9. Hungary

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NOTE: unlike this draft, the published version repeatedly mixes up the MSZP and MSZMP abbreviations in the section titled "The Origins of the Party System".

The institutions squeezed the cleavages: much of the history of Hungarian party competition between 1990 and 2002 could be summed up in this verdict. At the beginning of the period, a relatively fragmented party system articulated a number of crosscutting or just weakly correlated cleavage dimensions. By the end of the period, something very close to a two-party system emerged, and the multiple cleavages were absorbed into the opposition between two poles symbolized by the two major parties, with the more centrist or otherwise idiosyncratic parties apparently approaching extinction.

Yet crisp phrases are rarely accurate: we could equally well argue that it was the weakness of the initial cleavages that allowed their aggregation into a single ideological divide without much apparent anchoring in social identities. Had the vanishing cleavages had a stronger hold over the behaviour of politicians and voters, the codified institutional framework would surely have been adjusted to the reality of a relatively fragmented multiparty system, sustained by a multiplicity of crosscutting divides.

Indeed, even if constitutional law had been hard to change, political practice, if there was a need, could surely have found ways to ameliorate the effect of the institutional arrangements that stole the air from the smaller parties. Their eventual extinction, in this interpretation, found its ultimate cause in a cleavage structure that was only too easy to simplify. Institutional details – most notably the majoritarian component of the electoral system and the overwhelming dominance of the executive by a prime minister whose survival could hardly be called in doubt between two elections – only

acted as catalysts for the eventual concentration of the vote on the two parties that became the standard-bearers of the poles on a cleavage that somehow proved more powerful than the others.

Either way, a most striking feature of the Hungarian party system was the spectacular and secular decline in party fragmentation that has taken place since the first free election in 1990, coupled with the strange combination of a stability in the names of the relevant parties with stunning volatility in their relative electoral strength and every election bringing about a wholesale alternation between government and opposition. The two biggest parties' share of the party list votes increased from 46 per cent in 1990 to 53 per cent in 1994, 61 per cent in 1998 and 83 per cent in 2002 (cf. *Appendix 8.1*), and has since settled around 90 per cent in the polls. The only new party to gain parliamentary representation after 1990 was just a splinter from the party winning the 1990 election – but the two biggest parties in 1998 and 2002 were among the smallest in 1990. Hence, a curious mix of continuity, secular change, and wild fluctuation characterized the party system while the codified institutional framework remained virtually unchanged.

This chapter will not set out to determine to what extent this developmental path was the cause or the result of developments in the cleavage structure. However, while discussing how Hungarian political parties after 1989 mobilized or downplayed potential cleavage lines and how the voters responded, we will make a point of noting wherever possible how the drastic reduction in party system fractionalization may have been related to institutional design and cleavage structure.

Throughout this chapter, the cleavage concept will be used in a colloquial way, so as to avoid the theoretical issue of whether all persistent political divisions can be called cleavages. Thus, cleavage is 'a tendency in rocks or crystals to divide or split in certain directions' and 'the process of division of a fertilized ovum by which the original single cell becomes a mass of smaller cells' (*The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language* 1995, 246) In other words, the word cleavage will be used here in a rather broad sense, standing for politically mobilized divisions that in some way pre-exist political mobilization either in the attitudes or other traits of the citizen population. The question whether adopting Knutsen and Scarbrough's (1995) more complex definition of cleavages would be appropriate in the Hungarian – and more generally East Central European – context was explored and answered negatively elsewhere, on the basis of empirical evidence that cleavages defined in their more complex way are not more successful than pure attitudinal divisions in cementing voters' party alignments (Tóka 1998).

The paper first describes the development of the party system over time, then it moves on to analyse electoral alignments with the help of longitudinal and cross-national survey data. The conclusions revisit and

summarize the key causal propositions about the causes and effects of the cleavage structure articulated by the parties.

The Origins of the Party System

Once the Iron Curtain came down in 1948, all non-communist parties ceased to exist in Hungary. From the autumn of 1987 various new civic organizations emerged to support the progress towards more political freedom and various other reforms. After the most stubborn opponents of political liberalization were removed from the Politburo of the ruling Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSZMP) in May 1988, even the key political parties of the short-lived post-war democratic era were formally reorganized in the second half of 1988 and early 1989. Another forty or so non-communist parties emerged in the year after the official recognition of the multi-party system on the MSZMP's Central Committee meeting in February 1989, but these achieved no lasting significance.

In the course of the democratic transition the key umbrella organization of the democratic opposition was the Opposition Roundtable (EKA), founded in March 1989 by four historical and three newly emerging parties and a trade union federation so as to represent a united voice in the National Roundtable Negotiations. This complex series of negotiations about the terms of the democratic transition took place in June–September 1989 between the MSZMP, its satellite organizations and the democratic opposition represented by the EKA. Admission to the EKA in itself signalled a party's potential strength and respectability to the electorate, and the roundtable talks themselves further increased the gap between outsiders and insiders. In the most crucial period of party formation, the talks drew the attention of the media and potential party cadres on EKA-members and accelerated their institutionalization. Not a single of the opposition parties excluded from the Roundtable was to win more than 2 per cent of the votes in 1990.

On the other side of the Roundtable sat representatives of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSZMP), a party soon to disappear. The October 1989 MSZMP-congress announced the party's break with Marxism-Leninism and established a new party named the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP). The losing Marxist-Leninist faction rejected the new programme and helped organize a relatively orthodox communist party under the old MSZMP label. The reformist wing inherited the government positions and party assets, but not the ideological positions nor the members of the troubled old party - former MSZMP-members were not automatically registered as MSZP-members. In the 1990 election campaign, the party emphasized pragmatism, statesmanship, the need for economic reforms, its commitment to

democracy, European integration, the party's role in maintaining political stability and the combination of social democratic, patriotic, moderately liberal and technocratic elements in the party's programme and leadership.

The voters presumably had little difficulty guessing what social groups and issue concerns the reorganized historical parties intended to speak for. From the autumn of 1989, the Independent Smallholders Party (FKGP), a moderately nationalist and religious agrarian centre party before 1948, had come out strongly in favour of the restoration of ex-farmers' pre-1948 property rights, a proposition emphatically rejected by all the other parties. The Social Democratic Party of Hungary (MSZDP) apparently considered the party label self-explanatory and did not bother to tie it to specific issues. Like the fiercely anti-communist FKGP, the MSZDP usually joined the more radical wing of the opposition in the political conflicts of 1989 - the greatest concern, apparently, of the party-leaders was to dissociate the MSZDP from the incumbent reform socialists who were also contesting the social democratic field. The Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP) stressed the traditional religious issues and emphasized its moral commitment to protect the poor. In the 1989 referenda it supported the same option as the Socialist Party, and in other respects as well it usually shared the views of the moderate opposition.

All parties with some historical roots attempted to develop organizations following the traditional mass party model (Enyedi 1996). But the dominant actors in the Opposition Roundtable – the MDF, SZDSZ and FIDESZ – were newly created umbrella organizations of anti-communist mobilization, each representing a fairly broad ideological spectrum. Their future political orientation was also uncertain because their chief issue concern – the transition to democracy – was bound to lose relevance soon. Yet their leading role in the transition process and the relatively great breadth and internal cohesion of the pre-existing social networks of intellectuals upon which these three organizations were based made them the most successful non-communist actors in mobilizing human and material resources for politics.

The nature of the most important resources was determined by the context. In Hungary's negotiated revolution, the media constituted the main channel of communication from parties to voters. The masters of this technique in Hungarian transition politics – apart from the reform socialists within the MSZP – were the pro-democracy activists in MDF, SZDSZ and FIDESZ. They had the most imagination for creative political initiatives, and were able to react promptly to any event. Unlike the historical parties and the reform socialists, the MDF, SZDSZ and FIDESZ did not have pre-determined fixed positions on any issue: they were free and - due to their doubtless skills and internal cohesion - able to adapt their policies to events and experiences as they saw fit.

The transferability of the initial advantages into electoral superiority over

less broadly based parties may seem less mysterious than the mere survival of these umbrella organizations in the ordinary business of party politics. Maybe they were 'organized along tribal lines' (as an insider put it), and - as the late MDF leader József Antall claimed – 'nobody beyond the Grand Boulevard' (i.e. the dividing line between downtown and midtown Budapest) was interested in their ideological debates, which reflected only the traditional micro-cleavage dividing the Hungarian intelligentsia (Körösényi 1991). But their founding fathers would never have acquired their undeniable charisma had they been unable to deduce from their ideological heritage a distinctive position on every single newly arising issue, thus maintaining the ideological cohesion of their emerging parties. The mere fact of competition between them as well as between them and the regime provided sufficient incentives to keep each of these three parties united.

Before being formally established in the autumn of 1988, the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) and the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ) both had at least a decade-long pre-history. The SZDSZ was more or less the direct successor to the informal network of the dissent movement dating back to the late seventies. For the general public, the only visible difference between them and the MDF until late 1989 was tactical. The founding fathers of the MDF, aiming at a moral reorganization of the nation, advocated *Realpolitik* and tried to co-operate with the reformers in the communist party.

In terms of leadership, the MDF initially relied on a group of intellectuals under the guardianship of the reformist Politburo-member Imre Pozsgay. Many of the most influential founding fathers shared with Pozsgay a left-wing version of the pre-war *népi-nemzeti* (literally populist-national or *völkisch*-national) orientation. The *népi* ideology sought a third way based on participatory democracy between cosmopolitan capitalism and internationalist communism, the building of a new national elite – preferably originating from the countryside –, and to some extent collective ownership mixed with small and medium size private enterprises. The network of dissenters, reform-economists and sympathizers that rallied around SZDSZ tended to despise the *népi* ideology and missed no opportunity to point out its historical links to anti-Semitic and authoritarian tendencies.

Of all opposition groups, the MDF was the fastest and most efficient in building a nation-wide party organization. By the summer of 1989 it became recognized as the most likely non-communist contender for electoral victory in the next election, which was due no later than June 1990. Its relative moderation may have been a key asset in 1988 and early 1989, but it soon turned into a liability as the breakdown of communist rule speeded up all over the Soviet bloc in late 1989. Through a number of bold political initiatives, the SZDSZ turned from a small party apparently unable

to obtain more than 5–8 per cent of votes into a major electoral force matching the MDF both in terms of membership and popularity. The MDF responded to this challenge in two ways. It started presenting itself as a centre-right, strongly patriotic Christian party facing a cosmopolitan, radical and agnostic SZDSZ. On the other hand, the MDF claimed that it was pursuing a more cautious approach than its liberal rival to the introduction of market economy. Indeed, conventional wisdom has it that the SZDSZ's radical proposals had turned into an electoral liability by the time of the 1990 elections.

The Federation of Young Democrats (FIDESZ) was established by a network of university students and young professionals that crystallized in the second half of the 1980s. Initially, FIDESZ became known mainly for its protest actions. Seeing its electoral niche eroded by its increasingly popular ideological twin, the SZDSZ, the Young Democrats fought for survival during the 1990 election campaign. The campaign strategy was based on maximizing the party's generational appeal so as to differentiate the party from the Free Democrats. In early 1990, the electoral strength of the Young Democrats was fairly limited; after the elections, however, the FIDESZ was the only party able to capitalize on the decreasing popularity of the MDF as well as of the SZDSZ.

Issue dimensions in 1989 and early 1990

Quite apart from the information overflow resulting from the exceptional circumstances of regime change, there was a non-trivial reason why the 1990 distribution of electoral preferences could not have been expected to reflect very closely the distribution of the population along some underlying cleavage dimensions. The point is not, as journalistic accounts often suggested, that the parties had no 'clear programmes' apart from some vague anti-communism. Had the parties not had a considerable ideological cohesion already when they entered the legislature, party discipline within the ranks of the backbenchers would hardly have been as high as it actually was in 1990–91.[1] Rather, while the parties of the transition period clearly and consistently propagated differences in priorities and policies, the many issue conflicts between them were not yet incorporated into one all-embracing ideological super-dimension pitting two comprehensive camps against each other across all controversial issue domains. The future importance of the several partly crosscutting divisions was unclear, since the communism versus Western-style democracy dimension was rightly believed to lose its relevance after the first election. Thus, the post-election period was to determine the dominant divide of the future as well as how the political parties were to unfold on the dominant dimensions.

In 1990, the anti-communism factor, or, in other words, the radicalism vs. gradual change divide, pitted the small party of orthodox communists (MSZMP) against the liberals (SZDSZ, FIDESZ), the Smallholders (FKGP), and

some smaller right-wing parties. From this perspective, the Socialists (MSZP) were somewhere near the Communists (MSZMP), while the Democratic Forum (MDF) and the Social Democrats (MSZDP) were close to the centre but still on the radical side. The Christian Democrats (KNDP) and the People's Party (MNP), i.e. the two EKA-members that in the November 1989 referendum broke with the SZDSZ-led radical opposition and sided with the socialists to support direct presidential elections, were probably in the centre.

The divide between the pro-market and the social protectionist parties ran mostly, but not entirely, parallel to this first dimension. Here again, the SZDSZ and the FIDESZ were on the one pole and the Communists on the other, but the exact ordering of the Socialist MSZP, the Democratic Forum, the Social Democrats and the Smallholders (all being on the pro-market side) was somewhat uncertain. The Social Democrats and the Smallholders were more in favour of pro-market policies and full-scale privatization than the other two, but the first had an ambiguous attitude towards declining industries, and the second obviously had an affinity for agrarian protectionism. The People's Party and the Christian Democrats unequivocally located themselves on the social protectionist side.

The parties' attitudes towards class interests could not be easily inferred from their respective positions on the pro-market versus social protectionism axis. With recession and an inflation rate in the range of 25 to 30 per cent at the time of the elections, the parties were not inclined to commit themselves to substantial increases in welfare spending, save for education and what was necessitated by the growing rate of unemployment. Under state-socialism, the actual flow of cash transfers and benefits in kind favoured middle and high status groups (Ferge 1991). Thus, one could easily pledge - as did the pro-market Free Democrats - to divert more public spending to the poor without increasing the overall level of welfare spending.

The Smallholders and the MDF also tended to hold out the prospect of a broad national bourgeoisie as a remedy to social problems, a position that might suggest that they were advocating the interests of would-be proprietors. The Free and Young Democrats, in contrast, saw private property merely as an economic instrument, not as a moral goal in its own right (Körösényi 1991, 10). While it was radically pro-market, the rhetoric of the Free Democrats often rang like that of the Social Democrats and the Socialists, who also called for strong trade unions to protect the interests of wage-earners against what they believed to become a small propertied minority. As if to make things even more obscure, the MDF pledged itself to restrict unemployment and pauperization, and the Socialists, who took pride in speaking for wage-earner interests, were inevitably associated with the former *nomenklatura* and had a tarnished credibility on welfare issues after the austerity measures of the late 1980s. Finally, the Hungarian People's

Party and the Christian Democrats loudly committed themselves to protecting the non-propertied poor, but their main issue concerns lay elsewhere.

The situation was much simpler regarding the nationalist–cosmopolitan divide, which was certainly present and fairly important in the 1990 campaign (cf. Glenny 1990). On this dimension, the Hungarian Democratic Forum, the Hungarian People's Party and probably also the Smallholders constituted the 'national' (*nemzeti*) pole, while the pro-Soviet Communists in the MSZMP along with the pro-Western Free and Young Democrats occupied the anti-nationalist end of the spectrum. Although the parties themselves rarely referred to it, commentators took the Christian Democrats' moderately nationalist and the Social Democrats' moderately anti-nationalist stands for granted. The Socialist Party was in a difficult position. As heir to János Kádár's Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, it was criticized for having betrayed national sovereignty in and after the 1956 anti-Soviet uprising and for not having made sufficient efforts to protect the Magyar minority in Ceausescu's Romania. But the presence of Imre Pozsgay in the leadership secured a certain *népi* and 'national' credibility for the Socialists. As a matter of fact, practically no controversial and salient policy issues were associated with the nationalist–cosmopolitan dimension. The 'national' issues of the day – the protection of the Magyar minorities living in neighbouring countries or the political and economic break with the Soviet-bloc - fitted the liberal just as well as the nationalist agenda, and both sides seemed credible and outspoken on these issues.

The alignments on the rural–urban, religious–secular, and moral (as distinguished from narrowly political) libertarianism–authoritarianism dimensions largely coincided with the national–cosmopolitan divide. The Democratic Forum on the one hand and the liberal parties on the other seemed to have opposite, distinct, but moderate positions on these three dimensions. The MDF had its strongholds in provincial cities; it was moderately religious, slightly conservative on moral issues, and demanded a measure of respect for authority. The Free Democrats were a distinctly urban or even metropolitan phenomenon; along with the other liberal party, the FIDESZ, they were plainly secular but outspoken on freedom of religion, mostly libertarian on morality and always suspicious of authorities. In 1990, however, only the urban–rural dimension had salience among these divides. The agrarian–rural parties, particularly the Hungarian People's Party and the Agrarian Alliance (ASZ), were trying to mobilize against the privileges that Budapest and other urban centres were seen to enjoy at the expense of the countryside.

This complexity of ideological divisions would presumably have allowed several different routes of cleavage development in the 1990s. With the socialist government out of power, democratic anti-communism as an ideology was likely to loose its importance for the structuring of the

political field, but there were good reasons to believe that the social protectionist versus pro-market divide could replace it as a dominant force in inter-party relations. If so, then the liberal and socialist camps would remain poles apart even after the 1990 elections. Indeed, pre-election commentaries suggested the following coalition formulas to be the most likely: MDF and MSZP with some smaller parties; SZDSZ–FIDESZ–FKGP, probably joined by the MSZDP; and MDF–SZDSZ (probably joined by FIDESZ). This last formula was supposed to have the best odds, and a liberal-socialist alliance to be inconceivable.[2]

However, all these pre-election speculations failed to grasp the full impact of the newly created electoral system. In the elections, the MDF won more than 42 per cent of the mandates with somewhat less than a quarter of the (first round) votes. Altogether, the Hungarian Democratic Forum, the Independent Smallholders and the Christian Democrats had close to sixty per cent of the seats (cf. *Appendix 8.1*), and soon reached an agreement on the composition and programme of the new government.

The coalition that changed the issue agenda

József Antall's coalition formula replaced the previous political divides with a new one between a Christian–National coalition government and its liberal and socialist opposition. Judging from survey data on the sympathy rating of the main parties by each other's supporters, the main emotional divide in early 1990 was still between the Socialists and the radical opposition (SZDSZ, FIDESZ, FKGP), with the Democratic Forum close to the centre. By May 1991, however, the main divide became the one pitting the government parties against the liberals and the Socialist Party: by then, the more sympathy a survey respondent had for the Free Democrats, the more likely he or she was to like the Socialists and the Young Democrats, and to dislike the Smallholders and the Democratic Forum (Tóka 1993).

The coalition formula chosen after the 1990 elections strongly affected the future importance and combination of the potential ideological divides too. In a 1990 citizen survey, the conflict over the reforms and the class cleavage were rated the most important among some possible political divides; and analyses of 1990 party manifestos, to some extent corroborated by mass survey data, suggested that these two cleavages pitted the liberal parties against the left (Tóka 1993). However, under the Antall-government liberals and ex-communists found themselves sitting side by side in the opposition benches, and protesting the Christian-national rhetoric of the government as well as its attempts to increase executive influence in public broadcasting and other supposedly non-political spheres of life.

Various shifts in the parties' policy proposals and rhetoric after the 1990 election also contributed to the redefinition of the cleavage structure. Referring to external constraints, until 1992 the MDF leadership opted for monetary and privatization policies along the lines suggested by the liberal

parties during the 1990 campaign, and it suspended its erstwhile plans to increase the money supply and investment in education. Some rhetorical and tangible differences certainly remained between the government and the liberal opposition: the latter called for a smaller budget deficit, curtailed spending on bureaucracy, a little spending more on welfare, lower taxes and a quicker pace of privatization. But fiscal policy and privatization became relatively uncontroversial areas in the second half of 1990 and 1991. The constraints on government policy had an impact on the Christian Democrats and the Smallholders too. Quite fittingly, the KDNP's key representative in the government was the Minister of Welfare and the nominal leader of the FKGP became Minister of Agriculture. But as part of a coalition government they could not live up to their party's promises of social protectionism. The opposition parties, including the Socialists, also avoided aligning themselves with any kind of social protectionist rhetoric. Thus, the differences between the parties' attitudes on most socio-economic issues either diminished or lost their relevance altogether.

Some of the major controversial issues in 1990–91 were related to the sectional interests represented by the two smaller coalition partners. In exchange for FKGP support, the Democratic Forum and the Christian Democrats had to give up much of their opposition to the Smallholders' restitution policies. Fearing that the government might score points among former owners of collectivized and nationalized property, the SZDSZ also shifted its position, but the Young Democrats and the Socialists kept rejecting the idea of compensating pre-1949 owners. On the issue of financial compensation to the churches – a pet project of the KDNP – polarization was moderate, but a few details divided the parties into two distinctive and united blocs, with the government parties speaking for a somewhat greater role of organized religion in social life than the opposition parties preferred.

The extent of central government power too was a recurrent issue. The MDF advocated a greater degree of central governmental control over local governments, education, national media, and state-owned companies than the opposition. The liberal and socialist opposition was unified, and the Socialists and the Free Democrats frequently claimed that the MDF wanted to create large clientelistic networks and subject ever more spheres of life to political control.

Finally, a major controversy surrounded issues of retroactive justice, on which the government parties repeatedly showed anti-communist zeal and determination to undo past injustices, while the liberals and the socialists insisted that retroactive justice violated the rule of law.

Overall, the government parties managed to act in concert even on such a matter as restitution, which had caused very pronounced disagreements between them before the 1990 election. The Socialist Party, which sought to affirm its position as a relevant player on the political scene, readily found

issues where it could appear as an ally of the liberal parties. The liberal parties, on the other hand, mostly abandoned their anti-communist rhetoric, partly because the content of the practical issues related to it had changed since the Socialists lost power, but possibly also because they found a ready and willing ally in the Socialist Party. The difference between the Socialists and the once united opposition did not disappear entirely: a small number of bills (particularly trade union law) were passed with only the Socialists voting against them. But on the main controversial issues discussed below this divide had no relevance any more. Moreover, the anti-communist pole – previously the domain of the liberal parties and the FKGP – was gradually occupied by the three government parties, and was not associated with the pro-democratic pole on procedural issues any more.

The demise of the traditionalist right

Notwithstanding their unity on most practical matters, the Christian–National bloc started to lose cohesion shortly after the formation of the Antall-government. This was primarily due to disagreements about restitution, foreign policy, and whether Christian-national influence in mass media and social life could be and should be increased by a rapid change of the guards in all spheres of life under government influence. The Antall-government took moderate positions on all these questions but the opposition could still portray it as a captive of the more radical voices in the government benches, while Antall and his party in fact lost the loyalty of the latter's representatives.

The internal divisions were only made worse by signs of diminishing support in the electorate. In the September–October 1990 municipal elections, the electoral coalition of FIDESZ and SZDSZ defeated the government parties in virtually every major city. From early 1991 on, Socialist candidates ever more often won parliamentary and local by-elections, but the FIDESZ maintained a huge lead in the opinion polls, with the MDF falling back to 10–15 per cent by late 1991. The heavy losses by the MDF were surely inflicted partly by the economic recession, but the party's newly acquired Christian-radical image must have had something to do with the fact that it lost considerably more support among secular than among anti-market voters (Tóka 1995a).

Premier József Antall's strategy of maintaining the cohesion of the Christian-national bloc by policy compromises and his discrete manipulation of leadership elections in the KDNP and the FKGP worked out with the KDNP, but almost completely failed with the FKGP. József Torgyán, the former FKGP caucus leader, turned out to be an absolutely unacceptable partner for Antall, and the Premier aided those trying to remove Torgyán from all party offices. Torgyán managed to rally most of the FKGP organizations behind him in the conflict with the FKGP MPs who remained loyal to Antall and the government coalition. Once Torgyán had won the

battle for party leadership, he expelled his critics (i.e. the majority of the parliamentary club) from the FKGP and took the party into opposition. For most of 1992–94, the parliamentary deputies of Torgyán's FKGP were one or two members short of forming a separate caucus. The thirty-five expelled MPs remained on the government benches and eventually founded a party of their own, known as the United Smallholders Party (EKGP; see Pataki 1994b). However, the EKGP had very little appeal on the Smallholders rank and file and lost out miserably in the 1994 elections.

A second series of defections from the government benches involved the MDF directly. By mid-1991, some sections of the MDF had lost patience with the failure of the MDF government to purge the economic and cultural elites of what they perceived as a hostile mix of former *nomenklatura* and secular–cosmopolitan liberals. This growing dissatisfaction within the ranks of the MDF found its most radical expression in the newspaper articles of party vice-president István Csurka. The tolerance or even encouragement supposedly shown by the government and the MDF towards various extremists – from Csurka to skinhead gangs masquerading in fascists uniforms – became the most hotly debated issue in Hungarian politics. In a major embarrassment to the government, several MDF deputies questioned the legitimacy and permanence of the current state borders of Hungary, and at least one even called for a peaceful reunification of the entire Carpathian Basin (read: historical, pre-1920 Hungary). In the year following the publication of a notorious Csurka-essay in the semi-official party weekly in August 1992, the Foreign Ministry counted approximately one thousand articles in the mainstream world press (approximately one half of all the entries found on Hungary) discussing Csurka's views, which were labelled fascist even by some fellow party members (Pataki 1992). The MDF was apparently paralyzed: the leadership sensed that Csurka's views faithfully reflected the frustration of many rank-and-file members, yet it could not agree with him either on policy objectives or on pre-election tactics. By way of example, Csurka argued that the 1994 elections were already lost; what remained at stake was the preservation of the ideological integrity of the party and a decisive increase in the social influence of the *népi-nemzeti* forces, requiring radical steps to promote faithful cadres in the media, the privatization agency, the civil service, and in the boards of state-owned companies. At last, even the official silence of the MDF about the widely recognized terminal illness of the Prime Minister was broken when Csurka publicly called upon him to nominate a successor. Coming on top of his public criticism of the beleaguered government, this *faux pas* alienated the bulk of the party from Csurka. Yet the party leadership suspected that a left-liberal alliance aiming at the total delegitimization of the Christian–National bloc was emerging under the guise of the public outrage over Csurka's views. Thus, the MDF leaders were reluctant to turn against him in a concession to 'anti-fascist' voices.

In June 1993, Csurka and his followers were eventually expelled from the MDF; they went on to found the Party of Hungarian Justice and Life (MIÉP) in August 1993. As an illustration of the delicate balance of forces within the MDF, the most vocal critics of Csurka were expelled at the same time (Oltay 1993b; 1993c). Even more important than the public image was the fact that Csurka became a serious threat to the organizational unity of the MDF. First he had developed an organization parallel to the MDF called the Movement of the Hungarian Path; then he organized a strong faction within the MDF caucus that defied the government in the vote on the Basic Treaty signed with Ukraine.[3] Once Csurka had been thrown out, moderate conservatives regained control of the MDF, but the party was unable to change its image accordingly in the run-up to the elections. The period of national mourning following Prime Minister Antall's death induced a surge of support for the MDF in public opinion polls, but this effect proved short-lived and did not translate into increased electoral support, nor into the consolidation of the party's position in the centre-right. The somewhat lax fiscal policies of the last 16 months before the elections, delivering a 7 per cent real wage increase in the last 6 months prior to the elections, were also no avail (see Okolicsányi 1994).

Hence, the last three years of the MDF-dominated government did little to reshape the issue agenda of Hungarian politics compared to where it was after the 1990 election. True, the – more apparent than real – consensus on economic issues was weakened by increasing criticism by the MSZP, KDNP and SZDSZ of the allegedly corrupt and clientelistic practices in the privatization process; by the KDNP and the MSZP calling for greater social justice and a more equal sharing of the burdens of economic transformation by rich and poor; and by the SZDSZ and the FIDESZ talking more and more about cutting corporate taxes. But if anything, the battles on non-economic issues became ever more bitter as Hungary's media war escalated (Oltay 1993a; Pataki 1994a), and the emergence of the extreme right generated considerable anxiety (Pataki 1992; Oltay 1993b, 1994a) – even making a few pundits publicly panic in late 1993 over the possibility of a right-wing coup.

At the same time, small but steady steps paved the way for a future socialist–liberal coalition through the establishment of the 'Democratic Charter' – a loose framework for protest action, organized by leaders from within the SZDSZ and MSZP along with some public intellectuals who were wary of what they saw as the authoritarian propensity of the MDF government (Bozóki 1996).

Somewhat unexpectedly, the Democratic Charter had its greatest – though first barely visible – impact on those leaders of FIDESZ around charismatic party leader Viktor Orbán, who felt definitely more anticommunist than liberal when it came to a choice between aligning with either the ex-communists or the momentarily unpopular Christian-national

right. In late 1992, they engaged in a reorientation of their party. For one thing, they were anxious to prepare voters for the economic policy measures that a liberal government would implement after the 1994 elections. As anybody familiar with the mechanics of the Hungarian electoral system must have realized, the 1992 opinion poll held out the prospect of a two-thirds majority for the SZDSZ–FIDESZ coalition. Hence the FIDESZ could easily afford to lose quite a few pocketbook-oriented and protest voters. Thus, early in 1993, the FIDESZ stopped espousing left-liberal views on religious and 'national' issues, voted against a routine adjustment of state pensions to the increase in nominal wages, and implicitly called for a boycott of the elections of union representatives to the social security council.

Secondly, the strong showing of the Socialists in the 1991–93 by-elections convinced most FIDESZ-strategists that the MSZP was going to be their most serious rival in the electoral arena. Some of them called for cooperation with the socialists in order to replace the Christian-nationalist government with a more agreeable alternative. But the group around Viktor Orbán secured a clear victory over them in the ensuing within-party elections, and the official FIDESZ-line became to stop the SZDSZ from co-operating with the socialists. Hence the party lashed out against the Democratic Charter and the SZDSZ for their supposedly exaggerated anxiety about the nationalist, as opposed to the Red menace.[4]

The 1993–94 period proved electorally disastrous for FIDESZ. First, the rejection of any coalition with the MSZP implied a post-election coalition with the MDF – a prospect unattractive to large sections of the FIDESZ constituency. The image of the party was further tainted by two scandals related to party finances and the party's demonstrative opposition to old-age pension hikes. Within just one year, the FIDESZ dropped from some forty to less than ten per cent in the public opinion polls.

Worse yet, the Christian–National constituency was reluctant to switch to the FIDESZ immediately after receiving the news of the party's reconciliation with MDF. The expulsion of Csurka from the MDF put an end to whatever hopes the FIDESZ might have entertained about the more moderate voters of the Christian–National camp switching to FIDESZ. Rather than placing itself into the position of the median party in an MDF-FIDESZ-SZDSZ coalition, Orbán's party was giving way for an overwhelming MSZP victory in the 1994 election.

With the MDF and the SZDSZ, followed by the FIDESZ, falling out of grace with the voters, the MSZP went on to win an overall majority of seats in the 1994 elections without any new items on its electoral platform, save the inclusion of a populist twist to its economic policy rhetoric and a more confident posture on non-economic issues (Oltay 1994b). The MSZP promised much the same as the liberals: competent and pragmatic leadership; economic prosperity; no government-promoted re-socialization

of society in the name of systemic change, but a continuation of the economic reforms and privatization; no retroactive revision of past privatization deals but tightened control of privatization by parliament; the implementation of all the restitution laws enacted during MDF rule; and probably some improvements in the relations with Slovakia and Romania.

In pursuing an electorally suicidal course of action, the FIDESZ-leaders were certainly confident that should the 'Warsaw express' – also called 'Lithuanian disease' in reference to the victory of ex-communists in the 1992 Lithuanian and the 1993 Polish elections – arrive in Hungary, they would at least become the major opposition party, most probably doomed to become the leading force on the political right. Compared to these expectations, the most disappointing aspect of the 1994 election outcome was not even the socialist victory, but the Free Democrats' unexpected rise to second place in the polls.

The SZDSZ went through a brief leadership crisis in 1991–92. After the resignation of its founding father, Péter Tölgyessy was elected party leader against strong resistance from veteran dissenters of the 1970s and 1980s. For about a year, the constellation of influential factions and a weak executive paralyzed the party. When Péter Tölgyessy came up for re-election in 1992, the old party establishment had launched a better-known candidate than in the year before, and Tölgyessy suffered a crushing defeat.

In the following years, the SZDSZ tried to adapt to electoral considerations in every respect except on some issues concerning economic policy, civic liberties and the constitutional framework. The nomination of a relatively unknown newcomer instead of the party leader for Prime Minister in the 1994 campaign testified to the new style. By 1994, the SZDSZ was the most united Hungarian party with some lessons learned and moral rising high again among the party faithful. The 1994 campaign of the Free Democrats steered clear of divisive issues and controversial policy pledges, emphasizing the personal qualities and appeal of the parties' leading candidates instead. All this made the Free Democrats an attractive liberal alternative to the triumphant Socialists, who were equally non-nationalist and secular, but somewhat anti-market in the eyes of the voters.[5]

Party positions redefined

Clearly, the issue dimensions that defined the ideological identity of the Hungarian parties changed considerably between 1990 and 1994. The most comprehensive data set available about the issue positions of the Hungarian parties to date serves as the point of departure for an evaluation. These data derive from an international survey conducted by Herbert Kitschelt and his associates in early 1994 (Kitschelt 1995; Kitschelt et al. 1999). In Hungary, 129 mid-level party activists – e.g. heads of regional or municipal party organizations – were interviewed, in nearly equal numbers from each of the six main parties. Among other things, the respondents had to locate seven

Hungarian parties on 16 twenty-point balanced issue scales. By way of example, the alternative positions on the first issue were 'social policy cannot protect citizens from all risks, but they also have to rely on themselves. For instance, all costs of medical treatments should be paid either directly by everybody from his or her own pocket, or by joining voluntary health insurance schemes individually'; and 'the social policy of the state must protect citizens from every sort of social risks. For instance, all medical expenses should be financed from the social security fund'.

The original answers were then recoded so that the resulting scores show how much closer to point 1 or point 20 the party in question was placed by the respondents, compared to their average placement of all the seven parties on the given question. Minus scores indicate a placement deviating from the average towards the first of the two response alternatives offered to the respondents, and positive scores the opposite.

Table 9.1: The mean position of seven parties vis-a-vis other parties as perceived by a panel of party activists.[6]

	Rated party						
Issue scale	*MSZP*	*FKGP*	*KDNP*	*SZDSZ*	*FIDESZ*	*MIÉP*	*MDF*
Social security	3.2	.1	1.6	-2.1	-2.8	.6	-.7
Market vs. state	4.2	.4	1.3	-3.3	-3.6	1.8	-.8
Mode of privatization	-.3	3.5	2.3	-4.5	-4.4	4.2	-.9
Inflation-unemployment	3.5	.9	.8	-2.3	-2.2	1.7	-2.4
Foreign investment	.9	-5.2	-1.2	5.4	4.7	-6.0	1.3
Income taxation	.0	-1.6	-.9	2.5	2.3	-2.3	.1
Immigration	2.9	-4.0	-.9	3.7	3.1	-4.7	-.1
Women at work	-5.5	4.2	3.1	-3.1	-3.3	3.8	.8
Abortion	5.9	-5.3	-6.4	6.8	6.6	-6.3	-1.2
Churches and education	7.9	-5.6	-6.7	7.1	6.7	-5.8	-3.6
Urban–rural	.7	-5.6	-.6	3.3	2.9	-2.5	1.8
Authority–autonomy	3.6	-5.1	-4.6	7.1	7.1	-5.5	-2.7
Environment	-1.3	-.1	.5	.6	1.8	-.8	-.7
Censorship	-3.6	4.1	4.5	-6.3	-6.1	4.9	2.5
Former communists	8.7	-6.2	-2.8	5.1	2.7	-7.0	-.5
Basic treaties with neighbours	-6.5	6.6	2.0	-5.6	-4.6	7.9	.2

Table 9.1 shows the mean issue placement of the seven parties by the cross-party jury. With the exception of the question on environmental protection, the respondents apparently saw sizeable differences between the positions of the different parties on just about every issue. On economic issues, the FIDESZ and the SZDSZ were attributed the most, and the MSZP the least pro-market position. The issues of foreign direct investments and property restitution slightly deviate from this pattern. The socialists and the liberals were seen to be more in favour of foreign direct investment than the average, while the Christian–National parties were believed to favour

property restitution and the defence of supposed national interests from the intrusion of foreign capital.

Table 9.2: Principal component analysis of the issue scales in Table 9.1 (N=903). Matrix of factor loadings (after varimax rotation)[7]

	% of variance explained		
	47.6	13.3	7.5
Scale			
Social security	-.01	.77	.09
Market vs. state	-.12	.82	-.20
Mode of privatization	-.53	.60	.01
Inflation-unemployment	-.02	.74	.03
Foreign investments	.67	-.25	.34
Income taxation	.37	-.42	-.13
Immigration	.77	-.15	.03
Women at work	-.80	.03	.18
Abortion	.88	-.14	.13
Churches and education	.91	-.06	.09
Urban–rural	.55	-.46	-.28
Authority-autonomy	.87	-.22	.20
Environment	.08	.07	.92
Censorship	-.82	.23	-.09
Former communists	.87	-.02	-.15
Basic treaties with neighbours	-.86	.10	-.01
Factor scores of rated parties:			
MSZP	1.24	1.21	-.64
FKGP	-1.04	.16	.21
KDNP	-.63	.23	.05
SZDSZ	.96	-.69	.24
FIDESZ	.81	-.78	.55
MIÉP	-1.07	.31	-.17
MDF	-.27	-.45	-.24

The next relevant finding emerges in Table 9.2, which derives from a factor analysis of the items in Table 9.1. For every respondent there are seven observations in the analysis on every issue: one for each party. If a small number of factors emerge, and all the original variables have high positive or negative factor loading on at least one of the factors, then party positions on just about any relevant issue can be nicely predicted once we know the position of the party on some other issues. A small number of factors would thus signal a relatively simple party-policy space.

In the given Hungarian data, we encounter essentially two dimensions. Technically speaking, we still see a third dimension with an *Eigenvalue* higher than one, but it merely explains 7.5 percent of the variance and it is almost exclusively defined by environmental protection, which, as we saw, barely produces any meaningful differences between Hungarian parties. No less than 48 per cent of the variations in party positions across the 16 issues

and seven parties can be explained by the first factor, on which all non-economic issues except environmental protection have a very high loading. In other words, inter-party conflict on national, religious and other non-economic issues tends to be structured along a similar pattern; such issue dimensions or cleavages were not cross-cutting but overlapping.

Most economic policy items have a high loading on the second, but not on the first factor. This factor only explains a meagre 13.3 per cent of the variance in party positions across issues, and it does not correlate with party positions on non-economic issues. This is clearly an economically defined left–right cleavage, pitting the socialist MSZP against the two liberal parties (SZDSZ and FIDESZ) and the MDF. On the first and primary dimension, the Christian–National, anti-communist and slightly agrarian FKGP, the MIÉP, the KDNP and the MDF are differentiated from the secular, cosmopolitan, and urban MSZP, FIDESZ and SZDSZ.

Thus, the analysis of the elite perceptions of party space lends support to the notion of a fairly simple cleavage structure. It is dominated by a strongly polarizing cultural dimension, which cuts across a much less important and less polarizing economic left–right cleavage. This sets Hungary apart from the Czech Republic and Poland, where economic issues played a much greater role in defining the major lines of conflict in the party system in the mid-1990s and where the number of cross-cutting issue dimensions was higher (Markowski 1997).

The Stabilization of the New Cleavage Structure: 1994–98

In the 1994 election the MSZP won 54 per cent of the seats with just one third of the popular vote. On the one hand, they needed no coalition partners – on the other hand, they did not have to be afraid of having one. All factions of the party agreed that some coalition partners would be desirable so as to avoid being locked into an unfavourable position in an ex-communists vs. democrats discourse, and in order to broaden the base of support for a new government that had to tackle a mounting budget and trade deficit. The Socialists rejected the FKGP and MDF as potential coalition partners because of their radical nationalist leanings and anti-communism. On the other hand, the FIDESZ and the KDNP refused to co-operate in any way with the MSZP. This left the SZDSZ as the only possible coalition partner. The Free Democrats, with their credentials of anti-communist dissent and monetarist and pro-Western stance, seemed ideally suited to boost the incoming government's legitimacy at home and its credibility among investors, creditors and governments abroad. As coalition partners they might also serve as a handy scapegoat in the event that the Socialist government failed to live up to the expectations of its voters.

When joining the coalition, parts of the SZDSZ entertained high hopes of being able to ally with what they perceived as a like-minded liberal wing of the Socialist Party in overcoming any relics of the communist past as well

as the union leaders within the socialist party. Other Free Democrats felt that they might lose too much electoral support if they were to reject an offer of governmental responsibility for reasons that were not readily comprehensible for some of their supporters; in any case, they felt closer affinity with the Socialists than with the Christian–National parties relegated to the opposition benches.[8] Finally, a significant minority of SZDSZ-members left or withdrew from the party in the wake of the coalition with the MSZP.

Conventional wisdom has is that the economic policies of the socialist–liberal coalition were liberal rather than socialist, but in fact the SZDSZ had little visible and direct impact on economic policy making. Like the FKGP before them, the Free Democrats also learnt from bitter experience that even a pivotal coalition partner – not to speak about a numerically dispensable one like the SZDSZ between 1994 and 1998 – has a hard time imposing its will on the prime minister given the constitutional position of the latter. The letters of agreement between the two coalition partners – the MSZP and the SZDSZ – gave extensive veto rights to the junior coalition partner, but in practice they had little choice but to swallow whatever humiliation and embarrassment the socialist prime minister invented for them. Coupled with a financial scandal and the inevitable alienation of some anti-communist supporters from the party, the 1994–98 coalition turned into an electoral disaster for the Free Democrats.

Support for the Socialists also fluctuated, but by the time of the 1998 elections it seemed to be back at the May 1994 level. Although the introduction of the 1995 austerity programme – widely considered 'right-wing' in Hungary in terms of underlying policy preferences – caused serious image problems for the socialists, they eventually persuaded both internal opponents and a significant part of Hungarian society alike that the infamous Bokros-package named after the most unpopular finance minister in Hungarian history put the country on the course to sustainable and rapid economic growth.

In stark contrast to the period of MDF rule, economic, social welfare and foreign policy issues dominated the political agenda in 1994–98. Foreign ownership of land, the Basic Treaties with Slovakia and Romania, the sale of electricity and gas companies to foreign investors, and the 1995 austerity programme were among the most divisive issues. All parties of the opposition unequivocally accused the government of betraying strategic national interests, the impoverished middle class, as well as the Magyar minorities in neighbouring countries. The MSZP and the SZDSZ defined themselves in terms of valence issues, casting themselves as champions of sound macroeconomic policy, European integration and foreign direct investment. Thus the issue agenda had changed, but the major divisions remained rooted in conflicting attitudes towards the Christian-national ideology, with the government trying to present an attractive, pragmatic, mainstream contrast to the excesses of the former.

With the government coalition firmly in control of the legislative process, the opposition struggled to form a potentially winning electoral alliance for the upcoming elections. The elections of 1990 and 1994 had taught Hungarian party strategists that the single-member districts were crucial for the success of the political parties. *Ad hoc* alliances formed after the first round, they inferred, were unlikely to influence the voters of the eliminated candidates. This made FIDESZ, MDF and KDNP leaders conclude that they were well advised to form a stable electoral alliance in advance of the 1998 elections. Recognizing its new place in the party system FIDESZ accelerated its own ideological and organizational transformation from a liberal youth organization into a conservative people's party. This prompted the party to change its party label in 1995 – from the Federation of Young Democrats (FIDESZ) to Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Party (Fidesz-MPP).

The parliamentary presence beyond the 1998 elections of the MDF and a number of former KDNP-deputies was made possible thanks to a variety of electoral pacts with the once again popular Fidesz-MPP. MDF was to run joint candidates with Fidesz-MPP in about third of the single-member districts, so that it would have enough representatives in the next parliament to form its own caucus even if the MDF-lists fail to clear the five per cent threshold in the election. The Fidesz-MPP-leaning members of the KDNP, in their turn, simply left their party and scores of them ran as Fidesz-MPP candidates in the 1998 election.

The Move Towards a Two-Party System: 1998-2002

The simple ideological structure notwithstanding, the 1998 election brought the same number of parties into parliament as the elections of 1990 and 1994. But the divisions within the emerging two blocs were becoming much harder to interpret in ideological terms. On the left, the differences between MSZP and SZDSZ were either reduced to matters of style and personality, or seemed largely inconsequential given the limited governmental influence of the junior coalition partner. The right-wing bloc went through a similar process in a climate marked by considerable fractionalization.

Even in 1998, bringing the Fidesz-MPP and the FKGP into a pre-electoral alliance seemed impossible if for no other reason than because of their rivalry for the position as standard-bearer of the right. The MDF and KDNP also held a grudge against the FKGP leader ever since József Torgyán had led his party out of the embattled Antall-government in 1992. Alas, by 1998 the Fidesz-MPP was not yet an entirely credible partner for many on the right, who saw no genuine commitment to their Christian-conservative, somewhat government interventionist, and at least slightly nationalist policy agendas in a party of young men and women that once joined the Liberal International for other reasons than mere convenience. By 1998, the Fidesz-MPP was in fact advocating much the same policies as the MDF, but words were not always enough to totally eradicate memories of the secular, anti-

nationalist and economically liberal stances that the party had once taken.

Hence, electoral coalition building turned out to be an extremely divisive issue within the parties of the right. The Christian Democrats split – essentially into a social-protectionist wing that would have favoured a coalition with the FKGP to any alignment with the MDF and Fidesz-MPP, and into a group supporting the unification of the centre right. The first faction retained control of the party label while the second eventually run in the 1998 election as Fidesz-MPP candidates. Tellingly, MDF also split for no other visible reason than coalition preferences. In March 1996, a new party – the Hungarian Democratic People's Party (MDNP) – was formed by about half the MDF deputies who defected from their party exclusively because of their opposition to the perceived coalition preferences of the then newly elected party leader. Once again, the winner-take-all logic built into the electoral system and prime ministerial omnipotence within the ruling coalition powerfully focused party political wrestling on questions that could only contribute to conflict and decay in the small parties.

Hence, the 1998 election found the political right bitterly divided, and with the two core components of József Antall's coalition hopelessly below the five per cent threshold for parliamentary representation. The MIÉP, the extremist splinter of István Csurka, visibly thrived on the wave of discontent among right-wing voters with the socialist-liberal government and with the seeming inability of the mainstream right to stop the socialists from winning another term in office. But the MIÉP was not likely to gain parliamentary representation and remained unacceptable as a coalition partner; so, the swing in its favour only served to erode the prospects of the right even further. With the socialists back in the lead and FIDESZ-MPP constantly denying that they would be ready for a coalition with the FKGP, a change of government seemed unlikely.

It testifies to the remarkably deep divide between the liberals of the SZDSZ and the Fidesz-MPP – by now more of a conservative than a liberal party – that both parties ruled out the possibility of a coalition with one another. In fact, the impossibility of such a coalition had been taken as an absolute certainty ever since the 1994 elections. Not crossing the dividing line between relevant political camps in governmental coalition-making seemed a number one article of faith for nearly all concerned.

The first round of the 1998 election saw the socialists taking a convincing lead in terms of popular vote ahead of Fidesz-MPP, with the FKGP coming in third. However far apart the two latter parties may have been in terms of social background, they shared a commitment to replace the governing socialist-liberal coalition with a rightwing alternative. This paved the way for a last minute electoral alliance prior to the second round of voting, and eventually for a rightwing government coalition based on Fidesz-MPP, FKGP and MDF.

The extent of the voters' willingness to rally under just two flags was neatly demonstrated by the otherwise inexplicable, sudden, but absolutely

lasting drop in support for both FKGP and MDF in the polls that they suffered just as they were entering an initially rather popular government as perfectly respected partners. At the same time and equally inexplicably, SZDSZ also lost about three per cent in the polls, only to remain at an almost unchanging 4–5 per cent level up until the 2002 election. The MDF, the MIÉP and the SZDSZ experienced a similar loss of support in the wake of the elections of 2002, which confirmed the absolute dominance of Fidesz-MPP and MSZP in the electoral arena. One may be tempted to infer that some citizens only waited to see which party offers the best rate of exchange between their votes and the increased parliamentary presence for one of the two major camps, and they took the answer to this question from the most authentic source: the election results themselves.

Looking at it from a narrowly party political perspective, the 1998–2002 government had numerous major achievements. First, under Orbán's unusually firm leadership the cohesion and internal solidarity of the rightwing bloc increased to a previously unknown level. Unlike previous governments, his parliamentary majority missed no opportunity to stress what divided the government and opposition in policy terms, and to seek partisan advantage everywhere possible within the – arguably rather loosely understood – constraints set by relevant laws. The government and especially Fidesz-MPP delivered on major elements of the Christian-national agenda in both domestic and foreign policy in a way that greatly pleased even the MIÉP, which offered consistent and dependable legislative support for the government from the opposition benches. The government became far more self-assertive vis-à-vis foreign investors and Western allies, far more ready to accept political conflicts because of its support for Magyar minorities in neighbouring countries, and a lot more effective in promoting the comprehensive change of the guards in every sphere of life that the Christian-national right deemed crucial after 40 years of communism than it had been before. The bloc's ideological identity became rooted primarily in anti-communism and a self-assertive foreign policy emphasizing national interest. The friendly ties between the major Christian churches and the right became much firmer than under the Antall-government, but without alienating any one of Fidesz-MPP's secular supporters.

Secondly, Fidesz-MPP added new dimensions to its rightwing identity, linking it to some welfare state and economic issues that proved very popular with large parts of the electorate. The newly introduced subsidies and hefty tax-cuts for middle to high-income families raising children, as well as the reintroduction of tuition-free status for about half the university students did not impose too much of a burden on the budget, but neatly responded to the concerns of the Christian-national right about declining birth rates, especially among the non-Roma, and about limiting the domain of market allocation in society. At the same time, such measures contributed towards the efforts by Fidesz-MPP to create a more caring image for itself. Even more importantly, Orbán's government – undeniably helped by the

highly favourable economic trends that prevailed between 1997 and 2002 – eradicated an uncomfortable legacy of the Antall-government – the association of rightwing governments with incompetence and mishaps in the eyes of many voters. Except for some of the smallholder ministers, Orbán's government seemed to function and communicate more smoothly and efficiently than any government before.

Third, the four years in government practically destroyed the FKGP, probably without inflicting too much damage on the electoral prospects of the rightwing bloc as a whole. After passing the budget for the last two years of the Orbán-government in a single stroke in December 2000, the FKGP saw a number of financial scandals emerging around it – partly due to minor wrongdoings of its own ministers, but also because Fidesz-MPP was apparently feeding journalists with damaging information. By the time of the 2002 election, the seemingly untouchable FKGP-leader not only had to concede the state presidency to a Fidesz-MPP nominee, but also had to resign from his cabinet post. His position in the party was undermined, and the party itself fell in the polls from around seven to one per cent one and a half years before the election. Most of these losses apparently benefited Fidesz-MPP, which recaptured its leading position in the polls in September 2001.

Thus, Fidesz-MPP seemed be heading for the 2002 election with good prospects of winning re-election. An electoral pact was signed with the MDF that the two parties would run on a joint list in order to prevent waste of votes on a separate MDF-ticket that would most probably not pass the five per cent hurdle.

Meanwhile all the above factors also helped to integrate the socialist and liberal opposition. In 1999, the SZDSZ made a brief attempt to reduce the unbridgeable gap dividing them and Fidesz-MPP but without success. By the time of the 2002 election, there could be no doubt that the MSZP and SZDSZ would join forces for the second round of the election and continue as loyal coalition partners in government, if need be. As it turned out, four years of Orbán's determined leadership, and the opposition's successful allegations about giant proportions of sleaze in government managed to mobilize just enough additional support for the MSZP to topple the government – but only in alliance with SZDSZ, and only because the MIÉP narrowly missed the five per cent threshold.

With nearly 90 per cent of the legislative seats in the hands of the two major parties and the future electoral survival of the only smaller parties in the parliament apparently dependent on an alliance with one or another of the big two, the parliament elected in 2002 seems to have confirmed the drastic simplification of the party system since 1990. It is tempting to draw a parallel with Germany and Spain, where the adoption of the constructive vote of no-confidence was, despite a proportional electoral system, also followed by a spontaneous move towards something rather close to – though never identical with – a two-party system. To the extent that the

constructive vote of no-confidence creates a situation where the leader of the biggest parliamentary party is likely to end up as a prime minister who dominates the executive and is next to impossible to remove, this device appears to create a winner-takes-all logic paving the way for something closely resembling a two-party system. It is probably not far-fetched to speculate that under this rule it takes some particularly autonomous cleavages – such as the one dividing the Catalans from the rest of Spain – to sustain a small party in the long run.

Mass Electoral Alignments

Table 9.3 presents data on the determinants of mass electoral behaviour derived from four surveys with national random samples. The surveys were carried out in September 1992, a few weeks before the 1994 elections, and between the two rounds of the 1998 and 2002 elections. The analysis explores the social and attitudinal base of the parliamentary parties over time. For each relevant party, there is a separate dependent variable coded 1, if the respondent preferred that party, and 0 if he or she preferred another party. The MIÉP did not exist in 1992; the KDNP and the MDF did not run as separate parties in 2002; in 1994 the MIÉP received less than two per cent of the list votes, a predicament faced by the FKGP in 2002. At these points in time, the parties in question either did not get any votes at all or too few votes to be represented in the samples, and had to be left out of the analyses; thence the empty cells in the matrix.

The predictor variables were identical in all four surveys; they tap socio-demographic traits, religiosity, former communist party membership, and political attitudes. The regression coefficients measure the relative impact of each independent variable at each point in time on the preferences for each of the then relevant parties. Statistically significant coefficients are printed in bold. Since all the independent variables were standardized to have a zero mean and unit standard deviation, the coefficients are comparable across parties, years, and variables. The higher a coefficient in absolute numbers, the more distinctive the composition of the given party's electorate was in the given year, compared to all other voters together.

The first set of regression analyses pertain to the socialist party (dependent variable: MSZP). Throughout the entire period its most distinctive traits were the overrepresentation among their ranks of secular people and former communist party members, and the underrepresentation of religious and anti-communist voters. Once these factors are controlled for, socialist voters are no different than others in terms of social status and place of living. Most remarkably, leftwing economic policy attitudes only characterize MSZP-supporters in those elections when the party was in opposition, i.e. 1994 and 2002. By contrast, at times when memories of the party's performance in government were still fresh (1992 and 1998), the MSZP-supporters were, albeit insignificantly, more rightwing than all other

voters combined. In the same years the socialist voters also seem to have been considerably older than in 1994 and 2002 (see the always positive, but remarkably changing impact of age on MSZP-support). By 2002, finally, the socialist electorate acquired a characteristic that had previously been the hallmark of SZDSZ-supporters only – a significantly less nationalist attitude than the sample average.

The Free Democrats (SZDSZ) are strikingly similar to the socialists. Initially, the party had an anti-communist appeal, but not so any more after having formed a government coalition with the MSZP in 1994. At that point in time there was a large gap between SZDSZ- and MSZP-supporters in terms of age, economic policy attitudes, and religiosity – but by 2002 all these differences had become more or less muted (see the increasing similarity of the respective regression coefficients). By then, there were only few major differences remaining between the two centre-left parties. SZDSZ-voters stand out as more middle-class and urban as well as far more centrist in terms of religiosity and the pro- vs. anticommunist dimension than MSZP-supporters.

The transformation of the Fidesz-MPP electorate over time is even more dramatic. In 1992, at the peak of its popularity, FIDESZ stood out as a party of the young, the cosmopolitan and the secular. By 2002, the very same party had a thoroughly rightwing constituency with all the appropriate attributes of a conservative movement – anti-communism, religisity, nationalism, and strong pro-market sentiments. It barely differed from other parties in terms of age structure, and it interestingly enough had stronger support among lower- than among middle-class voters. This combination of characteristics was not previously observed amongst rightwing parties in Hungary. The MDF used to have a relatively elderly and middle-class, somewhat pro-nationalist and anti-communist, but overall not very rightwing constituency – see the insignificant impact of religiosity and economic policy attitudes on MDF-support. The only consistent and highly distinctive trait of the Christian Democratic (KDNP) constituency was its religiosity – with predictable consequences for its age composition –, without any other trait linking them to the broader rightwing. The small holders (FKGP), in their turn, appealed to an aging, lower class, rural, anti-communist and nationalist electorate.

As the MDF, the KDNP and the FKGP disappeared as relevant electoral alternatives, all the distinctive traits they showed separately were merged in the profile of the new Fidesz-MPP electorate. At the same time, anti-communism gained importance as a feature defining the Fidesz-MPP as well as the MIÉP. By the beginning of the 21st century, the small electoral niche that István Csurka's far-right MIÉP managed to carve out for itself was not all that different from the large bloc of voters supporting the Fidesz-MPP: it just displayed even more consistently anti-communist and especially nationalist attitudes than the centre-right electorate, plus a different demography – with men, the young and higher social status predominant on

the far-right.

Table 9.3: Logistic regression analyses of the determinants of party preferences in 4 CEU surveys: B-coefficients[9]

	1992 (N=749)	1994 (N=708)	1998 (N=979)	2002 (N=990)
Dependent variable: MSZP				
Gender (High=woman)	-0.16	0.05	**0.16**	**0.18**
Age (High=old)	**0.44**	0.05	**0.22**	0.05
Class (High=high income, high education)	0.07	-0.08	-0.05	-0.01
Rural (High=lives in rural area)	-0.20	0.07	0.03	0.09
Anti-communism (High=anticommunist attitudes; was not a communist party member before 1990)	**-0.64**	**-0.63**	**-0.84**	**-0.93**
Religiosity (High=frequent church-goer)	**-0.27**	**-0.45**	**-0.32**	**-0.35**
Nationalism (High=nationalist attitudes)	0.09	-0.01	-0.08	**-0.29**
Economic policy attitudes (High=left-wing)	-0.09	**0.26**	**-0.16**	**0.26**
Dependent variable: SZDSZ				
Gender (High=woman)	-0.19	-0.02	0.05	-0.08
Age (High=old)	-0.01	**-0.32**	**-0.43**	0.06
Class (High=high income, high education)	-0.16	**0.24**	**0.27**	**0.46**
Rural (High=lives in rural area)	**-0.30**	**-0.29**	**-0.28**	**-0.65**
Anti-communism (High=anticommunist attitudes; was not a communist party member before 1990)	0.14	**0.28**	-0.17	-0.10
Religiosity (High=frequent church-goer)	-0.21	-0.01	-0.03	-0.07
Nationalism (High=nationalist attitudes)	0.09	**-0.36**	**-0.47**	**-0.35**
Economic policy attitudes (High=left-wing)	0.01	**-0.28**	-0.09	0.06

(continued on next page)

Table 9.3 (continued)

	1992 (N=749)	1994 (N=708)	1998 (N=979)	2002 (N=990)
Dependent variable: FIDESZ (from 1995 Fidesz-MPP)				
Gender (High=woman)	0.15	0.18	**0.17**	0.01
Age (High=old)	**-0.88**	**-1.01**	**-0.49**	-0.02
Class (High=high income, high education)	-0.10	-0.05	-0.11	**-0.27**
Rural (High=lives in rural area)	-0.09	-0.05	-0.05	0.00
Anti-communism (High=anticommunist attitudes; was not a communist party member before 1990)	-0.02	0.19	**0.65**	**1.08**
Religiosity (High=frequent church-goer)	-0.16	-0.22	**0.16**	**0.36**
Nationalism (High=nationalist attitudes)	**-0.21**	0.24	0.10	**0.31**
Economic policy attitudes (High=left-wing)	-0.02	-0.16	-0.13	**-0.29**

Dependent variable: MDF

Gender (High=woman)	0.10	0.02	0.10
Age (High=old)	**0.52**	**0.39**	**0.73**
Class (High=high income, high education)	**0.27**	0.04	0.10
Rural (High=lives in rural area)	0.15	0.18	-0.23
Anti-communism (High=anticommunist attitudes; was not a communist party member before 1990)	**0.55**	**0.40**	0.36
Religiosity (High=frequent church-goer)	0.08	0.09	0.36
Nationalism (High=nationalist attitudes)	0.09	**0.28**	0.29
Economic policy attitudes (High=left-wing)	-0.03	-0.13	0.30

Dependent variable: KDNP

Gender (High=woman)	-0.30	0.04	0.08
Age (High=old)	**0.37**	0.36	0.43
Class (High=high income, high education)	-0.09	-0.27	0.54
Rural (High=lives in rural area)	-0.03	**-0.42**	0.14
Anti-communism (High=anticommunist attitudes; was not a communist party member before 1990)	0.14	0.12	0.38
Religiosity (High=frequent church-goer)	**1.17**	**1.15**	**1.12**
Nationalism (High=nationalist attitudes)	**0.49**	0.12	-0.02
Economic policy attitudes (High=left-wing)	-0.02	-0.10	-0.03

Dependent variable: FKGP

Gender (High=woman)	0.14	-0.24	**-0.33**
Age (High=old)	**0.42**	**0.49**	**0.41**
Class (High=high income, high education)	**-0.48**	**-0.53**	**-0.35**
Rural (High=lives in rural area)	**0.57**	0.21	**0.32**
Anti-communism (High=anticommunist attitudes; was not a communist party member before 1990)	**0.39**	**0.70**	**0.60**
Religiosity (High=frequent church-goer)	**0.10**	0.17	0.01
Nationalism (High=nationalist attitudes)	**0.14**	0.29	**0.22**
Economic policy attitudes (High=left-wing)	0.13	-0.17	0.14

(continued on next page)

Table 9.3 (continued)

	1992 (N=749)	1994 (N=708)	1998 (N=979)	2002 (N=990)
Dependent variable: MIÉP				
Gender (High=woman)			-0.28	**-0.62**
Age (High=old)			0.10	**-0.45**
Class (High=high income, high education)			**0.37**	**0.37**
Rural (High=lives in rural area)			0.16	0.23
Anti-communism (High=anticommunist attitudes; was not a communist party member before 1990)			**1.01**	**1.72**
Religiosity (High=frequent church-goer)			0.05	0.10
Nationalism (High=nationalist attitudes)			**1.01**	**1.52**
Economic policy attitudes (High=left-wing)			0.05	-0.23

All in all, the determinants of party preferences varied by party a lot more in the first half of the 1990s than the very nearly one-dimensional structure of party positions that emerged from 1993 would seem to suggest. This is probably why the six-party system was viable for so long. It was possible for the political parties to carve out socio-cultural niches for themselves, more or less independently of the day-to-day political agenda. Until 1998, the FIDESZ, KDNP, and FKGP, with their special appeal among the young, the religious, and the rural population, respectively, were cases in point, as was the large difference between the SZDSZ- and MSZP-supporters in 1994. By 2002, however, most of these differences disappeared – in some cases because the parties themselves disappeared, but also because of increasing attitudinal similarity as evidenced by shrinking distance between the MSZP and the SZDSZ, on the one hand, and between Fidesz-MPP and the MIÉP, on the other. Economic policy issues and social class played just a minor role in party competition whether on the elite or the mass level. Instead, non-economic issues defined party positions, inter-party distances and electoral behaviour. Economic conditions did have an impact on the popularity of government parties, but since performance evaluations remained unrelated to preferences with respect to divisive policy issues and social group identities, they could not translate into a stable socio-economically defined left–right cleavage. As Table 9.3 and previous studies (cf. Markowski and Tóka 1995; Tóka 1995a) suggest, MSZP-support in 1993–94 was to some extent dependent on economic policy attitudes. The more bitter a voter was about market reforms, the more likely he or she was to support the Socialist Party. Yet after winning the 1994 elections, the MSZP decided to form a coalition government with the Free Democrats, the most pro-market formation of all Hungarian parties at the time, since that party was closer to the MSZP than the Christian-national right on non-economic issues. Along with the introduction of a harsh economic austerity programme in 1995, this move served to reinforce the dominance of cultural issues in the determination of partisan attitudes in Hungary. Socio-economic left-right issues either divide Hungarian parties within the two major blocs, or differentiate between supporters of incumbents and opposition – at any rate without having any consistent relationship with the left-right position of the parties.

Table 9.4: Pairwise correlations between four attitudinal predictors of vote choice: 1992 data above, and 2002 data below the diagonal line[10]

	Anti-communism	Religiosity	Nationalism	Economic policy
Anti-communism (High=anticommunist attitudes; was not a communist party member before 1990)		**.18**	-.03	.03
Religiosity (High=frequent church-goer)	**.12**		.01	-.01

Nationalism (High=nationalist attitudes)	-.03	**.09**		**.21**
Economic policy attitudes (High=left-wing)	**-.10**	.03	**.14**	

It is very instructive to consider how attitudes regarding economic policy, religion, anti-communism and nationalism were correlated among citizens in the period examined. Three sets of observations are worth making about the data displayed in Table 9.4. First, all the pair-wise correlations between these attitudes were fairly weak throughout the entire period. Some potentially interesting changes over time emerge from the data, but they are statistically insignificant except that by 2002, anti-communism became negatively correlated with economic leftism. Hence, we can hardly argue that the citizen-level links between these issue dimensions determined how they came to be connected to each other by the party system. Rather, it was the parties, and not the structure of these cleavages at the social grassroots, that created strong links between positions on some of the four dimensions, for instance by linking the cause of religion unequivocally to the nationalist and anti-communist causes. In terms of citizens' attitudes, the party space may well have remained multidimensional, instead of being reduced to a single axis of ideological differentiation among the parties.

Secondly, the correlations between economic policy attitudes on the one hand, and attitudes on the three non-economic issue dimensions on the other were, on the whole, no weaker than the correlations among positions on the three non-economic issue dimensions. Hence, it was once again the parties, and not some naturally given linkage between these dimensions among citizens that bundled the three non-economic issue dimensions and separated them from the economic left-right dimension. Third, while the most obvious staple of party ideologies became the link between nationalist, pro-church, and anti-communist stances, among citizens anti-communism has not been connected to nationalism at all, and even the weak positive correlation between pro-church and nationalist attitudes may have declined over time. Thus, neither the one-dimensional structure of the party system (coalition alternatives and so forth) at the beginning of the 21st century, nor its disconnection from the socio-economic left-right cleavage can be explained in terms of an underlying cleavage structure.

Rather, it seems that the reduction in the number of parties led to the simplification of the structure of electorally relevant ideological divisions into a single left-right dimension, and that elite consensus – imperfect and qualified, but no less real – excluded economic left-right issues as well as major constitutional and foreign policy issues from becoming consistently and persistently linked to this emerging, non-economic left-right divide. Indeed, all parties kept endorsing and supporting democracy, even though they were not entirely certain that the other parties would comply with the democratic rules of the game.[11] No major political institutional change occurred at the national level after 1990.[12] A broad commitment to market, military and legal reforms, with an eye to integration into the European Union and NATO was also shared by the six main parties and the business,

media and academic establishments.[13] This consensus made the major parties extremely wary of political instability and mass mobilization on socio-economic issues in the early years (cf. Greskovits 1998), and allowed for very effective sanctions against any deviants. Several major parties did, at one point or another, violate this gentlemen's agreement, but they backed down very quickly after the invariably unfavourable reception of such moves in the press and among the other parties.

This consensus was not perfect, and major cracks appeared on its surface from the mid-1990s onwards, first regarding the merits of the 1995 economic austerity programme and then increasingly about major foreign policy issues as well. Yet the relatively minor disagreements over the importance of joining the EU and NATO, and the considerably wider, but ideologically not much more articulate inter-party dissent on economic policies did not serve as major building blocs of party identities. Previous studies of party elites by Herbert Kitschelt *et al.* (1999) showed that party positions on economic issues in Hungary were less polarized, more diffuse, and less crucial for gauging inter-party ideological distances than in the Czech Republic and Poland. Alas, analyses of mass electoral behaviour repeatedly found that social status and class were less strongly correlated with party preferences in Hungary than in most other East Central European and a number of Western democracies (Evans and Whitefield 1996; Tóka 1996).

As a further confirmation of these observations, Table 9.5 presents bivariate statistics on the impact of various attitudes on party preferences in some East European countries in late 1995. The important finding for the present chapter is that attitudes on foreign and economic policy issues apparently did not become as important correlates of party preferences in Hungary as in most other East European countries.

Because party preference (i.e. which party the respondent would vote if there were an election) is not a metric scale but a nominal variable, the so-called uncertainty coefficient was used here to measure how well party choice can be predicted on the basis of responses to the three attitude questions. This coefficient tends to have very small numerical values even in the case of relatively strong relationships. For instance, using this measure the impact of a social class variable (coded 1 for blue-collar workers and 0 otherwise) on party preference was just .04 in Great Britain in 1990 (see Tóka 1996, 116).

Table 9.5: The impact of attitudes towards the market, the EU and NATO on party preferences in November 1995 (Uncertainty coefficient)[14]

	Uncertainty coefficient		
	Market	*EU*	*NATO*
Albania	.071		
Armenia	.052		
Belarus	.044		

Bulgaria	.081	.057	.075
Croatia	.009		
Czech Republic	.059	.053	.079
Slovakia	.030	.019	.015
Estonia	.027	.017	.019
Hungary	.017	.015	.012
Latvia	.012	.011	.025
Lithuania	.031	.017	.032
Macedonia	.055		
Poland	.032	.013	.015
Romania	.025	.022	.021
Russia	.040		
Slovenia	.015	.022	.013
Ukraine	.053		
Georgia	.021		
Kazakhstan	.031		

The data come from the *Central and Eastern Eurobarometer* No. 6, in which the respondents in the Eastern European countries (then) aspiring for EU and NATO membership were asked how they would vote in a referendum on the entry of their country into these organizations. The responses to these two questions were apparently much-much better predictors of party preference in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic than elsewhere. The explanation seems to be easy: these are the two countries among the nine in the analysis where the (former) communist parties were the least reformed and remained relatively orthodox during and after the transition to democracy. Poland, Estonia, and Hungary, with their thoroughly transformed post-communist parties were the other extreme. There, the issues of NATO and EU membership hardly differentiated between the supporters of the different parties.

A more complicated picture emerges when we move to the approval of a free market economy. This item predicted voting behaviour much better in the unlikely group of Albania, Armenia, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Macedonia than elsewhere. The cross-national differences are now less easily explained than those on foreign policy issues. It is true that the attitude in question seems to have had the least to do with voting behaviour in Croatia, Latvia, Slovenia, and Hungary, and none of these countries had significant orthodox communist parties at the time. But the Russian and Ukrainian successor parties of the CPSU were surely ideologically more orthodox formations than the Macedonian, Armenian, and Albanian post-communist parties. Yet, attitudes towards the market did not appear to have had greater impact on party preferences in 1995 in Russia and Ukraine than south of the Balkan and Caucasus mountains.

At first sight, the same comparison seems to defy Peter Katzenstein's ingenious proposal that small countries, because of their greater openness to trade, are more constrained in their economic policy choices than big countries. Thus, adversarial party competition on economic issues is more

likely to appear in big countries, and corporatist institutions in small countries (Katzenstein 1985). Obviously, Albania, Macedonia, and Armenia are small even in comparison to Hungary. Note, however, that their openness to trade may well have been lower in critical periods of their recent political development than that of Hungary, Slovenia and the Baltic states – indeed lower than that of Russia and Ukraine. The reasons are Albania's protracted policy of autarchy under Enver Hoxha, and the trade blockade against Macedonia and Armenia by some of their neighbours in the 1990s, coupled with ongoing warfare in neighbouring territories.

Formal testing of the hypothesis is difficult given the difficulties when it comes to evaluating the amount of unregistered foreign trade – i.e. smuggling – across some borders in Eastern Europe. But it seems clear enough that Hungarian party competition in the mid-1990s had little use for some traditional left–right issues related to foreign and economic policy. This, in turn, can probably be explained by two, interrelated factors: the reformist attitude of the former communist party and the high level of trade openness of the country, especially towards Western Europe.

Conclusions

By now it is conventional wisdom that East European cleavage structures are weak by default. Strong cleavage mobilization presumes organizational carriers and collective identities, over and above the political parties themselves. After decades of systematic destruction and officially encouraged erosion of social pluralism, the post-communist countries may have very little in the way of cleavage politics. Ethnicity may at times be an exception, as ethno-linguistic identities were occasionally promoted by the Soviet-type regimes, but in all other respects East European party politics is likely to be even more fluid than what is usual in new democracies. Established parties will split and decline, and new ones will emerge out of the blue with an astonishing regularity, as politicians will – quite rightly – expect that voters have only the shallowest of loyalties to the parties they supported previously (Mair 1996).

Indeed, aggregate volatility (i.e. the percentage of the vote changing hands between different parties from one election to another) [15] seems to be much higher all over East Central Europe than in Italy and Germany after the Second World War, or in Spain, Portugal and Greece in the 1970s and early 1980s (Tóka 1997).[16] The 28.3 per cent net volatility between the 1990 and 1994 Hungarian elections was three and a half times higher than the West European average between 1885 and 1985, and comparable to the very highest West European figures registered in that period, such as the 32 and 27 per cent figures produced by the first elections in Weimar Germany.[17] Between 1994 and 1998, volatility increased further yet to 33.6 per cent, and remained at 22 per cent even between the third and fourth free elections – despite any major change in the identity or ideological position

of the relevant parties since 1993–94.

In 1990 as well as in 1994, the incumbent government suffered a humiliating defeat, with the opposition winning, respectively, over 90 and over 80 per cent of the seats in the incoming parliament (*Appendix 9.1*). Even in 1998 and 2002, when Hungarian economic and income growth nearly topped European league tables, parliamentary elections produced wholesale alternations of government and opposition. And throughout at least the first six-seven years of the 1990s, comparative surveys repeatedly found Hungarians among the economically and politically most dissatisfied nations in Europe – even if not as wary of the transformation process as the peoples of Belarus, Bulgaria, Russia and Ukraine (cf. *Table 8.1* in the first edition of this volume).

Overall political stability in Hungary probably benefited from the fact that the major issues of economic transformation became a matter of partisan controversy only to a limited extent. In this sense, the weakness of this cleavage promoted political stability. However, the dearth of party competition on divisive economic issues probably contributed to the high volatility in the party and electoral arena. Indeed, an analysis of Polish, Czech, Slovak and Hungarian data show that the less strongly related party preference is to attitudes on persistent and salient issues, the easier it is for voters to move from one party to another (Tóka 1998).

Yet in an East European comparison the Hungarian party system was certainly not among the least stable in terms of electoral volatility[18] – nearly the same six parties won parliamentary representation in each of three elections in the 1990s. Only the smallest of the six was replaced in 1998 by a splinter formation from another parliamentary party. In the 2002 election two more relatively sectional parties dropped out of parliament, but once again no new formation could pass the threshold of parliamentary representation. The absence of disruption and upheaval in other elements of the political system – the constitution and the electoral system have hardly been altered since the end of the democratic transition - presumably helped stabilizing the party system. But this cannot be a sufficient explanation for the steady progress of party system consolidation, as the absence of major changes in the institutional framework was far less unusual in the post-communist world than party-political stability. Rather, the following factors can be emphasized.

First, the Opposition Roundtable (EKA) had dissolved itself by 1990 instead of remaining a heterogeneous and oversized electoral alliance contesting the first elections on its own, doomed to break-up like the anti-communist umbrella organizations in all other countries covered in this volume. Hungary was thus ‘spared’ at least one phase of organizational transformation which nearly all other East European countries went through when their initial pro-democratic popular fronts gradually disintegrated.

Second, the parties of the Opposition Roundtable gained early influence through the national roundtable talks with the communist establishment as

well as a monopoly of representing the anti-regime opinion in the process of transition. Thus, they attracted the best human, organizational and material resources available for competitive party politics in Hungary in 1989-90. This gave them considerable advantage over other parties founded only after spring of 1989.

Third, Hungary does have a politically mobilized cleavage line that has some hold over the electorate and the party elites. This cleavage divides society into two camps: a socially conservative, religious, somewhat nationalist, and anti-communist camp, on the one hand, and, on the other, a secular, morally permissive and generally less nationalist camp. The former camp wishes to see undone the historical injustices that occurred under communism. The latter camp – at the core of which are supporters of the former communist regime and those who appreciate that that regime in some ways promoted modernization and secularization – would prefer to draw a thick line between past and present. This is what left-right came to mean in Hungarian political parlance in the 1990s.

But all this was still not enough to safeguard the electoral viability of all the parties of the EKA,[19] or to prevent the entry of newcomers into the party arena. In the 1994 election campaign, two outsiders – the Agrarian Alliance (ASZ) and the Republic Party (KP) – showed evidence of having electorally attractive leaders, financial resources and grass-root organizations that should have been sufficient for gaining parliamentary representation – provided that their message to the voters was right. Yet they failed, probably because they lacked a truly unique ideological position within the party system. In 2002, the Centre Party (ÖMC) similarly failed to make it to parliament with its middle-of-the road and technocratic appeal. This was probably due to the inability of these parties to step out of the nearly one-dimensional simplicity of the emerging cleavage structure, in which their position was difficult to distinguish from those of the Socialists (MSZP) and Free Democrats (SZDSZ). In other words, given the already high number of parliamentary parties, Hungary's relatively simple cleavage structure acted as a gatekeeper against the entry of new parties.

At the same time, the simplicity of the cleavage structure may have undermined the six-party system as it existed between 1990 and 1997. At the very least, the one-dimensional party system had something to do with the fact that for a long time it seemed very difficult to distinguish between the Young Democrats (FIDESZ) and the Free Democrats (SZDSZ), and between the Christian Democrats (KDNP) and the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) in ideological terms. The ideological reorientation of FIDESZ in 1993–94 and of the KDNP in 1995–96 was directly linked to their failure to carve out unique ideological niches for themselves. This ideological shift contributed – at least indirectly and through its impact on opinion-makers – to the free-fall of these two parties in the public opinion polls of the respective periods. Thus, the tendency for some parties to engage in extremely risky, almost suicidal ideological repositioning seems to have

derived from the fact that it was rather hard to define distinctive and electorally viable ideological positions for as many as six parties in the largely one-dimensional ideological space of the post-1993 Hungarian party system. If so, then the dearth of party polarization on economic issues did indeed undermine the relatively fragmented multiparty system that existed between 1990 and 1997.

The logic of the electoral system surely contributed to the simplification of the party scene. Having seen and experienced the electoral system at work in previous elections, more and more party leaders drew the conclusion that in election campaigns the declared coalition preferences were at least as important as policy platforms. In 1994–97, this was to cause dramatic factional fights over the alternative 1998 electoral alliances within the MDF and KDNP. The SZDSZ found itself in a similar dilemma concerning prospective electoral pacts with the MSZP. The incentives stemming from the majoritarian features of the institutional framework – e.g. the electoral system, the strong position of the Prime Minister *vis-a-vis* the cabinet, the constructive vote of no-confidence, and the relative absence of checks and balances – made parties strongly dependent on their coalition preferences and forced them to declare them well in advance of an election. The majoritarian features of the electoral system also made it difficult to reconcile six unique ideological niches with the limited variety of conceivable coalition set-ups.

However, it would be wrong to give too much credit to the Hungarian electoral system for the fact that by 2002 the parliament became nearly entirely two-party, with the electoral prospect of the remaining smaller parties being very doubtful. The PR element numerically dominates in this mixed system, and even majoritarian runoff and alternative vote systems – which are the closest parallel to the electoral formula employed in Hungarian single-member districts – tend to produce a more fragmented party system than what emerged in Hungary by the beginning of the 21st century (cf. Lijphart 1994, 104–5). Besides, the comparative evidence from post-communist countries suggests that mixed systems tend to increase the number of parties above the level that we would predict merely by averaging the expected effect of their majoritarian and PR components (Moser 1999). In contrast, by 2002 the number of effective parties in Hungary fell below what we would expect in a pure majoritarian-runoff system.

Looking for other explanations of the very low number of parties – and the consequently very simple cleavage structure – in Hungary around the millennium, we may be struck by the obvious parallel with party system development in Germany and Spain after the adoption of the constructive vote of no-confidence. It would seem that this institutional device, which is meant to increase executive stability in parliamentary systems, does indeed have a remarkable historical record of preventing successful (and even unsuccessful) votes of no-confidence in the prime minister. Several

behavioural consequences follow suit. Likely governmental coalitions become fairly well clarified in advance of elections, and the ticket leader of the biggest party in the winning coalition invariably becomes the chief executive. Enjoying, *de facto*, an almost fixed term of office, the prime minister becomes hugely dominant vis-à-vis minor coalition partners unless the latter can credibly threaten to cause an alternation of government and opposition by defecting from the coalition in the next election. As a result, minor parties can easily lose credibility on the issues that distinguish them from their big brother coalition partners, and prospective political entrepreneurs, the media and the voters all obtain strong incentives to focus their attention on the major parties in the feasible governmental coalitions. At the end of the day, the dynamics of *Kanzlerdemokratie* may, after all, be a stronger determinant of party systems and cleavage structures than the often discussed but too often inconsequential features of electoral system design.

It would certainly be wrong to trace the simplicity of the one-dimensional cleavage structure merely to the codified institutional framework. As we saw above, the weak articulation of the socio-economic left-right cleavage in Hungary can plausibly be explained with structural factors and the historical path (i.e. the reformist heritage of the Hungarian ex-communists). Alas, one could speculate that the limited political imagination of Hungarian political entrepreneurs may have been responsible for the nearly perfect overlap between the nationalist, anti-communist and religious issue dimensions at the level of party profiles – despite the absence of such an overlap at the level of citizens' attitudes. Yet the more modest claim that the institutions squeezed the cleavages remains highly plausible.

P.S. in 2006: I guess what the last sentence above wanted to say was this: "Yet the more parsimonious claim that the institutions squeezed the cleavages probably remains the best one-line summary of party system development in Hungary between 1990 and 2002."

Acronyms used in the text

ASZ	Agrarian Alliance
EKA	Opposition Roundtable
FIDESZ	Federation of Young Democrats
FIDESZ-MPP	Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Party
FKGP	Independent Smallholders Party
KDNP	Christian Democratic People's Party
KP	Republic Party
MDF	Hungarian Democratic Forum
MDNP	Hungarian Democratic People's Party
MIÉP	Party of Hungarian Justice and Life
MNP	Hungarian People's Party
MSZDP	Social Democratic Party of Hungary
MSZMP	Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party

MSZP	Hungarian Socialist Party
ÖMC	Alliance for Hungary – Centre Party
SZDSZ	Alliance of Free Democrats

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NOTES

1. For 1990 roll-call data, cf. Hanyecz and Perger (1991).
2. For pre-election analyses of election programmes, cf. Urbán (1990) and Kovács and Tóth (1990).
3. The treaty came under fire from the far right because of a clause confirming that Hungary had no claims on Ukrainian territory. The treaty was nevertheless ratified with unanimous support from the opposition, but in order to avoid further defections the government had to pledge itself not to sign any such treaty with other neighbours for the duration of its term.
4. The dominant faction within the FIDESZ anticipated the SZDSZ-leaning elements to leave the party as a result of the new strategy. Indeed, former vice-president Fodor ended up as the number two candidate on the SZDSZ national list in 1994 and as one of the three SZDSZ ministers of Gyula Horn's first government. This, however, was a welcome rather than an unwanted by-product of the new strategy: e.g., Fodor was the only potentially serious challenger of party leader Viktor Orbán in leadership races and could well have unseated the latter after the 1994 election fiasco if he had not already left the party.
5. See the Gallup reports in *Magyar Nemzet* (30 May 1994) and *Pesti Hírlap* (1 June 1994); also Tóka (1995a).
6. The responses were recoded as explained in the text. N=129. *Source:* Four country survey of middle level party elites by Herbert Kitschelt and associates, Spring 1994, Durham, NC, Duke University.
7. The responses were recoded as explained in the text. N=129. Source: Four country survey of middle level party elites by Herbert Kitschelt and associates, Spring 1994, Durham, NC, Duke University.
8. For a different assessment, cf. Körösényi (1995).
9. Parameters significant at the .05 level are printed in bold. The regression constants are not reproduced. The table entries are logistic regression coefficients, showing the net impact of each independent variable on party choice when all other variables in the equation are controlled for. Dependent variables are coded one if the respondent named the party in question as his or her preferred choice 'if there were an election next Sunday' in 1992 and 1994, and the party that he or she voted for on the list ballot in 1998 and 2002, and zero if she or he named another party. Respondents without party preference in 1992 and 1994 and non-voters in 1998 and 2002 are excluded from the analysis.
The independent variables in the analysis are:
GENDER: a dichotomous variable, standardized to mean zero and unit standard deviation, with higher values indicating women and lower values men.
AGE: year of birth (last two digits), standardized to mean zero and unit standard deviation.
CLASS: the standardized sum of three standardized variables, two of which measured education (less than primary or more; and completed university or not) and the logarithm of monthly net family income divided by the size of the household.
RURAL: place of residence (1=village; 0=town), standardized.
ECONOMIC POLICY ATTITUDES: the standardized sum of the standardized form of three variables, measuring the importance attached to three political goals on a 9-point scale. The goals were: Increase pensions and social benefits (CEU variable name: Q18L); Help the development of private enterprises and a free market economy in Hungary (Q18B); Speed up privatization of state-owned companies (Q18N). Because of their direction, the last two items entered the index creation with a

negative sign, so that high values on the index stand for traditionally understood left-wing economic attitudes.

ANTI-COMMUNISM: the standardized sum of two standardized variables, one recording if the respondent was a member of the former communist party some time before 1990, and the other recording answers to a question (CEU variable name: Q18Q) about how important the respondent thinks it is to 'remove former communist party members from positions of influence', standardized and adjusted to response set effects through subtracting the mean rating of the importance of eight different political goals from the raw score on the original question.

RELIGIOSITY: the standardized sum of two standardized variables measuring frequency of church attendance (weekly church attendance or less; some church attendance or none).

NATIONALISM: answers to a question (CEU variable name: Q18K) about how important the respondent thinks it is to 'strengthen national feelings', standardized and adjusted to response set effects through subtracting the mean rating of the importance of eight different political goals from the raw score on the original question. *Source*: CEU (1992–).

10. The table entries are Pearson-correlations, with parameters significant at the .05 level (two-tailed) printed in bold. Respondents without party preference in 1992 and non-voters in 2002 are excluded from the analysis. The sources, the construction of the variables and the number of cases are the same as in Table 9.3.

11. Searching for the roots and motivation of this consensus is well beyond the scope of this paper.

12. Characteristic is the example of election law. Only the legal threshold for party lists winning mandates was raised from 4 to 5 per cent of the list votes. Otherwise, even the constituency boundaries have remained unchanged since 1990.

13. The orthodox communist MSZMP and the radical nationalist MIÉP, which had a small parliamentary representation in 1993–94, were exceptions to this.

14. The wording of the questions and the coding of the responses for this analysis were as follows: *Market*: 'Do you personally feel that the creation of a free market economy, that is one largely free from state control, is right or wrong for [OUR COUNTRY'S] future?' (1=right, 2=wrong, 3=do not know, no answer). *EU:* 'If there were to be a referendum tomorrow on the question of [OUR COUNTRY'S] membership in the European Union, would you personally vote for or against membership?' (1=for, 2=against, 3=do not know, no answer) NATO: 'If there were to be a referendum tomorrow on the question of [OUR COUNTRY'S] membership in NATO, would you personally vote for or against membership?' (1=for, 2=against, 3=do not know, no answer) All coefficients are significant at least at the .01 level. Respondents who were not entitled to vote in their country of residence are excluded.

15. More precisely, aggregate level or net volatility means half the sum of the absolute percentage differences between the votes received by each party in two consecutive elections. Suppose that there are three parties contesting the first of two elections, each receiving 33.3 per cent of the vote. If one of them goes out of business by the time of the next election, and the remaining two receive 60 and 40 per cent of the vote, respectively, then the total volatility between the two elections was (33.3+|33.3-60|+|33.3-40|)/2=(33.3+26.7+6.7)/2= 33.3 per cent.

16. Only a few – though certainly not all – elections in Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, and Romania might have been exceptions.

17. On the West European figures for 1885–1985, cf. Bartolini and Mair (1990).

18. The Baltic states, Poland and Russia, had substantially higher volatility in their legislative elections in the 1990s (cf. Tóka 1997; 1998).

19. The Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Society (BZSBT) did not even contest any election on its own, and two other member organizations, the Hungarian People's Party (MNP) and the Social Democratic Party (MSZDP) dismally failed to win parliamentary representation in 1990.

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APPENDIX 9.1: ELECTORAL RESULTS

Distribution of list votes in Hungarian parliamentary elections, 1990–2002

	1990, %	*1994, %*	*1998, %*	*2002, %*
Successor parties to MSZMP:				
Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP)	10.89	32.99	32.89	42.05
Workers' Party (MP; MSZMP in 1990)	3.68	3.19	3.95	2.16
Patriotic Electoral Alliance (HVK)	1.87	-	-	-
Other left-wing parties:				
Social Democratic P. of Hungary (MSZDP)	3.55	0.95	0.12	-
Szociáldemokrata Párt (SZDP)	-	-	-	0.02
Agrarian Alliance (ASZ)	3.13	2.10	-	-
H. Cooperative and Agrarian P. (MSZAP)	0.10	-	-	-
New Left Party (UB)	-	-	-	0.06
Liberal parties:				
Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ)	21.39	19.74	7.57	5.57
Fidesz (FIDESZ, FIDESZ-MPP in 1998)	8.95	7.02	29.45	-
Republic Party (KP)	-	2.55	-	-
P. of Entrepreneurs (VP; LPSZ-VP in 1994)	1.89	0.62	0.09	-
United P. of H. Entrepreneurs (MVEP)	-	-	-	0.01
Christian-conservative parties:				
Joint list of Fidesz-MPP and MDF	-	-	-	41.07
Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF)	24.73	11.74	2.80	-
Christian Dem. People's P. (KDNP)	6.46	7.03	2.31	-
Christian Coalition of Somogy (SKK)	0.12	-	-	-
Hungarian Dem. People's P. (MDNP)	-	-	1.34	-
Alliance for Hungary – Centre P. (ÖMC)	-	-	-	3.90
Independent Hungarian Dem. P. (FMDP)	0.06	-	-	-
FKGP and its splinter groups				
Independent Smallholders Party (FKGP)	11.73	8.82	13.14	0.75
National Smallholders Party (NKGP)	0.20	-	-	-
United Smallholders Party (EKGP)	-	0.82	-	-
'Reconciliation' Independent Smallholders P. (KFKGP)	-	0.11	-	-
Conservative Party (KP)	-	0.04	-	-
New Alliance (USZ)	-	-	0.49	-
'Reform' Smallholders Party (RKGP)	-	-	-	0.02
Smallholders P. – The Party of the Smallholders Alliance (KGPKGSZP)	-	-	-	0.01
Nationalist parties:				
Hungarian Independence Party (MFP)	0.04	-	-	-
Hungarian People's Party (MNP)	0.75	-	-	-
Freedom Party (SZP)	0.06	-	-	-
Market Party (PP)	-	0.01	-	-

National Democratic Alliance (NDSZ)	-	0.52	-	-
P. of Hungarian Justice and Life (MIÉP)	-	1.59	5.47	4.37
Miscallenous other parties:				
Green Party of Hungary (MZP)	0.36	0.16	0.05	-
Green Alternative (ZA)	-	0.02	-	-
Together for Hungary Union (EMU)	-	-	0.19	-
Forum of Nationalities (NF)	-	-	0.13	-
Roma Party of Hungary (MRP)	-	-	-	0.01

Abbreviations: Dem=Democratic; H=Hungarian; P=Party.

Sources: 'Az Országos Választási Bizottság jelentése (Report of the National Election Committee)', *Magyar Közlöny,* 13 May 1990; 'Az Országos Választási Bizottság jelentése (Report of the National Election Committee)', *Magyar Közlöny,* 24 June 1994; 'Az Országos Választási Bizottság jelentése (Report of the National Election Committee)', *Magyar Közlöny,* 4 June 1998; 'Az Országos Választási Bizottság jelentése (Report of the National Election Committee)', 4 May 2002, posted at http://www.election.hu/ and accessed on 6 May 2002.

Distribution of seats in Hungarian parliamentary elections, 1990–2002

	1990	*1994*	*1998*	*2002*
FIDESZ	22 (5.7%)	20 (5.2%)	**148 (38.3%)**	164 (42.5%)
FKGP	**44 (11.4%)**	26 (6.7%)	**48 (12.4%)**	**-** (0.0%)
KDNP	**21 (5.4%)**	22 (5.7%)	**-** (0.0%)	**-** (0.0%)
MDF	**164 (42.5%)**	38 (9.8%)	**17 (4.4%)**	24 (6.2%)
MIÉP	- (0.0%)	- (0.0%)	14 (3.6%)	- (0.0%)
MSZP	33 (8.5%)	**209 (54.1%)**	134 (34.7%)	**178 (46.1%)**
SZDSZ	94 (24.4%)	**70 (18.1%)**	24 (6.2%)	**20 (5.2%)**
independents	6 (1.6%)	- (0.0%)	1 (0.3%)	- (0.0%)
others	2 (0.5%)	1 (0.3%)	- (0.0%)	- (0.0%)

Note: The majorities of the incoming governments are printed in bold. Deputies elected in single-member districts as joint candidates of more than one party are counted according to the parliamentary party that they joined at the first session of the respective parliament, including two ASZ-candidates (one each in 1990 and 1994, respectively) who joined SZDSZ in exchange for receiving SZDSZ-endorsement in the second round of the election.
Sources: as above plus press reports about the first session of each parliament.

Turnout in Hungarian parliamentary elections (including invalid and blank votes), 1990–2002

Year	*1st round, %*	*2nd round, %*
1990	65.1	45.5
1994	68.9	55.1
1998	56.3	57.0
2002	70.5	73.5

Note: In 1990, the turnout in the voting for party lists was 0.1 higher than in the single-member districts, because in that election voters casting their ballot outside of their home constituency were only allowed to vote for regional party lists, but not for the candidates standing in the single-member districts. The table reports the higher of the two figures.

Sources: As above.

APPENDIX 9.2: GOVERNMENT COMPOSITION

Partisan composition of governments and the cause of their termination, 1989–1998

December 1988–23 May 1990
Premier: Miklós Németh
Government parties: MSZMP until October 1989, thereafter MSZP
Overwhelming but not entirely quantifiable and dependable legislative support from virtually all deputies elected in the 1985 non-competitive elections.
Cause of termination: March–April 1990 general elections.

23 May 1990–21 February 1992
Premier: József Antall
Government parties: MDF, KDNP, FKGP
Cause of termination: the FKGP left the coalition, though 35 FKGP deputies (eventually expelled from the party) continued to support the government. Since the Premier did not resign and no no-confidence motion was passed by the Parliament, from the point of view Hungarian constitutional law no change of government occurred.

21 February 1992–21 December 1993
Premier: József Antall
Government parties: MDF, KDNP, and various splinter groups from FKGP; in June 1993 the Hungarian Justice National Politics Group and from July 1993 the MIÉP also supported the government in the legislature
Cause of termination: József Antall died on 12 December 1993, and a new Prime Minister had to be elected.

21 December 1993–15 July 1994
Premier: Péter Boross
Government parties: MDF, KDNP, EKGP; legislative support from the MIÉP caucus
Cause of termination: May 1994 general elections.

15 July 1994–8 July 1998
Premier: Gyula Horn
Government parties: MSZP, SZDSZ
Cause of termination: May 1998 general elections.

8 July 1998–27 May 2002
Premier: Viktor Orbán
Government parties: Fidesz-MPP, FKGP, MDF
Cause of termination: April 2002 general elections.

27 May 2002–
Premier: Péter Medgyessy
Government parties: MSZP, SZDSZ

APPENDIX 9.3: THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

The rules of pertaining to parliamentary elections are laid down in Act. No. XXXIV of 1989, slightly amended in 1994 and 1997 as indicated below. All Hungarian citizens over 18 years of age are eligible to stand as candidate and vote in parliamentary elections, with the exception of citizens who have no domicile in Hungary, are abroad on the day of the given election, are under guardianship, have been banned from public affairs, or are serving a sentence of imprisonment or under forced medical treatment ordered in the course of a criminal procedure. Further rules regarding the campaign etc. are formulated by the National Election Committee, which also supervises the elections and announces the election results. The composition of the National Election Committee is based on parity among the parties. The respective municipal council elect the secretary and two members of the local returning boards, and each party and each independent candidate running in the district can delegate one additional member.

Every voter may cast two votes: for a candidate in a single-member district (henceforth SMD) and for a regional party list in a multi-member constituency. If the turnout remains below 50 per cent either in a regional district (henceforth RD) or in an SMD, the result is invalid and the election has to be repeated on the day set by the National Election Committee for the second round of the general elections.

Candidates running in the SMDs are considered elected if they receive an absolute majority of the valid votes in the first round. Barring this, a run-off round takes place between those candidates who received more than 15 percent of the valid votes or were among the top three vote-winners. If the turnout in the first round is below 50 per cent, all candidates can contest the runoff. In either case, the candidate with the largest number of votes in the run-off round is elected, provided that the turnout was over 25 percent.

The average RD has 7 seats, which are filled from party lists according to a quota system. The quota equals the number of valid votes divided by one plus the number of seats. If unallocated seats remain after one seat has been awarded to each full quota, the party lists win these remaining seats in the order of their number of remainder votes, provided that their remainder votes are equal to at least two-thirds of the quota. The difference between the full quota and the remainder votes that earned a mandate is subtracted from the party's cumulated remainder votes on the national level. Due to the above mentioned two-thirds rule, about one fifth or more of RD seats remain unallocated on the regional level and are added to the national pool of compensatory mandates. The relatively small multi-member constituencies and the allocation rules significantly favour those parties that obtain at least 10–15 per cent of the vote locally. Apart from this, no party can gain any list mandates if it obtains less than 4 per cent (since January 1994, 5 per cent) of the list votes nationally (henceforth legal threshold). Voters cannot express preferences regarding the ranking of the candidates on the party lists.

Candidates can also win seats on the national lists of the parties. The voters do not vote directly for these lists. Rather, the remainder votes – i.e. votes which, after the completion of the above steps, did not yet go towards obtaining a mandate either in the multi-member or in the single-member constituencies are cumulated on the national level by party. Fifty-eight compensatory mandates plus the unallocated RD seats are distributed according to their cumulated number of remainder votes among the national lists of those parties which surpassed the legal threshold according to the d'Hondt highest average method.

The country is divided into 176 SMDs and 20 RDs. Candidates standing for parliament in a single-member district must collect at least 750 supporting signatures in the district to appear on the ballot. Every party which has nominated candidates in one fourth, but at least in two of all SMDs within an RD have the right to set up a regional list. Parties which have lists in more than six RDs are allowed to have a national list.

Source: Tóka (1995b) or Benoit (1996).

APPENDIX 9.4: CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The constitutional framework of post-communist Hungary was laid down in the amendments passed in October 1989 and in the summer of 1990, following the political agreements reached in the National Roundtable Talks in 1989, and by the 30 April 1990 MDF–SZDSZ agreement, respectively.

Hungary is a parliamentary republic without any trace of federalism. There are nineteen regional assemblies, which have been directly elected since 1994. Yet their prerogatives and political significance are such that they practically never appear in the news. The parliament is uni-cameral and is elected for four years. The parliament has a specialized committee system and access to generous public funds for party caucuses. Individual members have the right to initiate legislation and propose amendments; they enjoy legal immunity that can only be waived by the assembly; they are entitled to submit interpellations to the Prime Minister and other ministers. The parliament can dissolve itself at any time, but failing that it is likely to serve its full term as the President of the Republic can dissolve it only under highly unlikely circumstances.

The major checks on the power of the parliament are provided by referenda and especially by the Constitutional Court. Members of the Court are elected by a super-majority in parliament from among a relatively broadly defined pool of legal professionals. Anyone can ask the Court to declare a law, decree or rule unconstitutional, even before it comes into effect. The Court has considerable leverage in extending its investigation to related rules not mentioned by the appeal on the table, and routinely interprets the supposed spirit or implications, rather than the letter of the constitution. Referenda can only be called by the legislature, which, however, is obliged to call a referendum if it has been proposed by at least 100,000 (from 1997: 200,000) citizens. However, no referendum may be called on constitutional and budgetary issues and questions that might run counter to an international agreement signed by the government.

The President can single-handedly dissolve parliament if, following an election, the death or resignation of the Prime Minister, no candidate for Prime Minister candidate wins a vote of investiture within 40 days of the first nomination was made, or four different governments are brought down by parliament within a year. The deputies can bring down a Prime Minister either through a constructive vote of no-confidence (which can be initiated by one-fifth of the deputies), or by defeating a simple vote of confidence initiated by the Prime Minister. The constructive vote of no confidence, if passed, automatically installs as new prime Minister the alternative candidate named in the motion. Otherwise, it is the President's exclusive right to nominate a Prime Minister. The PM can be any Hungarian citizen. In practice, presidents always consult the parliamentary parties and the candidate named by the strongest parliamentary caucus is always given the opportunity of the first try to form a government. So far every candidate for premier has succeeded in winning a vote of investiture. A nominee for Prime Minister has to present a programme to the assembly, which then votes on the candidate and the programme. Investiture and constructive no-confidence votes need the support of an absolute majority of all members of the Parliament.

Cabinet ministers are nominated by the Prime Minister and appointed by the President. The constitution refers to the responsibility of individual ministers to the assembly, but gives the latter no power to remove the former. Obviously, in actual practice the prospective coalition partners agree on the composition of the cabinet prior to the election of a Prime Minister.

The head of state is elected by the parliament for a five-year term. One re-election is allowed. If no candidate receives a two-thirds majority in the first two rounds, a candidate can be elected by a simple majority in a third round within three days. The current President, Ferenc Mádl, was elected in 2000 with a simple majority provided by Fidesz-MPP, MDF and FKGP. The previous president, Árpád Göncz, was unanimously elected in May 1990 as part of a comprehensive MDF–SZDSZ deal, and reelected in June 1995 by a two-thirds majority against the then opposition candidate Ferenc Mádl, when his party of origin (SZDSZ) was a junior coalition partner of the MSZP. Before signing a law, the President can send it back to Parliament once, with comments urging reconsideration, or refer it for judicial review to the Constitutional Court. The President's right to refuse making appointments or dismissals proposed by the Prime Minister is severely limited, but there is no legal remedy against his or her decision. The President has the right to address the Parliament, to initiate legislation and referenda. According to Art. 29 of the constitution the President 'shall express the unity of the nation and safeguard the democratic functioning of the state' and acts as the (nominal) commander-in-chief of the army.

The Prime Minister dominates the executive, as he is the sole focus of parliamentary accountability. The Prime Minister's office has a staff of several hundred. On top of the ten-odd ordinary cabinet ministers, there are – in ever-changing numbers – ministers without portfolios, who are responsible for specific jurisdictions and work out of the Prime Minister's Office.