20]

	in percentage of all voters		
Value orientation:	1990	1994	1998
Religious right	14	5	4
Religious left	8	12	12
Non-religious right	59	29	28
Non-religious left	19	55	56
Together:[21]	100%	101%	100%

It is hardly surprising if these momentous changes in the voters' attitude profile influenced party strategies and election results alike - some may even say that this is, indeed, what democracy is all about. In 1990, all major parties except the then little-known KDNP came out strongly in favor of pro-market reforms. It seems that the voters either did not notice, or did not really bother about the minute differences between the more radical gospel of the liberals and the somewhat more middle-of-the-road economic philosophy of the MDF. The winner of the election, the MDF, had very nearly the same degree of support in the four voter groups distinguished here. This finding echoes the conventional wisdom that the MDF owed its 1990 victory to its relatively centrist appeal.

Table 4: Percentage distribution of list votes by attitude profile, 1990-1998[22]

	Religious		Non-religious	
	Right	Left	Right	Left
Vote choice:			1990	
FIDESZ	5	2	10	11
FKGP	19	18	8	11
KDNP	24	23	2	4
MDF	36	35	35	32
MSZP	5	2	8	11
SZDSZ	9	11	28	23
other parties	2	10	9	9
Together:[23]	100%	101%	100%	101%
Vote choice:			1994	
FIDESZ	4	3	10	6
FKGP	13	9	7	9
KDNP	25	29	3	4
MDF	25	14	12	7
MSZP	15	30	33	44
SZDSZ	15	11	24	20
other parties	4	4	11	10
Together:[24]	101%	100%	100%	100%
Vote choice:			1998	
Fidesz-MPP	45	31	31	32
FKGP	14	22	11	12
MDF	1	5	4	3
MIÉP	6	4	1	1
MSZP	22	17	38	39
SZDSZ	2	7	11	8
other parties	10	14	4	5
Together:	100%	100%	100%	100%

Whether or not it would have been possible to win the 1994 election from the middle, by that time the preferences of the median voter were certainly different than in 1990. The victory of the ex-communist MSZP was presumably due to a number of diverse reasons, but our data show that it was among the non-religious "left-wing" (i.e. anti-market) voters where they really won the election. The majority of the religious voters voted for the incumbent MDF and KDNP, and the socialists also failed to defeat the liberal alliance of SZDSZ and FIDESZ among the non-religious pro-market voters. Thus, the socialist victory of 1994 stemmed partly from the fact that the non-religious "left" became a substantial majority in the electorate, and that the MSZP could disproportionately attract their votes in the 1994 election.

As previous chapters explained, the MSZP faithfully promoted market-oriented reforms and privatization while in office. No surprise, then, that its particularly strong appeal to the anti-market constituency proved to be the transitory phenomenon of a single election that they contested from the opposition. By 1998, there was once again no statistically significant difference between the support that they had on the "left" and on the "right", as long as we define these in terms of economic policy attitudes. To put it differently, one possible reason for the opposition victory in 1998 was that the center right, through its rhetorical defense of the welfare state and state property from the assault of the 1995 austerity program and energy-sector privatization, became as competitive with the MSZP among the anti-market as among the pro-market voters.

Let's now consider the other important dimension of politically relevant social attitudes. As a cursory reading of Table 4 suffices to tell, religiosity was far more strongly correlated with vote choice in the 1990s than economic policy attitudes. In all three elections, the MSZP and the SZDSZ had a much stronger appeal to the non-religious than to the religious voters, and the opposite applied for the FKGP. As more detailed analysis could show, in the case of SZDSZ and FKGP (and of the FIDESZ in 1990 and 1994) this only reflected the demographic composition of the party's electorate. Namely, the SZDSZ voters were always far younger and more urban (and thus less religious) than the Hungarian average, and the opposite was the case with the FKGP. In contrast, the socialists had a genuine problem in appealing to the religious voter per se, quite understandably given the long history of conflict between communism and the churches.

While the secular character of the MSZP- and SZDSZ-voters remained fairly constant over time, interesting changes took place among the right-wing parties. In 1990, the MDF attracted voters independently from their religiosity. In contrast, the MDF of 1994 and 1998 was clearly a party of the religious voters, above all, though certainly not as exclusively as the KDNP. The difference between the 1990 and 1994 MDF meant that the voters of the different parties were a bit more polarized on cultural issues in 1994 than in 1990. By 1998, however, the Fidesz-MPP and MIÉP essentially replaced MDF and KDNP on the right-wing of the political spectrum. Since the Fidesz-MPP and MIÉP both had a more evenly distributed support across religious and non-religious voters than the latter two, this change of party alternatives on the right brought about a declining polarization of the electorate across

party lines on religion-related issues.

Thus, on both economic policy issues and the religious dimension, the 1990s first saw an increasing, and then a declining polarization between the partisan groups in the electorate. Overall, the voters may have known the parties much better in 1998 than in 1990, but the policy differences between the parties were arguably smaller at the end of the decade than at the beginning - or so the voters saw the matter, at least. This conclusion is neatly confirmed if we consider the voters' self-placement on a left-right scale.

In each election year, national samples of voters were asked, shortly before the election, to place themselves on a seven-point scale where, so they were told, one meant "left" and seven meant "right". Table 5 shows the mean score of each party's voters on this scale in each election year. The differences between the parties are presumably produced by two causes. On the one hand, different parties attract different kinds of voters, and, on the other, many voters understand the question about left and right essentially as a question about their party political preferences. Consequently, they respond to it by what they believe to be the left-right position of their own favorite party. In either case, between-party differences in voters' left-right self-placement should be a useful tool for detecting how big ideological differences citizens discover between the parties, and was often used for comparative analyses of party polarization following the classic study of Sani and Sartori.[25]

Table 5: Mean left-right self-placement of the voters by list vote[26]

Vote choice:	1990	1994	1998
FIDESZ	4.3	4.2	4.1
FKGP	4.4	4.3	4.5
KDNP	4.6	4.8	4.0
MDF	3.9	4.6	4.9
MIÉP	-	4.8	4.3
MSZP	2.8	3.0	3.1
SZDSZ	4.2	4.0	4.0
All voters together:	4.0	3.7	3.8

The most intriguing result in Table 5 is that all major parties, except the sharply declining MDF and the relatively steady FKGP, came to be seen as more, rather than less centrist over time. For instance, the mean left-right position of the MSZP-voters was 2.8 in 1990 and 3.1 in 1998, while the same figures for the Fidesz-voters were 4.3 and 4.1, respectively. In other words, both groups became more centrist, since the mid-point on the scale is 4. A substantial

rightward shift was apparent in the position of the average MDF- and KDNP-voters between 1990 and 1994. Although the MDF suffered heavy vote losses in this period, these changes - together with the simultaneous rise of the relatively non-centrist MSZP to the position of the biggest party - clearly created a bigger polarization between the major parties in 1994 than in 1990. Between the second and third election, however, the modest centrifugal movement of the MDF-electorate - a fairly small party by the time of the 1998 election - was probably more than counterbalanced by the centripetal movement of the average MSZP-, Fidesz-, and MIÉP-voter.

Overall, we believe that the erstwhile increase and the subsequent decrease in the policy and ideological differences between the major party alternatives provide the most likely explanation for how turnout and the strength of party attachments changed in the Hungarian electorate between 1990 and 1998. If so, then the relatively weak polarization of the Hungarian parties may have something to do with the relatively low turnout and weak party attachments in Hungary.

The Nature of the Game

Most possible motives of electoral decisions can be classified as either policy- or performance evaluations. From the bits and pieces of information about candidate personalities, real world developments under different governments, party promises and so forth, voters make inferences about the likely future policies and past performances of the different actors. If the number of parties is high, government policies are likely to reflect complex compromises between a number of players. Thus, the separate contribution of individual parties is harder to evaluate, and becomes less relevant for voters' decisions than in a two-party system. In contrast, when the number of parties is low, the performance of individual parties in office is - unless divided government complicates the matter as in the US - far more straightforward to assess, while the ideological differentiation between the parties is likely to be lower.

One important characteristic of the Hungarian elections in the 1990s seems to have been that performance evaluations played more, and ideological, policy-related considerations a lesser role than we would expect simply on the basis of the number of parties. Table 6 shows comparative evidence to this effect about elections in the late 1990s. The countries in the comparison are ordered by the effective number of parties (on this measure, see above). The importance of performance evaluation for vote choice is measured through the strength of statistical association (in other words the correlation) between party choice and evaluations of the state of the national economy. The weight of policy (or ideological) considerations is measured through the strength of statistical association between left-right self-placement and party choice. As Table 6 reveals, performance evaluations had, in a cross-national comparison, a rather large influence on the vote in Hungary, even bigger than in Australia, New Zealand or the United Kingdom. Only in the Czech Republic was this influence even bigger than in Hungary. In contrast, policy or ideological considerations had a good deal less influence in Hungary than in other countries with a comparable number of parties, although still more than in the United States or in Romania.

Table 6: The approximate influence of performance and policy evaluations on the vote in Hungary in cross-national comparison[27]

	Effective number of parties in the election[28]	Weight of performance evaluations for vote choice[29]	Weight of policy evaluations for vote choice[30]
Election:			
USA 1996	2.4	.20	.38
Taiwan 1996	2.9	.15	.28
United Kingdom 1997	3.2	.41	.51
Spain 1996	3.3	.24	.49
Australia 1996	3.3	.37	.40
New Zealand 1996	4.4	.38	.63
Hungary 1998	4.6	.43	.51
Poland 1997	4.6	.24	.70
Czech Republic 1996	5.3	.55	.73
Romania 1996	5.6	.21	.23
Ukraine 1996	10.0	.14	.58

In other words, Hungarian elections, in comparison with Polish or Czech elections, for example, are somewhat less about the content of policy proposals and more about who can deliver more or less the same things more effectively. However, this is not to say that the voters are unmoved by the ideological differences between the parties. As one can easily observe in Table 4, Hungarian elections usually do not polarize voters according to their economic policy preferences. Rather, as the parties differ from each other more clearly on moral, cultural, religion-related issues than on economics, it is religiosity, nationalism, anti-communism and the like that divide the voters of the Hungarian parties most.[31] Indeed, it is the latter issue dimensions that define the primary meaning of left and right in Hungary, and not socio-economic cleavages as, for example, in the Czech Republic or to some extent in Poland.[32]

Consequently, Hungarian parties cannot be seen as representatives of particular social classes, and economic status has little influence on the vote. In the elections after World War 2, there was a strong class voting in Hungary.[33] In the 1990s, farmers and agricultural workers were still a bit more likely to vote for the Small Holders, white-collars for the liberal parties or MDF, and managers for the ex-communist MSZP. But these tendencies were relatively weak, and otherwise class voting very nearly disappeared from the Hungarian electoral arena. Rather,

correlates of cultural orientations like age, rural vs. urban residence, religiosity, former communist party membership and to some extent level of education became the most important non-attitudinal determinants of the vote. Unlike social class, membership in the groups defined by these characteristics proved more important influences on the vote in Hungary than in Western democracies.[34]

We extensively documented these enduring tendencies elsewhere.[35] Most Hungarian parties had a very distinct appeal to particular sections of the electorate. Thus, despite the large changes in the size of their voter basis and the limited inter-party differences on economic issues, they apparently succeeded in maintaining a distinct identity throughout the 1990s. This combination of distinct identities with rather limited polarization on the issues most salient to the voters allowed huge swings of the vote to coexist with a remarkably stable set of players. On the negative side, the party system failed to generate much excitement and high electoral participation among the voters. On the positive side, however, it contributed to the development of a political system where party responsibility for government actions is relatively clearly defined, and most votes have a very visible, dependable impact on the party composition of the government. Hungarian voters may not be able to express all that much about their policy preferences through the vote; but they can certainly keep their governments post facto accountable.

Notes

[1] On the election results see the Appendix of this volume. Unless otherwise noted, all survey data analyzed and reported in this chapter come from a May 1990 post-election survey of 981 respondents carried out by the TARKI institute, Budapest, and the April 1994 and April 1998 pre-election surveys with 1200 respondents each by the Department of Political Science of the Central European University, Budapest. All the data are publicly available from the Hungarian sociological data archive, the TARKI, and the Zentralarchiv in Cologne, Germany. The data are weighted throughout the analysis. Of course, we alone are responsible for the calculations and interpretations presented here.

[2] Cf. András Körösényi, "Revival of the Past of New Beginning? The Nature of Post-Communist Politics", *Political Quarterly* vol. 62 no. 1 (1991), 1-23; and Jason Wittenberg, "The 1994 Hungarian Election in Historical Perspective", in Gábor Tóka and Zsolt Enyedi eds. *Elections to the Hungarian National Assembly 1994* (Berlin, Sigma, 1999), 139-167.

[3] For a review of the explanations of the MSZP's electoral resurgence see Bernard Tamas, "Parties on Stage: Evaluating the Performance of Hungarian Parties", in Gábor Tóka and Zsolt Enyedi eds. *Elections to the Hungarian National Assembly 1994* (Berlin, Sigma, 1999), 13-51.

[4] On the influence of the electoral system see Kenneth Benoit, "Votes and Seats: The Hungarian Electoral Law and the 1994 Parliamentary Elections", in Gábor Tóka and Zsolt Enyedi eds. *Elections to the Hungarian National Assembly 1994* (Berlin, Sigma, 1999), 108-138.

[5] Stefano Bartolini and Peter Mair, *Identity, Competition, and Electoral Availability: The Stabilisation of the European Electorates 1885-1985*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990).

[6] Gábor Tóka, "Party Appeals and Voter Loyalty in New Democracies", *Political Studies* vol. 46 (1998), 589-610; Gábor Tóka, "Voting Behaviour", in Tamás Kolosi, István György Tóth, and György Vukovich eds. *Social Report 1998*, (Budapest, TARKI, 1999) 389-408.

[7] Gábor Tóka, "Voting Behaviour", in Tamás Kolosi, István György Tóth, and György Vukovich eds. *Social Report 1998*, (Budapest, TARKI, 1999), 389-408.

[8] Zoltán Fábián, "Szavazói táborok és szavazói hûség (Constituencies and Voter Loyalty)", *Századvég* vol. 1 no. 1 (1996), 95-111.

[9] Our calculus is once again based on the distribution of party list votes, transformed from percentages into fractions of the vote.

[10] Gábor Tóka, "Voting Behaviour", in Tamás Kolosi, István György Tóth, and György Vukovich eds. *Social Report*

1998, (Budapest, TARKI, 1999), 389-408.

[11] The data come from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (see http:/www.umich.edu/~nes/cses/). In each country appearing in the table, national probability samples of the adult population were interviewed shortly after a national election. The table shows the percentage of all respondents who responded with "yes" to the question "Do you usually think of yourself as close to any particular political party?" The data are weighted.

[12] The 1990 survey (titled "Politics") was carried out by Róbert Angelusz and Róbert Tardos in February 1990. The data are available from the Hungarian data archive TARKI.

[13] Richard Rose and William Mishler, "Negative and Positive Party Identification in Post-communist Countries", *Electoral Studies* vol. 17 (1998), 217-234.

[14] For Hungary, the table shows the participation rate in the first round of each election separately, but only the average turnout in all national elections between 1990 and Spring 1997 for the other countries. All except the Hungarian data come from IDEA (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance), *Voter Turnout from 1945 to 1997: A Global Report on Political Participation*, (Stockholm, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 1997), and refer to the total voting age population, including the disfranchised. The table lists all countries rated "free" by the Freedom House in 1996/97 for which turnout data were available.

[15] Herbert Kitschelt, Zdenka Mansfeldova, Radoslaw Markowski and Gábor Tóka, *Post-Communist Party Systems: Competition, Representation, and Inter-Party Cooperation* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999); Gábor Tóka, "Party Appeals and Voter Loyalty in New Democracies", *Political Studies* vol. 46 (1998), 589-610; Gábor Tóka, "Hungary." in Sten Berglund, Tomas Hellén and Frank H. Aarebrot eds. *Handbook of Political Change in Eastern Europe* (Cheltenham, Edgar Elgar, 1998), 231-274.

[16] Herbert Kitschelt, Zdenka Mansfeldova, Radoslaw Markowski and Gábor Tóka, *Post-Communist Party Systems: Competition, Representation, and Inter-Party Cooperation* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[17] Gábor Tóka, "Hungary." in Sten Berglund, Tomas Hellén and Frank H. Aarebrot eds. *Handbook of Political Change in Eastern Europe* (Cheltenham, Edgar Elgar, 1998), 231-274.

[18] On the relationship between nationalist vs. cosmopolitan orientations and the vote see Geoffrey Evans, and Stephen Whitefield, "Social and Ideological Cleavage Formation in Hungary", *Europe-Asia Studies* (1995) vol. 47, 1127-1204; Raymond Duch, "The Electoral Connection and Democratic Consolidation", *Electoral Studies* (1998) vol. 17, 149-174; William L. Miller, Stephen White, and Paul Heywood, "Political Values Underlying Partisan Cleavages in Former Communist Countries", *Electoral Studies* (1998) vol. 17, 197-216.

[19] Economic orientations were measured through responses to four questions: "To what extent do you agree or disagree ... that the government should regulate prices by decree?"; "... that the government should support declining industries so that the people who work do not lose their jobs?"; "... that it should be the government's responsibility to provide a job for everyone who wants one?"; and "How much influence do you think trade unions have in this

country: more than they should, less than they should, or just about the right amount of influence?". Accepting that there is, inevitably, something arbitrary in any cutoff-point between left and right, we classified the respondents left-wing if they answered at least two of these questions as if they (either "strongly" or "rather") agreed with government intervention in the economy and/or desired greater trade union influence, and right-wing otherwise. Religious vs. non-religious orientations were ascertained through how frequently the respondents attended religious services. Everyone who did so at least once a month was classified "religious", and non-religious otherwise.

[20] On the definition of the four groups see the previous note.

[21] The total may differ from 100 percent because of rounding errors.

[22] On the definition of the four groups see the note to Table 3.

[23] The total may differ from 100 percent because of rounding errors.

[24] The total may differ from 100 percent because of rounding errors.

[25] Giacomo Sani and Giovanni Sartori, "Polarization, Fragmentation and Competition in Western Democracies", in Hans Daalder and Peter Mair eds. *Western European Party Systems: Continuity and Change.* (Beverly Hills, Sage, 1983), 307-341.

[26] The respondents were asked to place themselves on a 1 to 7 scale where 1 meant "left" and 7 "right". The 1990 survey (titled "Politics") was carried out by Róbert Angelusz and Róbert Tardos in February 1990. The data are available from the Hungarian data archive TARKI.

[27] Except for the number of parties, the data was provided by the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), which has been collecting mass survey data in the immediate aftermath of national elections since 1996, using a cross-nationally standardized questionnaire and probability sampling. Background information on the project, study documentation, as well as the data files themselves can be downloaded from the CSES web-site (http://www.umich.edu/nes/cses.htm). Throughout the analysis, the data are weighted and vote choice recoded as reported by Gábor Tóka, "Do Some Party Systems Make Equal Votes Unequal? A Comparison of Old and New Democracies", Paper prepared for presentation at the Conference on Re-Thinking Democracy in the New Millenium, organized by the University of Houston at the Omni Hotel, Houston, TX, 16-19 February 2000.

[28] The number of effective electoral parties in the last legislative (in the US: presidential) election; computed as $1/\text{sum}(v_i)^2$, where v_i is the fraction of the vote obtained by the $_i$th party in the election. The figures were calculated by the authors from electoral data published in relevant 1996-98 issues of *Electoral Studies* and at the website of the Political Transformation and the Electoral Process in Post-Communist Europe project at http://www2.essex.ac.uk/elect/.

[29] The electoral importance of performance evaluations was measured with the strength of statistical association (as expressed by the average of two eta coefficients) between vote one the one hand, and responses to two questions about economic evaluations in the CSES surveys on the other (Q9: "What do you think about the state of the

economy these days in [country]? Would you say that the state of the economy is very good, good, neither good nor bad, bad, or very bad?" and Q10: "Would you say that over the past twelve months, the state of the economy in [country] has got better, stayed about the same, or got worse? [IF BETTER/WORSE:] Would you say much better/worse or somewhat better/worse?").

[30] The weight of policy evaluations for vote choice was measured with the strength of statistical association (as expressed by an eta coefficient) between vote and left-right self-placement on an eleven-point scale.

[31] Cf. Herbert Kitschelt, Zdenka Mansfeldova, Radoslaw Markowski and Gábor Tóka, *Post-Communist Party Systems: Competition, Representation, and Inter-Party Cooperation* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[32] Cf. Radoslaw Markowski, "Political Parties and Ideological Spaces East Central Europe", *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* vol. 30 (1997), 221-254.

[33] Cf. Gábor Tóka, "Electoral Research in Hungary", in Hans-Dieter Klingemann, Ekkehard Mochmann, and Kenneth Newton eds. *Elections in Central and Eastern Europe*, (Berlin, Sigma, 2000), 71-104.

[34] Cf. Gábor Tóka, "Parties and Electoral Choices in East Central Europe", in Paul Lewis and Geoffrey Pridham, eds. *Stabilising Fragile Democracies* (London, Routledge, 1996), 100-125.

[35] See, for instance, Gábor Tóka, "Parties and Elections in Hungary in 1990 and 1994", in Béla K. Király and András Bozóki eds. *Lawful Revolution in Hungary 1989-94*, (Highland Lakes, NJ: Atlantic Research and Publications, Inc. and Boulder, CO: Social Science Monographs), 131-158. Cf. also Gábor Tóka, "Hungary." in Sten Berglund, Tomas Hellén and Frank H. Aarebrot eds. *Handbook of Political Change in Eastern Europe* (Cheltenham, Edgar Elgar, 1998), 231-274.