



Weekly Briefing

Hungary political briefing:
The Hungarian Political Landscape:
One Year After the Parliamentary Elections
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The Hungarian Political Landscape: One Year After the Parliamentary Elections

Political support for the ruling party usually declines in the post-election period. The situation can easily deteriorate further when external shocks – such as global financial crises, pandemics, natural disasters or wars – hit the economy or the country's political and financial system. This is exactly what happened in the case of Hungary. However, neither the war in Ukraine and its economic repercussions, the sanctions, the energy crisis, nor the decline in political support after the elections could significantly change the central role of the Fidesz-KDNP in Hungarian politics. At the same time, the Hungarian government also has to face challenges from the European Commission, as the country's foreign policy does not seem to be in line with the European mainstream. Therefore, it is worth taking a closer look at public support for the Hungarian government's main foreign policy decisions.

Introduction

Over the past year, we have witnessed a general deterioration of political and economic conditions around the world. In addition to the war in Ukraine, the struggle between the Americans and Chinese has intensified as the Americans have put pressure on China to choose sides in the war, while China has successfully brokered an agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The economic impact of the war on the Hungarian economy was more obvious and direct in the form of economic sanctions, galloping inflation, rising interest rates and weaker domestic demand, etc. Addressing the economic problems required a careful balancing of sound fiscal and monetary policies with attention to the problems of the financial system'. This briefing addresses the question of how the ruling party was able to conduct domestic and foreign policies in such an environment that allowed it to maintain its influence in Hungarian politics.

Polling figures

	2022	2023
Fidesz-KDNP	52	51
Left-wing coalition	36	26
"Our Homeland Movement"	6	12
Two-tailed Dog	3	8
Others	2	3

Source: <https://nezopont.hu/haromnegyedestobbseggel-gyozne-most-a-fidesz/>

While Table 1 summarizes the results of the statewide list election, Table 2 shows the final estimate for party seats in the legislature. This also includes an estimate of the most likely outcomes of the local elections. In general, we can say that the government has strong social support – despite the external shocks mentioned above – while the liberal, left-leaning opposition has lost about a third of its support since the parliamentary elections. At the same time, other opposition parties–“Our Homeland Movement” and “Two-Tailed Dog”–have gained strongly in popularity.

Table 2. Parliamentary seats in 2022 and most likely results in 2023		
	2022	2023
Fidesz-KDNP	135	148
Left-wing coalition	57	30
“Our Homeland Movement”	6	12
Two-tailed Dog	0	8
Minority representant	1	0

Source: <https://nezopont.hu/haromnegyedes-tobbseggel-gyozne-most-a-fidesz/>

The survey conducted by the Századvég confirms the finding of the Nézőpont. The researchers of the Századvég concluded this way: “In summary we can state that the even after one year after the 2022 Parliamentary elections, the political support of the Fidesz-KDNP party alliance is outstanding, while the opposition can be characterized by strong fragmentation and general unpopularity.”¹ In case, elections were held now, 42 percent of the voters would cast a ballot for the ruling party. The opposition, if they were similarly aligned as last year, would receive 25 percent of the vote. In case, the opposition parties would run their own candidates, the Fidesz-KDNP would get 40 percent of the vote, the “Hungarian Two Tailed Dog” party would receive 11 percent, the DK 9 percent and the “Our Homeland Movement” 9 percent. (See table 3 and 4!)

Table 3. Party preferences in case there is no opposition alliance	
Fidesz-KDNP	40
MSZP	1
DK	9
Dialogue for Hungary	1
LMP	2
Jobbik	2
Momentum Movement	8
“Hungarian Two Tailed Dog” party	11
“Our Homeland Movement”	9
Other parties	5
Do not know how to answer or don not want to respond	12
Source: https://szazadveg.hu/hu/2023/03/31/stabil-kormanyparti-foleny-erotlen-baloldal~n3647	

Table 4. Party preferences in case of an opposition alliance	
Fidesz-KDNP	42
Opposition camp	25
“Hungarian Two Tailed Dog” party	11
“Our Homeland Movement”	9
Party of normal life	1
Solution party	1
Do not know how to answer or don not want to respond	12
Source: https://szazadveg.hu/hu/2023/03/31/stabil-kormanyparti-foleny-erotlen-baloldal~n3647	

Main topics of Hungarian politics

1. *The war*: The war in Ukraine is still at the heart of Hungarian politics. The Prime Minister said in his usual radio interview on 31 March 2023, “... we have seen this in the case of the First and Second World Wars as well, that even if there was enthusiasm at the beginning due to the actual or perceived truth, as the number of casualties, pain, and loss increases, people increasingly turn towards ceasefire and peace negotiations. This process began in the world of European peoples. However, this has not yet reached the leaders, so for now, much of Europe still represents a warlike stance.” ²[1] It is clear from this quote that the Fidesz-KDNP is in favor of an immediate ceasefire and peace negotiations between Ukraine and Russia. Fidesz-KDNP stands alone in this opinion and is often falsely accused by domestic and foreign political forces of being an ally of Putin. If one takes a closer look at the other parties, one finds that none of them supports a ceasefire and peace negotiations at this point in time. Although Fidesz-KDNP seems to be alone in this opinion in Hungarian politics, the vast majority of voters agree with it. (See the Századvég result later!)

2. *Inflation.* The Prime Minister pointed out that the first faint signs of declining inflation could be observed in the economy and that the Hungarian government's goal was to bring the inflation rate below ten percent by the end of the year. As for fixed prices, he added that on the one hand they serve the purpose of keeping inflation under control, on the other hand fixed prices are intervention instruments that can cause supply shortages and disrupt market forces. Clearly, the fewer fixed prices we have in the economy, the closer we get to normalcy. At the same time, maintaining fixed prices may be important for a while. As prices continue to fall, fixed prices will disappear from the economy, the government promises.
3. *The conflict with the European Union.* The Hungarian Prime Minister emphasized in the above-mentioned radio interview that the original reason for the establishment of the European Union was to create peace in Europe. It is enough to think of the Franco-German conflict, which triggered two world wars in the 20th century. The rapprochement of the two nations was based on the establishment of the European Community. The prime minister said we created the European Union for two reasons: to keep the peace and to increase prosperity. Contrary to these goals, he said, the European Union has become a pro-war institution and its sanctions are harmful to European economies. He also argued that not only one or two countries are being dragged into the war, but also the existence of the European Union is being called into question in this way.

In this context, it is worth analyzing the results of the Századvég' survey. The poll was conducted in March 2023 and included 1,000 people. The poll quoted European politicians and analyzed voters' opinions on the quotes. The Vice President of the European Commission said on February 27, 2023 [2], "Hungary must be called out more often, particularly about its positions on Russia and the war" on February 27, 2023 ³. According to the survey, 56 percent of respondents disagreed with this opinion, while 36 had the opposite opinion and 8 percent did not know how to answer or did not want to answer this question. Another quote came from David Pressman, the U.S. ambassador to Hungary, who said in response to Viktor Orbán's call for an immediate cease-fire that there was no such thing as a "peace camp". Again, 58 percent of Hungarians said they disagreed with this statement, the percentage of unsure respondents in this case was 15 percent, and 27 percent of respondents agreed with this statement. Stronger disagreement with Roberta Metsola's demand came from respondents who said that EU member states should supply more weapons to Ukraine and even consider sending fighter jets to the

country at war. In this case, 70 percent of respondents disagreed with this opinion and 22 percent supported it, while 8 percent of respondents were not sure. ⁴

Summary

Based on the reactions of the public and the opinions of the liberal, left-leaning opposition, we can see a growing gap between the policies of these parties and the majority public opinion. We should not be surprised, therefore, that these parties have failed to gain popularity over the past twelve months. Another hot topic seems to be imported Ukrainian agricultural products, which are pushing European and Hungarian products out of the market. The European Union has reduced tariffs and other non-tariff barriers on agricultural products from Ukraine (grain, eggs, seed oil, etc.). The first strong protests took the form of demonstrations in Bulgaria, Romania and Poland. Even though Hungarian farmers did not take to the streets, the reaction of political parties to the case will be crucial in the political debates of the coming months.