






Weekly Briefing

Hungary Political briefing:
Viktor Orbán and the 27th Congress of the Fidesz
– Hungarian Civic Alliance
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Summary

The last week was full of new initiatives in the Hungarian politics, since the parties clearly started their 2018 parliamentary elections campaign early. There are new data suggesting that only the Jobbik is viewed by the electives as a real challenger to the governing parties, the Fidesz and the KDNP. The political slogans of the parties are being tested now, and contours of their strategy can be already mapped, however, final strategies will only be implemented in the beginning of the next year.

The 12th of November 2017, the Hungarian Prime Minister and party leader, Viktor Orbán was re-elected as party leader on the 27th Congress of the Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Alliance. In his speech he delineated the most important pillars of the party's strategy leading to the 2018 parliamentary elections. He stressed that during the last four years, the government was able to strengthen economic and political achievements, deepen spiritual foundations of the politics and protect the economy. He remembered the audience; in 2014, the Fidesz promised that economic progress not only will be demonstrated through economic indicators, but it can also be shown in the daily lives of the citizens. The public work programme, which started after 2010, helped improve the lives of the poorest and the most destitute layers of the society. Other significant achievements of the period between 2014 and 2018 were emphasized in his speech. (Substantial increases in wages, minimum wages, and higher economic growth rates etc.) It seems to be a clear intention of the Fidesz to center economic results of the last years during the campaign. He also strongly underlined that many of these reforms did not receive the support of the opposition parties, they didn't back the tax reliefs for large families, the loan-rescheduling programme for private property owners and governmental proposals regarding immigration. That might be the second element of the elections strategy.

He returned to the importance of deepening the spiritual foundations of the Hungarian politics often, underlining that the ‘zeitgeist’ is not equal with the values suggested and transmitted by and through the media, since millions of Hungarians cling to their cultural identity and find order, security very important. In his opinion, hardworking people who care about their families, take responsibility, love their home country, and adhere to their Christian traditions, make up the majority of the *society* in Hungary and Europe. That is the mainstream which will prevail both in Hungary and Europe. That might be the third element of the strategy Fidesz would like to follow next year.

Thus, it is not surprising he suggests the foundations of the Hungarian politics can only be strengthened by relying on national traditions. The contrast between the national traditions and the bureaucratic, technocrat Brussels is clearly emphasized in his speech at the same time, he doesn’t find any contrast between Western culture and Eastern spirit which formed the Hungarian nation. These words clearly indicate the steadiness of the Hungarian politics regarding the Eastern Asian countries. Thus, he argues for the free alliance of the European nations, while he rejects the idea of the European United States. That is not new in the Fidesz-politics, however, the lines are very clean-cut this time.

As it could be demonstrated, the Fidesz will center economic achievements of the last 8 years and the country’s protection from immigration in the months to come. The Fidesz will position itself against the Jobbik which seems to be the main challenger in the next parliamentary elections. This trend can be corroborated by the data as well. The newest polls of the Iránytű Intézet (Compass Institute; www.iranytuintezet.hu) was published the 11th of November 2017. The questionnaire was carried out between 16 and 21 October 2017 and it included 1.000 pollees. According to that survey a growing number of electives believe that the challenger of the Orban-government will be the Jobbik party in the 2018 elections. 34 percent of the pollees take the view the Jobbik can be a real alternative to the governing party. That change is a 4 percentage points increase compared to October. There are only 7 percent who consider the MSZP

as a real challenger of the Fidesz, and 3 percent of the people participating in the survey believe that a coalition of left-wing parties could counterbalance the Fidesz and the KDNP. At the same time, there is a growing number of people taking the view that these two parties will be the dominating forces of the Hungarian politics, even in that aspect there is a rise in the figures. (October: 17 percent, November: 26 percent)

These findings are in line with the events of the last month, when the Prime Minister Candidate of the socialist party (László Botka) resigned the 2nd of October 2017, since he could not fulfill his plan to create a coalition of left-wing parties with the exclusion of the DK. The president of the DK (Mr. Gyurcsány) was the Hungarian Prime Minister between 2004 and 2009, who largely contributed to the defeat in 2010 elections and thereafter to the problems of party in disarray. His person could not be accepted by the resigning Prime Minister Candidate, however influential forces of the MSZP in Budapest supported the inclusion of the DK in the coalition negotiations, since electorate seats without a coalition with the DK are hardly to be won in Budapest. These tensions led to the resignation of the Prime Minister Candidate, since then there is no new Prime Minister Candidate, the MSZP has to revise and reconfigure its strategy regarding the next year elections.

At the same time, the Jobbik has shown clear signs of unity, which is being increasingly rewarded by the pollees. The party started its billboard campaign this week, in which the party positions itself as a center party. Its critics on the Fidesz-government evolves around typical center-party topics, such as the rule of law and political inclusion. The Jobbik accuses the Fidesz of dismantling political institutions that are supposed to secure the rule of law in politics and economy. At the same time, the party reassures that its Prime Minister Candidate, Gábor Vona will be the prime Minister of every Hungarian, not only that of the party.

A very similar of reasoning can be found at the party Momentum, which started a signature collection campaign this week. The eventual success of this

campaign could lead to a popular vote on the repealing of the Civic Law that defines the term “internationally subsidized organization”. The party supports the obliteration of the term, and it attempts to achieve the re-enactment of the Civic Law. To the success of the campaign, the party needs 200.000 supporting signatures, which would allow for the referendum. The referendum itself only could take place after the 2018 elections, but the campaign clearly could influence the parliamentary elections.

The figures of the Iránytű poll indicate the possibility of new political space, where again two dominating political parties will determine the Hungarian politics. Until 2010, the political spectrum was dominated by a left-wing and a right-wing party. This political constellation seemed to end in 2010, since then, the Fidesz-KDNP party-alliance dominated Hungarian politics. Maybe not in 2018, but in the years to come, there is a slight chance that these basic features of the Hungarian politics will alter creating a new political arena. However, the Hungarian politics is still being dominated by the Fidesz, that according to the survey of the Závecz Research, published November 17, 2017, has a growing popularity. 34 percent of the electives would vote for the Fidesz based on the research carried out October, whereas the Jobbik only received 10 percent, the MSZP 8 percent, the DK 6 percent, the LMP 5 percent of the votes. (The survey included 1.000 people.)

In theory, it could be stated, that the MSZP is more likely to rethink its strategy for the 2018 parliamentary elections, however, it is more likely that MSZP will concentrate on the party infightings, and it won't be able to come up with new ideas, and address broad layers of the society.

The Fidesz seems to be determined to center the migration issue in its election campaign. Bence Tuzson, state secretary responsible for government communication, stressed in this interview the 16th of November that within one week more than one million Hungarians sent back their response to the government's questionnaire. The survey focused on the migration problem and its practical solutions. At the same time, he emphasized that despite most of

opinions among pollees, there seems to be no common platform among political parties.

To sum it up, the main parties already started their campaign, the opposition parties, since economic results of this government are excellent, attempt to focus on the social and legal issues of relevance, such as the rule of law, legal protection of civic organizations, social and political inclusion, while the governing parties center immigration, achievement in the economy, and broader topics, like spiritual foundations of politics. The former big opposition party, the MSZP is in disarray for the time being, it is far away from gathering force and taking the necessary steps for a success in the elections.