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ANALYSIS

Barring surprise, Viktor Orban is due to win a third consecutive term as the head of Hungary

On 8th April next nearly 8 million Hungarians are being called to ballot to renew the 199 members of the Országgyűlés, the only house of parliament. This date is not a random choice since on 8th April 1990 the second round of the first free elections organised in Hungary took place after the communist dictatorship over the country came to an end. The legislative election will almost be without surprise, such is the degree to which outgoing Prime Minister, Viktor Orban (Alliance of Young Democrats-Civic Union, FIDESZ-MPP) dominates the country and the impotence of the opposition

According to the most recent poll by Nezipont, published at the beginning of March FIDESZ-MPP will easily win the election on 8th April with 52% of the vote, ahead of the Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik), a nationalist party led by Gabor Vona, which is due to win 17% of the vote. On the left, the Socialist Party (MSZP) is due to win 10% of the vote and the Democratic Coalition (DK), the party of former Prime Minister (2004-2009) Ferenc Gyurcsany, 6%. Doing Politics Differently (LMP), an ecologist party led by Akos Hadravszky and Bernadett Szel, is due to win 9% of the vote.

"NO" TO MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES, AS WELL AS THE DEFENCE OF HUNGARIAN IDENTITY ARE THE MAJOR THEMES IN VIKTOR ORBAN'S CAMPAIGN

"We need four more years to consolidate our results and make them irreversible," said the outgoing Prime Minister Viktor Orban. As of 13th December 2015, the day he was re-elected to lead the FIDESZ, the Hungarian leader said he wanted to continue serving Hungary if his fellow

countrymen re-elected him to office. "In my opinion the issue at stake in these elections is simple: do we want to become a country of immigration?" declared the head of the Magyar government. He would like to see himself as the defender of Hungarian identity ("Hungary First" is his tag line) and is against Brussels' commitment to relocate 160,000 Syrian, Iraqi and Eritrean refugees within the 28 Member States, speaking of an "offensive by Islam", qualifying the refugees as "Muslim invaders". For the outgoing Prime Minister who maintains that "Christianity is the last hope for humanity", "the European Union is trying to undermine Europe's Christian foundations and to transform the societies of each Member State into multicultural societies."

Viktor Orban has called on his European counterparts to join him in a global alliance against mass immigration, notably from Muslim countries.

In July 2016 Budapest approved a bill on asylum requests and illegal immigration that enabled the police to deport immediately any illegal immigrant

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intercepted within an 8km area behind the Hungarian border, a measure which was then extended to the entire country. In 2015 it is estimated that 391,384 people entered the country illegally – a year later there were only 18,236 illegal entries.

Another of Viktor Orbán's obsessions is George Soros. The outgoing Prime Minister accuses the Hungarian born American billionaire, Chair of the Open Society Foundation of conspiring against Hungary with a plan to Islamise Europe via forced immigration. George Soros accuses Viktor Orbán of using him as a scapegoat to turn public attention from the "Mafia State" that the Prime Minister is now in the process of establishing. In his speech to the nation on 18th February last, the Hungarian leader accused George Soros of financing power centres in the EU and the UN to act against Hungary. Five days prior to this a draft bill was put to the Hungarian Parliament entitled "Stop Soros", which aims to oblige any NGO working in the humanitarian area and any NGO financed from abroad to justify periodically its activities so that checks regarding the funds it receives can be made to ensure that these are not being used to fund immigration. In the event of infringement, NGOs might be obliged to pay fines of up to 25% of the total funds they have received from abroad.

Viktor Orbán likes to repeat that after the election on 8th April the Hungarian government will be formed by himself or by George Soros, meaning that in the event of victory by the opposition the government will be so weak that George Soros will de facto be man to lead the country

The FIDESZ has not presented a programme in these elections and is using as its support the results of the last 8 years (two consecutive mandates) leading the State, with sound GDP growth (which lay at 4% last year), increases in the minimum wage (6% in 2016, 15% in 2017, 8% planned this year) and low unemployment at 3.8%, the lowest rate since the collapse of communism in 1989.

ON THE LEFT, THE OPPOSITION MADE IMPOTENT DUE TO ITS DIVISIONS

On 25th February last Peter Marki-Zay, an independent candidate supported by all of the opposition parties, won the local by-election in the town of Hodmezövasarhely (47,000 inhabitants), that lies on the Serb border and the stronghold of Janos Lazar (FIDESZ), Minister of the Chancellery and loyal to Viktor Orbán, with 57.49% of the vote. Turnout totalled 62.45%, and was twice that recorded in the local elections of 2014.

This success led to hope across the opposition, both on the left and the right. "This win is a turning point that shows that FIDESZ can be beaten anywhere in the country," declared Gabor Vona, leader of Jobbik. "This win has come just in time for the opposition to choose to cooperate together, just as it comes in time to allow FIDESZ to adjust its campaign," stressed the director of the think-tank Political Capital, Peter Kreko. "54% of the electorate want a change of government. FIDESZ leads, but the dislike of this party is strong and our studies prove that those who are against Jobbik and FIDESZ want a united opposition. They would vote for any personality who might beat Viktor Orbán," indicated Andras Pulai, an analyst at the pollster Publicis. "The opposition no longer plays the old game in which it had no chance of winning, but the situation is new, and no longer hopeless, if we adopt an intelligent strategy," stresses Gabor Torok, a professor of political science at the Corvinus University, Budapest.

Convinced that the opposition has no chance of winning the election on 8th April the Hungarians are not very motivated to vote. More aware than before of the need to stand together to win in the ballot-box, the parties on the left are still divided however, unable to form a single list or agree on a candidate for the post of Prime Minister.

The Socialist Party (MSZP) led by Gyula Molnar has however joined forces with Dialogue for Hungary (PM), a social-democratic, ecologist party led by Timea Szabo and Gergely Karacsony. The latter is the candidate of both of these parties for the post of Prime Minister.

The socialists say they are prepared to widen their cooperation but do not see any possible alliance with Jobbik, a party whom they have asked to withdraw their candidates in which an independent candidate would have more chance of winning.

If they came to office the Socialist Party and Dialogue for Hungary want to re-allocate European funds, which in their opinion are being misused or misspent on projects of no interest. Both parties are promising to reduce petrol, electricity and heating prices as well as increase the wages of people working in healthcare by 50% (a sector in default, many doctors and nurses have left the country in quest of better pay). Both parties on the left want to double retirement pensions of the poorest and guarantee that no pensioner will receive below 100,000 forints (320€) per month. Finally, they will increase investments in healthcare, education and will do away with the flat tax rate on VAT, income and businesses, set at 16% and will organise a referendum on the abolition of the Constitution[1].

The Democratic Coalition (DK) led by former Prime Minister (2004-2009) Ferenc Gyurcsany, is promising to increase teachers' wages by 15% (and that of young teachers by 30%). Doing Politics Differently (LMP), an ecologist party led by Akos Hadhazy and Bernadett Szel, also supports an increase in teachers' wages and more widely those of civil servants. The LMP takes a strict stance on migrants. "We do not support the migrant quotas established by the European Union, we shall not take down the wall (built on the border with Serbia and Croatia as of July 2015 to prevent migrants from entering the country) and I shall re-introduce border controls," declared Bernadett

Szel, who is also standing for the post of Prime Minister.

ON THE RIGHT THE MOVEMENT FOR A BETTER HUNGARY IS STRUGGLING TO FIND ITS PLACE

Over the last four years Gabor Vona has changed the political orientation of the Movement for a Better Hungary. "I decided to break away from the racist, anti-Semitic environment" he explained. Vona dissolved the Magyar Guard, a paramilitary militia belonging to the party and gave up advocating Hungary's exit from the EU. With the tagline "With a Hungarian heart, common sense and clean hands", Jobbik is campaigning on social issues (health, education) and notably on the defence of wages and retirement pensions, as well as the fight to counter corruption. The party accuses Viktor Orban of authoritarian excesses. The change set by Gabor Vona does not seem to have been accepted by supporters of the movement who do not necessarily appreciate the development of their party, which is struggling to attract new voters, who are not convinced by this change. Jobbik has also been pushed to position itself differently by the radicalisation of FIDESZ, which has clearly swung to the right over the last few years and which has hardened its narrative regarding questions such as immigration and the European Union.

"Jobbik has not been able to respond to the demand for radicalism that has been expressed in society since the historic migration crisis of 2015. It has blurred its image by trying to delete its xenophobic leanings in a bid to diversify its electorate," maintained analyst Andras Pulai.

THE HUNGARIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

The Orszaggyules, the only house in parliament, has 199 MPs elected for four years: 106 of them are elected according to a single list in constituencies and 93 by proportional representation from a national list. Voters have two voting slips, one to choose

1. The Hungarian Constitution entered into force on 1st January 2012. The text in which the word « Republic » was deleted, introduced a reference to God, and made the forint the national currency, it established the golden rule (inclusion of a limit – of 50% of the country's public deficit). The European Union and the Council of Europe have protested against several of the articles in the Fundamental Law which has been modified several times since its adoption.

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a political party, the other to vote in support of a candidate.

Voters who belong to a national minority^[2] vote for the lists of their minority and not for the national parties. Only one quarter of the votes required by the national parties is necessary for a list representing a minority to win a seat. The national minorities that do not win seats can delegate a spokesperson in parliament.

Only the parties running in at least 27 constituencies spread amongst at least 9 counties and Budapest can put candidates forward in the proportional vote. The parties that put forward candidates in 106 constituencies receive 2 million €; those running in 80 to 105 constituencies receive 1.5 million €, those with candidates in more than 54 constituencies but fewer than 79 receive 1 million € and finally those presenting candidates in 27 to 53 constituencies receive 500,000€. Each candidate receives 3,200€ for his/her electoral campaign.

To be able to sit in parliament a party has to win at least 5% of the votes cast; an alliance of two parties, 10% of the vote and an alliance of 3 parties or more, 15%. The seats covered by the national lists are distributed proportionally to the votes cast; votes that do not enable a party to win seats, as well as the votes for a party having achieved the seat which go beyond the electoral threshold are then redistributed according to the d'Hondt method.

Any party that wants to put a list forward in the general single list vote must collate at least 500 voter signatures. In the single list constituencies

candidates can be presented either by the parties or by the citizens.

Finally, party political broadcasts can be made on TV, if the channel accepts to give the parties free air-time. In this case they must then grant the same time to all of the electoral lists running.

8 political parties are represented at present in the Hungarian parliament:

- Alliance of Young Democrats-Civic Union (FIDESZ-MPP), created on 30th March 1988 led by outgoing Prime Minister Viktor Orban, with 117 MPs;
- the People's Christian-Democratic Party (KDNP), founded in 1944 led by Zsolt Semjen, 16 seats;
- the Socialist Party (MSZP), founded in 1989 and chaired by Gyula Molnar, with 29 MPs;
- Together. A party for a new era (Együtt), a social liberal party created in 2012, led by Peter Juhasz, has 3 seats;
- Democratic Coalition (DK), a social-liberal party led by former Prime Minister (2004-2009) Ferenc Gyurcsany, with 4 MPs;
- Dialogue for Hungary (PM), a social democratic, ecologist party created in February 2013, led by Gergely Karacsony and Tímea Szabó, 1 seat;
- The Hungarian Liberal Party (L), led by Gabor Fodor, 1 seat;
- Movement for a better Hungary (Jobbik), a nationalist party created in October 2003 and led by Gabor Vona with 23 seats;
- Doing Politics Differently (LMP), an ecologist party founded in 2009, led by Akos Hadravszky and Bernadett Szel, with 5 seats.

2. Hungary recognises 13 national minorities :Germans, Armenians, Bulgarians ; Croatians, Greeks, Poles, Roma, Romanian, Ruthenians, Serbs, Slovaks, Slovenians, Ukrainians.

Reminder of the elections results on 6th April 2014 in Hungary

Turnout : 61,73%

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		Proportional vote			Single list vote		TOTAL		
Coalition	Political Parties	No of votes won	% of votes won	No of seats	No of votes won	No seats	Total % of votes won	Total seats	
FIDESZ-MPP KDNP Alliance	Alliance of Young Democrats-Civic Union (FIDESZ-MPP)	2 264 780	44,87	30	2 165 342	87	66,83	117	
	Christian Democratic Party (KDNP)			7				9	16
Unity	Socialist Party (MSZP)	1 290 806	25,57	21	1 317 879	8	19,10	29	
	Together. Party for a new Era (Együtt)			2				1	3
	Democratic Coalition (DK)			3				1	4
	Dialogue for Hungary (PM)			1					1
	Hungarian Liberal Party (MLP)			1					1
	Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik)	1 020 476	20,22	23	1 000 637		11,56	23	
	Doing Politics Differently (LMP)	269 414	5,34	5	244 191		2,51	5	
	Others	201 887	4	0	424 750	0	0	0	

Source : <http://www.valasztas.hu/48>

RESULTS

Viktor Orban easily sweeps to victory for the third time running in the Hungarian elections

Outgoing Prime Minister Viktor Orban easily won the general election in Hungary on 8th April and there will retain office for another four years. His party, the Alliance of Young Democrats-Civic Union (FIDESZ-MPP), allied to the People's Christian Democratic Party (KDNP) led by Zsolt Semjen, won 48.53% of the vote [1] and is due to take 134 of the 199 seats in the Orszaggyules, the single house in Parliament, i.e. the majority of 2/3. He again took advantage of electoral redistricting and of the tailor-made voting system. According to political analysts with this electoral system the FIDESZ-MPP would have won each of the general elections that have taken place over the last 25 years.

The Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik), a nationalist party, won 19.63% of the vote taking 25 seats. Its leader Gabor Vona linked his political fate to the results of this general election and is contested within his own party. He failed to be re-elected, announcing as a result his decision to quit as head of the party.

On the left, the Socialist Party (MSZP), chaired by Gyula Molnar and allied with Dialogue for Hungary (PM), a social-democratic, ecologist party led by Timea Szabo and Gergely Karacsony, won 12.44% of the vote and 20 seats. Doing Politics Differently (LMP), an ecologist party led by Akos Hadrassy and Bernadett Szel won 6.98% of the vote and 9 seats and finally the Democratic Coalition (DK), a social liberal party of former Prime Minister (2004-2009) Ferenc Gyurcsany won 5.62% of the vote and 8 seats.

Turnout was clearly higher than in the previous elections on 6th April 2014, which until the announcement of the first results, maintained hope on the part of the opposition. Nearly seven Hungarians in 10 turned out to vote (69,41%), which is higher by 7.68 points and the second highest in democratic Hungary than the general election on 8th and 29th May 1994.

The opposition parties achieved the highest results in Budapest, whilst the most rural areas in Hungary remained loyal to the outgoing Prime Minister's party, a distribution of votes to be seen everywhere in Europe. Moreover, according to the exit polls, the youngest voters opted more for the opposition than for FIDESZ-MPP.

Results of the general elections of 8th April 2018 in Hungary

Turnout: 69.41%

Political Parties	% of votes won	No. of seats won
Alliance of Young Democrats-Civic Union/People's Christian Democratic Party (FIDESZ-MPP/KDNP)	48.53	134
Movement for a better Hungary (Jobbik)	19.63	25
Socialist Party-Dialogue for Hungary (MSZP- PM)	12.44	20
Democratic Coalition(DK)	6.98	9
Doing Politics Differently(LMP)	5.62	8
Others	6.80	3

1. The results (still incomplete) of this text only relate to the proportional vote.

<http://www.valasztas.hu/dyn/pv18/szavossz/hu/I50.html>

"We have won, Hungary has won a decisive victory. This historic victory offers us a chance to continue to defend ourselves and to defend Hungary," maintained Viktor Orban when the results were announced. "The future of the country is at stake. We are not just satisfied with electing parties, the government, and the Prime Minister but we are also choosing the future of our country" he declared after having fulfilled his civic duty in Budapest.

The outgoing Prime Minister, a great admirer of Russian President Vladimir Putin and champion of an "illiberal democracy" focused his electoral campaign on immigration. "In my opinion the stake in this general election is simple: do we want to become a country of immigration?" insisted Viktor Orban, who adopted the slogan 'Hungary First'.

Orban stands as the defender of Hungarian identity, qualifying the refugees as "Muslim invaders" and refers to national interest to justify his policy to limit certain freedoms, his control of the economy, the media etc ... He also often makes use of the conspiracy theory. Hence, he has accused George Soros, an American billionaire of Hungarian origin, the President of the Open Society Foundation, of conspiring against Hungary by financing networks of influence in the EU and the UN, to act against Budapest and accusing him of working on a plan to islamise Europe by forced immigration. "The Hungarians have always tended to think that behind historic events dark forces are pulling the strings," declared political expert Kristof Szombati.

"In a country in which the checks and balances have been weakened over the last 8 years, most voters do not have access to all of the information necessary to vote. However, Viktor Orban has succeeded in mobilising his electorate in surprising numbers. We thought that the opposition would do better," indicated Bulcsu Hunyadi., an analyst with the think tank Political Capital.

"In Europe, to be re-elected for the third time, is rare all the same. We are in a climate in which those on their way out are being ousted, in which all parties in office are having problems. Even weakened Viktor Orban only has a fragmented opposition and a civil society that finds it difficult to prove that there is a strong, credible alternative," stresses Jean-Michel de

Waele, a political expert from the Free University of Belgium, who concludes "the problem in Hungary is that there is no strong, credible, democratic opposition to offer any prospects."

"It's a tsunami for the FIDESZ-MPP giving Viktor Orban great legitimacy due to the high turnout, including at international level," declared Daniel Hegedüs, a political expert who has forecast that for the months to come there will be an "increase in the attacks against the critical fringes of civil society." "Victory for V.Orban will mean that his rhetoric will become increasingly aggressive," said Edit Zgut, an analyst from the think tank Political Capital. Indeed, Viktor Orban has already announced the closure of "organisations committed to politics", amongst others those that focus on Human Rights.

As for the opposition, although the Movement for a Better Hungary is still the second most powerful party in Hungary, it is struggling to move forward in comparison with the election on 6th April 2014. Its voters do not seem to have been convinced by the party's recent development. The radicalisation of FIDESZ-MPP, which has hardened its discourse over immigration issues and the EU over the last few years, indeed pushed the party led by Gabor Vona to move more to the centre. "Jobbik failed to respond to the demand for radicalisation that came from society following the migratory crisis in 2015. It then confused its image by trying to erase its xenophobic tendency in order to diversify its electorate," maintained Andras Pulai of the pollster Publicis.

The opposition, whose campaign focused on countering cronyism, the embezzlement of European funds by the government in office, the need to invest in education and healthcare, as well as increasing wages and pensions, struggled because it is divided and fragmented.

Originally from Szekesfehervar (north-east of Lake Balaton), aged 55, Viktor Orban is a graduate in law from the University of Lorand Eötvös of Budapest (in 1989, he studied for a few months at Pembroke College at the University of Oxford thanks to a grant awarded by George Soros). He was one of the founder members of the Alliance of Young Democrats in 1988. Two years later he was elected MP (he was re-elected at each general election) and in 1993 he took the chairmanship

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of the party. In 1998 he became the youngest Prime Minister in Europe at the age of 35 before having to withdraw four years later before a left-wing opposition that won the election on 7th and 20th April 2002, a defeat that Orbán never really accepted. He had his revenge however 8 years later in 2010, the year in which he became head of government again.

“Viktor Orbán won the general elections on an anti-immigration ticket and in Europe, populist parties will not miss the opportunity finding inspiration in this winning formula,” declared Tamas Boros of the

think tank Policy Solutions, adding “the high level of legitimacy that this new term in office offers him also provides him with munition in his battle against the European Union.” Viktor Orbán’s victory is not good news for Brussels. The Hungarian Prime Minister likes to vilify the European Union and is quick to oppose its decisions (such as Brussels’ commitment to relocate 160,000 refugees from Syria, Iraq and Eritrea within the 28 Member States). However, he has always resisted crossing the red line which would deprive him of the European funds which his country so badly needs.

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