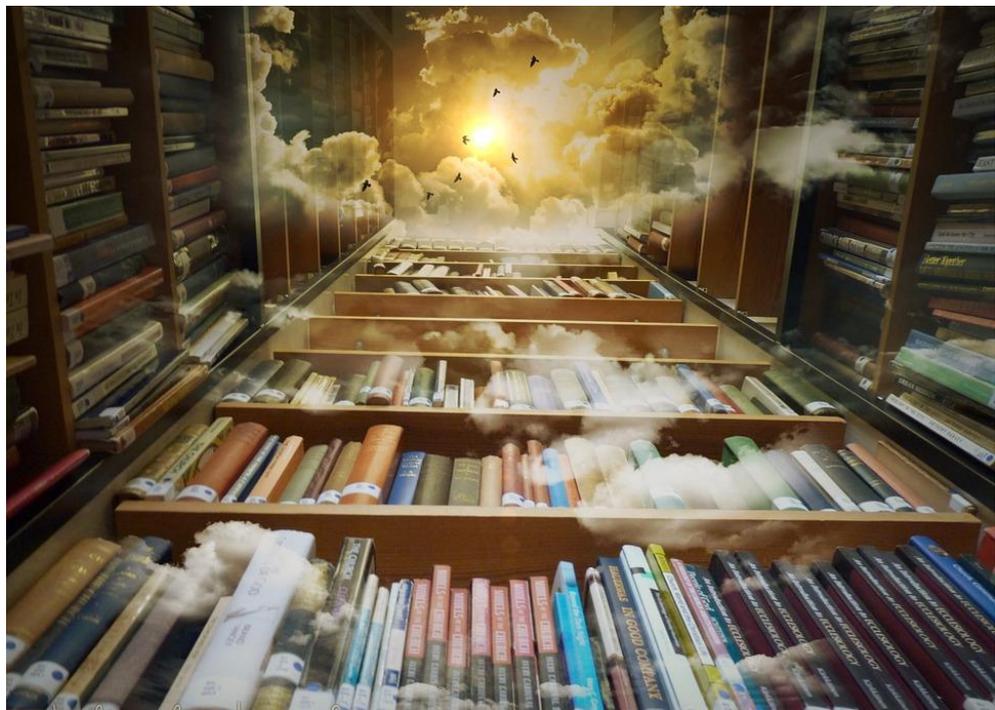


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Fidesz dominance

Why has the same party won elections in Hungary for more than 12 years? CFPA's new book looks at this question from a comparative and a historical perspective.



Why has the same party won all elections in Hungary for more than twelve years? A new book from the Centre for Fair Political Analysis focuses on this question and attempts to uncover the reasons of this sustained success. Other analysts and scientists have offered two main explanations so far: the erosion of the quality of Hungarian democracy and, relatedly, rising corruption and populism. CFPA believes that these analyses lack the necessary historical and comparative depth that is required to fully understand the situation in Hungary. Their focus is very narrow: they focus on current events (past couple of years) and mainly derive the reasons for the success of Fidesz from Hungarian politics, not considering international trends. CFPA attempts to remedy this in its new [book](#), *Ruling Party – Fidesz in historical and international context*. As the title suggests, the book presents similar examples from the past and from around the world to uncover why they could remain in power for a long period of time.

In order to find these examples, the book describes Fidesz as a dominant party. Dominant parties have a vast literature in political science and are defined as being in government for an unusually long period of time (at least for a decade, but often for even longer). The focus of the book is why these parties emerge and how they manage to remain in power regardless of the regime they are in, and how the factors contributing to

their dominance are similar to the way Fidesz managed to attain dominance.

In the book, five main reasons for the dominance of Fidesz are identified. Fidesz uses the 'historical momentum' of certain events, such as the 2006 crisis of the Socialist government, and the democratic transition of 1989-1990 to create a narrative of history that legitimizes its enduring rule. This is similar to the way the Swedish Social Democrats and the African National Congress in South Africa used history to establish their legitimacy.

Fidesz also builds its dominance on the way it presents the image of the Hungarian nation to the public. This image has become so political that having a certain perspective on what being a Hungarian is has become synonymous with the party, strengthening the relationship between Fidesz and its voters. Both Kuomintang in Taiwan and the Scottish National party in Scotland have used nationhood in a similar way, reinforcing their dominance in their respective countries.

Another reason for the dominance of Fidesz is its perception of democracy. As Viktor Orbán has said himself, their view of democracy is not a liberal one, and they attempt to separate the liberal institutions from the democratic ones and put the emphasis on the latter. This perception of democracy makes lasting dominance easier to establish, and proven by other

dominant parties, such as the PRI in Mexico and the Justicialist Party in Argentina.

Strong leaders, who are towering figures both within their parties and in the wider political sphere, can also contribute to dominance. Just like Lee Kuan Yew in Singapore and Jawharlal Nehru in India has done, Viktor Orbán has been the undisputed leader of his party for a long period of time and was able to extend that leadership to the country as a whole. Dominant parties often rely on their leaders to lay the foundations of their dominance.

Finally, the contribution of the opposition to enduring dominance cannot be ignored either. The way the dominant party treats its opposition, and the way the opposition acts in a dominant system is crucial to keeping the ruling party in power. This is apparent in the case of the Republican People's Party in Turkey and the Liberal Democratic Party in Japan and is very prominent in the case of Fidesz as well.

In addition to the exploration of the reasons for dominance using the examples in other countries, the book also emphasizes the importance of historical patterns. Hungary has had several periods of dominance in its own history: the Liberal party in the late 19th century and the Christian National Unity Party in the first half of the 20th century both dominated Hungarian politics for decades, and this pattern reemerged with the rule of Fidesz, The



final chapter of the book explores this pattern, and how dominance is 'in the DNA' of Hungarian politics.

All in all, it is important to put the success of Fidesz in historical and international context. The new book of CFPA provides this context with numerous examples and an in-depth exploration of the nature of the dominance of Fidesz, which helps us understand why Hungarian politics is the way it is beyond the state of democracy or corruption.