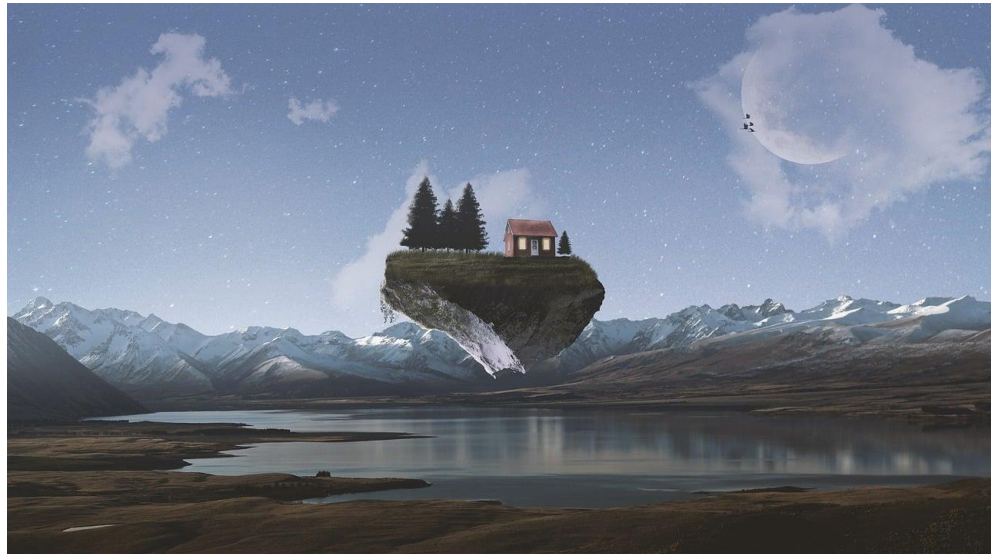


Júlia Lakatos

The Return of Politics



A new opposition party, Tisza, has approached Fidesz in the opinion polls for the first time in well over a decade. The party's fast rise to fame is not just due to the fatigue and disappointment of pro-government voters, but to the return of domestic politics in political messaging.

One would think that if a party is in power for fourteen years straight, it would be focused on domestic policy. This is not necessarily the case with Fidesz, as its dominant party status, and longtime lack of a potent political opponent has led its leader,

Viktor Orbán, to turn his attention to furthering the country's geopolitical possibilities in a changing global world order. That is, his focus has been on macro level, international politics. Strengthening the network of similar minded actors within the EU, exchanging know-how with American partners, and formulating a concept of economic neutrality. The everyday problems of voters were less frequently talked about. Creating a framework for growth and development was more important, not to mention staying above water in face of all the conflicts his alternative view of democracy created.

It's no wonder that the leader of the Tisza party, Péter Magyar, has made a habit of talking about the everyday, micro aspects of politics. Taking thermometers to hospitals on the hottest summer days to measure the temperature, he called attention to the deteriorating state of health care institutions. Actively taking part in protecting the shores during the recent flooding of the Danube, he is showing that those issues are at the center of his attention that directly affect voters on a daily basis. This is forcing the governing party to change its tune and turn back to domestic politics.

As we have written about this in our book on dominant parties, historically, those parties could remain in power, and achieve the status of dominant parties in Hungary, which were able to

convince voters that they could manage the most important social issues better than any other challenger. For a long time, Fidesz had this appeal. As of now, Tisza voters are mainly followers of the previously existing opposition parties that have migrated to the party that shows more potential than its predecessors. A smaller number of its supporters come from voters that are disappointed by Fidesz. In order to have a change in power, Tisza would need to increase its appeal in this second group. Obviously Fidesz aims to counter this, both by discrediting the head of the party (as he was originally from their ranks) and by turning to its traditional mode of communicating with voters, announcing another National Consultation. The question is whether this is can fulfill society's need for capable management? For a long time Fidesz's legitimacy built on "knowing what people wanted". It appears that after fourteen years in power, what people really want is to feel seen.