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## Will Hungary have a two-party system?



Over the course of the last 15 years, Hungary has been an outlier in terms of party competition, befuddling observers from all over the world. Viktor Orbán and Fidesz have won each and every election decisively, and the margin of victory has not fluctuated much either. Opposition politicians, parties and alliances came and went, but Orbán and his party have remained in a stable

and dominant position. This changed last year at the European elections, and polling trends suggest that Hungarian politics is undergoing a substantial change. What is even more surprising – even to Hungarians – is the fact that the developments are following a template from an unlikely country – the Republic of China (or Taiwan).

The Tisza party, led by Péter Magyar, has managed to demonstrate that it is the most viable alternative to Fidesz, meaning that it is the one that has a chance of coalescing the vote of those critical of the current cabinet. Only months after its establishment, Tisza managed to secure more support at last year's European election than any other opposition party, and this rapid rise convinced dissatisfied voters that it might be possible to challenge the dominance of Fidesz, if they unite behind Magyar. [Polling trends indicate](#) that the emergence of Tisza has continued since the European election, and Tisza is seemingly catching up with Fidesz, and it may have even overtaken them in popularity.

As Tisza has managed this success by siphoning support from other opposition parties, the current Hungarian landscape shows a fierce battle between two rivals: Fidesz and Tisza, and other parties and politicians barely matter. This forecasts a two-party race at the upcoming parliamentary election in 2026.

It is currently impossible to predict who will come out victorious in 2026, but it seems clear that Hungary has a two-party system, at least for now.

A lot of commentators assume that this is a temporary development, and will not last beyond the next election. The two sides are diametrically opposed, determined to destroy each other. Should Tisza break the current dominant system, analysts anticipate a total destruction of 'the world of Fidesz', as voters would see the vulnerability of Orbán and would desert for other, possible new parties by the time the next election comes around, leading to a multi-party competition. On the other hand, should Fidesz triumph once again, the faith in Tisza could be lost, and the promise holding its voters together could dissipate, causing these supporters to look for a new viable alternative, returning Hungary to its previous dominant system.

Nevertheless, these expectations may not come to fruition. Both sides expect total victory, but as the example of the Republic of China shows, it may not ever come. Taiwan was a dominant system from its foundation in 1949, as the ruling Kuomintang party won every election for decades. Starting from the 1980s, the opposition gained more and more traction, and finally, in 2000 (as a result of infighting within the ruling party) it secured a surprising victory via the Democratic People's Party (DPP),

defying the common wisdom that the system of Kuomintang was unbreakable.

The antagonism between Kuomintang and DPP was naturally fierce. DPP and its supporters had over 50 years of frustration against the government, and Kuomintang had a deeply entrenched system that had been working for decades. Based on the level of animosity between the political foes and the apparent vulnerability of Kuomintang, a collapse of the dominant system could have been expected, with new parties emerging to create a completely new political landscape. In a way, the situation was an amplified version of the Hungarian situation should Péter Magyar get to govern in 2026.

Yet, the competition between Kuomintang and DPP has remained in Taiwan ever since. The two parties have alternated in power in the last 25 years. Society is polarized between the two sides, without any of them being able to claim 'ultimate victory', forcing them to coexist.

The Taiwanese case implies that regardless of how much the two sides aim to destroy each other, they might need to prepare for a long-lasting race. Hungarian voters are as polarized as the ones in Taiwan, with both parties having strong and dedicated bases, and no matter the election result, they might be



adamant in their support. As things currently stand, with the polarization of Hungarian society, the clear alternatives and the template of Taiwan, there is a real possibility that Hungary is headed towards enduring two-party competition.