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Does it take a moderate right-winger to defeat Orbán?

Hungary's political year in the light of the upcoming elections

After a decade of Viktor Orbán's undisputed rule over Hungary, the opposition is closer than ever before to challenging his power. This chapter focuses on three main subjects. First, it provides insight into the joint opposition's primary elections. It describes the circumstances in which a moderate right-wing politician, Péter Márki-Zay, finally became the winner of the primary, and hence the challenger to Viktor Orbán in the upcoming elections. Second, it highlights the dilemmas, the open questions, and the potential areas of conflict between the opposition parties. And third, it shows how Fidesz is preparing for the elections in spring 2022. Amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, the party is building an alternative power structure in case of an electoral defeat. It is flirting with the idea of boosting its anti-LGBT campaign, and is claiming to be the great defender of the family. The article concludes that even if the opposition manages to win the upcoming election, the representation of leftist and Social Democratic politics will likely be limited because of both the internal pecking order of the opposition and the voters' preference for liberal and moderate right-wing politics.

Setting the scene

Hungary's politics has been dominated for over a decade by the figure of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. He has continued to dominate the political right since the mid-1990s as an unquestioned leader, and he is now serving his fourth term as premier. The fractured opposition has been unable to bring him down in three parliamentary elections. Orbán's politics is neither an exception to, nor a malfunction of, the so-called young democracies. Instead, his politics fits into the global trend of the nationalist and populist right that is becoming mainstream. Fellow right-wing populists – like Trump, Bolsonaro, Salvini, Le Pen, Netanyahu, Putin, Erdogan, Modi and Vučić – provide Orbán with not just a legitimisation for his politics, but also an excellent supply for building international coalitions and alliances

for the future. In March 2021, after a long period of conflict, Orbán's party, Fidesz, left the European People's Party. While Orbán has long been strengthening his strategic alliance both within the Visegrad Group and with countries in the Western Balkan region in order to be a geopolitical counterweight in the EU, he has never lost sight of possible partners in western and southern Europe. Orbán is now attempting to forge an alternative alliance and a new group in the European Parliament with politicians such as Matteo Salvini, Giorgia Meloni, Marine Le Pen and Santiago Abascal.

In 2022, parliamentary elections will be held in Hungary. According to the polls, the opposition has never been as close to defeating Orbán as it is now. Indeed, despite having no clear leader, the opposition is now neck and neck with Orbán's Fidesz and its coalition partner, the Christian Democrats. This is more than the opposition has ever achieved in the last 10-12 years.

Hungary's opposition politicians usually name two main factors that impede their success in elections. First, the dominance of media close to the government, especially the government's complete control over local newspapers in rural areas. Second, the changes that Fidesz has introduced to the parliamentary election system. Indeed, the party has reshaped the electoral map, changed the election law so that it no longer requires a two-round election but just one-round, and introduced a first-past-the-post voting system. This makes a united opposition list necessary, given that no opposition party has been able to challenge Fidesz on its own. The existing opposition parties, however, are markedly different from each other ideologically, historically, and economically, as well as in their approach to politics in recent decades. Until recently, their differences had made it very difficult for them to cooperate, and various parties had attempted to challenge Fidesz on their own, but with no success.

In 2021, however, the situation changed. A rainbow coalition of parties – from the former extreme right over liberals, to Greens and Socialists – held a common primary to select the candidate to become prime minister, and it united opposition candidates in the individual election districts.

A joint opposition primary is an unprecedented political innovation in Hungary at the national level

But it was not only the constraints in the electoral system that incited the opposition to unite. A significant group of opposition voters increasingly pushed the parties to overcome their conflicts and ideological divisions and to unite to take the power from Orbán. The opposition parties thus seized the opportunity of a political experiment, hoping to

mobilise even beyond their parties, and to shake up and revitalise democratic participation in public affairs. A joint opposition primary is an unprecedented political innovation in Hungary at the national level and the civic coalition organising this primary enjoyed the support of thousands of volunteers across the country to run the polling stations, help in online voting, and count ballots.

Political innovation: the opposition primaries

The challengers: who are the strong(wo)men of the opposition?

The first round of the primary was contested by five candidates. Initially Gergely Karácsony, the Green mayor of Budapest and co-chair of the tiny green 'Dialogue for Hungary' party, had been leading the polls with the support of another small green party, and the equally small Socialist Party.

For Karácsony, the primary was not the first time he attempted to challenge Orbán. In the 2018 elections, Karácsony was the joint prime minister candidate of the Socialist Party and the 'Dialogue for Hungary' party. With barely 12 per cent, his green-socialist party coalition only came third, but a year later, in the most significant victory so far for the opposition in Orbán's era, he managed to oust the Fidesz mayor of Budapest.

A second strong contender was Klára Dobrev, from the social-liberal 'Democratic Coalition' party, which is currently the most popular opposition party with around 18 per cent in polls. Dobrev, an MEP, is widely acclaimed as having international experience, in business and public service. However, in the public perception, her competencies are overshadowed by the fact that she is married to her party's chairman, Ferenc Gyurcsány, who, as prime minister (2004-09), had navigated Hungary into an economically weak and painful position that was worsened by the economic crisis in 2008. Only an IMF loan of 20 per cent of Hungary's GDP was able to avert the total economic collapse. He is also remembered for his infamous 'lie speech', a bizarre rant full of swear words, given in front of his parliamentarians. In this speech, he stated that he had "lied day and night" and did not have the faintest idea how to govern the country. When the media leaked the speech and aired it in 2006, angry crowds stormed the streets and protested in front of the parliament for months.

A third candidate was Péter Jakab, the head of Jobbik (around 10 per cent in polls), a former extreme right-wing party that has moved close enough to the centre in the last few years to be accepted as part of the joint opposition. Jakab is known for his daring and jousting political style, often pointing the finger and accosting Prime Minister Orbán in head-to-head clashes.

A fourth contender was András Fekete-Győr, the young leader of the liberal Momentum party (around 7 per cent in polls), whose voters are mostly young and from the capital, Budapest. Fekete-Győr was one of the leaders of the party's 'NOlympics' campaign in early 2017 – a campaign that successfully made Fidesz withdraw Budapest's bid to host the 2024 Olympic games.

Finally, the fifth contender was Péter Márki-Zay, the mayor of Hódmezővásárhely, with a background as an economist and marketing expert. Márki-Zay is an independent centre-right politician with a culturally conservative and a pro-market programme. His most remarkable feat was ousting the Fidesz candidate in the local elections in 2019 in

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his native Hódmezővásárhely, a middle-sized town, and one of the bases of Fidesz, in the south of the country. He was the only candidate without party endorsement, his political base being the extra-parliamentary 'Everyone's Hungary' movement, which has a few thousand members and was funded in 2018. The movement aims to go beyond the country's political division between the left and right, and targets those who are disappointed with party politics and the political elite. Márki-Zay positioned himself as being in opposition to all other candidates, who, in his view, represented the failed political elite of the last decades. In his campaign, he focussed on the fight against corruption. This resonated not just with the last 12 years and the nepotism of Fidesz, but also with the pre-2010 era, in which many politicians of the current opposition were involved in scandalous corruption cases.

First-round surprise: victory for Klára Dobrev

The first round of the opposition primaries brought a surprising result. Karácsony, who had initially been leading in the polls, only came second, with 27 per cent of the vote. With hardly any presence outside Budapest, he had led a lacklustre campaign, and later admitted that he had not been very interested in the candidacy.

The winner of the first round was Klára Dobrev, with 35 per cent of the vote. The result was partly due to her charismatic style, diligent campaigning across the country, and the remarkable mobilisation of the party's supporters. However, the result was also partly because the party of the former prime minister Ferenc Gyurcsány is still the strongest and most cohesive opposition party in Hungary, with the most dedicated voter base.

The third position was surprising too. Initially, hardly anyone had expected Márki-Zay to make it into the second round, where three candidates would confront each other. Even without the support of any party, he received 20 per cent of the vote.

In the individual constituencies, candidates who had been tainted by corruption, or who had been in politics for decades, were generally voted out. Voters instead tended to opt for fresh faces, now that they were being given the opportunity to choose for the first time. A key battleground was the Budapest district of Zugló, where a long-time Socialist Party candidate tainted by a series of corruption scandals was forced to bow to public pressure and pull out of the race.

Second-round surprise: centre-right candidate for a liberal-progressive opposition

Like the first-round, the second round of the primary also resulted in a very big surprise. In the brief period between the two rounds, the opposition divided into two groups. One coalesced around Dobrev and the Democratic Coalition party. The other group was headed by Karácsony and Márki-Zay, who held the second and third places respectively. After several days of hesitating, Karácsony stepped down, in favour of Márki-Zay. His reasons were twofold. He initially justified his decision by giving the prognosis that he would not be able to defeat Dobrev, but that Dobrev would not be able to defeat Orbán. However, he believed that if he himself stepped down and supported Márki-Zay, the centre-right candidate would first be able to defeat Dobrev and then, with the support of the opposition, would be able

to defeat Orbán. A few days later, Karácsony then revealed his more personal reasons for stepping down, saying that he had lost his interest in campaigning, he was bored during the candidate debate, and that he had never really had any great ambition in the race. His stepping down was surprising as Karácsony had received almost one and a half times more votes in the first round than Márki-Zay. It also greatly disappointed the left-wing and green voters who had hoped Karácsony could challenge Viktor Orbán's neoliberal economic policies and right-wing ideologies with clear green and Social Democratic values. But with Karácsony's endorsement, it was Márki-Zay who became Dobrev's challenger.

As a consequence, the campaign for the second round of the primary was framed as a contest between 'forces of the past' and 'forces of the future'. The Márki-Zay camp branded itself as the 'coalition of the clean', implying that their rivals were tainted by a corrupt past. In the second round, Márki-Zay was supported by relatively fresh political forces, including not only Karácsony and the two green parties but also the liberal Momentum party and the Socialist Party. Jakab's Jobbik party chose not to endorse any of the candidates.

In the end, Márki-Zay won the second round with a convincing 57 per cent against Dobrev's 43 per cent. Both sides were able to mobilise extra voters in absolute terms compared to the first round, but Márki-Zay more so. The narrative of a break with the past united voters of very different political persuasions vis-à-vis the pro-Dobrev and Gyurcsány camp.

Several on-site media reports about the primary campaign programmes, and then subsequent studies on the same, confirmed that Márki-Zay had managed to address new or disappointed voters, many of them young, highly educated people.¹ In his campaign, Márki-Zay relied strongly on social media and he was very present on different online video channels. He gave several interviews to popular YouTubers to reach out to young voters, as well as to voters who were hesitant or apathetic.

Given that the primaries were being held for the very first time in Hungary and that it was an unknown format even for the voters, the turnout was promising. Altogether more than 650,000 votes were cast in the second round. Nevertheless, it remains to be seen if this represents a large enough base, as around 3 million votes will be needed to defeat Fidesz in the spring 2022 national election.

Where does this leave the opposition?

Not in a comfortable place.

The victory of Péter Márki-Zay is rather astonishing against the background of a dominantly liberal and progressive opposition. Márki-Zay is a culturally conservative politician, a Christian-conservative with seven children, who emphasises national, religious and family values. Economically, he is neoliberal. He is also vehemently opposed to a progressive tax system, which opposition parties have agreed upon without exception. Márki-Zay often makes market-fundamentalist references, based on his experience of living and working in

¹ Farkas, E. and Mikecz, D. (2021) 'Fővárosi, Személyesen Szavazó Előválasztók Szociológiai, Politikai Hátere', PTIblog, 29 October (<https://politikatudomany.tk.hu/blog/2021/10/elovalasztas-felmeres>).

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the United States for several years. Regarding social policies, he is personally opposed to abortion and uses a paternalistic tone towards Roma people. But he also emphasises his distance from autocratic, nepotist and unfair political measures, which gives him a relatively progressive character in the conservative political spectrum.

In short, Márki-Zay successfully personifies a human-faced, credible, right-wing conservative politician – especially compared to Orbán and the ruling Fidesz elite. Márki-Zay also maintains a strong focus on fighting corruption – a key problem in Hungary, where state capture by Fidesz has allowed Viktor Orbán’s childhood friend to rise from a bankrupt gas repairer to the nation’s richest entrepreneur in the last 12 years. Indeed, it speaks volumes about the state of the Hungarian opposition that it has been unable to field a candidate with generally accepted anti-corruption credentials, and that it has to rely on a right-wing politician for some credibility in this respect.

Another issue is the ability of such a conflictual opposition coalition to actually function. Indeed, these political parties have mutually exclusive economic agendas and different views on cultural values, which makes it questionable whether any future coalition they might form would be viable. In addition, the participating politicians harbour deep-seated antipathies towards each other – and their voters are even more irritated. Gyurcsány continually leads the polls as the most reviled politician. Jobbik and its supporters meanwhile protested the most persistently and vehemently against Gyurcsány after his ‘lie speech’ that was leaked in 2006. Indeed, being anti-Gyurcsány has been an identity marker for Jobbik until the last few years.

In addition, the Social Democratic voters for their part also bear Gyurcsány a grudge for introducing severe neoliberal austerity measures at the peak of the economic crisis while theoretically leading a socialist-liberal government. Since then, ‘the left’ has been associated strongly with ‘austerity’. Two years after Gyurcsány’s resignation as prime minister in 2009, he and other former members of the Socialist Party funded the Democratic Coalition – since when prominent figures have left the Socialist Party to join him and his party. Many are irritated by the presence of Gyurcsány, who represents the old unsuccessful times of before 2010. Indeed, Márki-Zay pointed out several times in his campaign that the opposition needs a renewal, and needs to replace the old discredited oppositional figures and political forces with new and credible politicians. Márki-Zay’s victory in the primaries therefore gave many of his supporters the impression of having successfully implemented the strategy of ‘a change of opposition before a change of government’ next year.

Sadly, this reading of events – that the opposition has been replaced and renewed – is naïve. Márki-Zay will now have to strike a deal with Gyurcsány and other members of the current opposition elite for a joint party list of candidates. While Márki-Zay has no party backing him, Gyurcsány leads the strongest opposition party by far. It is only a matter of time before Márki-Zay must therefore make compromises with him to assure a future ma-

jority in parliament. After that, Márki-Zay will be an easy target for accusations of being Gyurcsány's puppet.

At present, it is also unclear what the joint opposition election programme would offer the voters as an alternative to Orbán's regime. In the primaries, the common ground between the candidates was to oust Orbán at any cost. It was much less discussed how the opposition intends to rebuild democratic institutions, restore the rule of law, correct the system of checks and balances, and more importantly, what their political and social vision of the post-Orbán era is.

Meanwhile, in the backyard of Fidesz: defamation, buying off the votes, double structure, dog-whistle politics, and the family above all

Márki-Zay's victory has surprised Fidesz, as the party was counting on either Dobrev or Karácsony to run against Orbán. The first signs of a smear campaign against Klára Dobrev date back to 2018 when she became an active politician in the Democratic Coalition and led her parties' European Parliament slate. The press close to the government started to refer to her as 'Ms. Gyurcsány', consistently disdaining her and emphasising her close ties to Gyurcsány and his disastrous pre-2010 politics.

This tactic of portraying every opposition figure as 'Gyurcsány's puppet' is one of the basic strategies of Fidesz. Shortly after Márki-Zay's victory, Fidesz started running massive advertising campaigns on billboards across the country, as well as on Facebook and YouTube, attempting to smear Márki-Zay with his alleged proximity to Gyurcsány. The advertisement, entitled 'The Gyurcsány Show', features Gyurcsány standing closely behind Márki-Zay. Tellingly, the government party spent about seven times as much on advertisements like this during the primaries as the opposition candidates have spent altogether.

Besides its defamation of the opposition, Fidesz is clearly attempting to buy the votes of young people, pensioners, and parents of small children. In January 2021, the government announced that young people under 25 would be permanently exempted from personal taxation from January 2022. Additionally, the government decided to ensure massive personal tax reimbursements for voters with children in February 2022, just two months before the elections. This effectively reinstates (most likely temporarily) a progressive two-rate personal income tax despite, for the last decade, Orbán having always personally and vehemently defended the flat-rate tax that he introduced in 2011. There is also a pension-hike in the package and ongoing generous housing support for families with children or for young couples planning to have children. Moreover, while the world market price for electricity, gas and petrol has skyrocketed in the last few years, Hungarian households do not see these trends

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in their home utility bills because the government controls these prices and uses them to show it takes care of the basic necessities of families. At the same time, while Hungary's 27 per cent VAT rate is one of the highest in the world, corporate tax is only 9 per cent, making Hungary one of Europe's tax havens.

The structure of the budget, based around a clear attempt to buy votes, fits Orbán's long-time neoliberal agenda perfectly – in other words, his agenda to replace welfare with workfare² and consequently to favour the wealthy. Having a registered employment status is indeed a prerequisite for being eligible for most of the announced measures. The family taxation system and other tax reduction elements, many of which have been in practice since 2010, clearly favour the upper middle class. What is more, a study revealed that nearly three quarters of the total tax reduction between 2010 and 2013 boosted the wealth of the highest two deciles.³ Alongside this, the few universal benefits that exist and the minimum pension have not increased since 2008, having thus lost more than 40 per cent of their value. A constant and significant increase in the minimum wage has somewhat reduced the national poverty rates, but compared to the European average, Hungary has one of the highest poverty levels,⁴ social inequalities have slightly increased,⁵ and those who are unable to work are increasingly less supported by the shrinking welfare system.

Fidesz still considers family policies and the rhetoric of defending the family to be the wonder weapon in its campaign

It is also evident that Fidesz still considers family policies and the rhetoric of defending the family to be the wonder weapon in its campaign. His measures in this area resonate with the public, for several reasons.

First, the shock therapy of the 1990s fuelled an extraordinarily social and economic disintegration that was further aggravated by the financial crisis in 2008-09.⁶ The permanent cuts in welfare spending and the increasing dysfunctionality of Hungary's institutions heightened the importance of family networks to provide material, financial and emotional resources to be able to survive, especially in times of permanent crisis. Family networks thus became important to reduce social inequalities (healthcare, education, social protection).

2 Lakner, Z. and Tausz, K. (2016) 'From a Welfare to a Workfare State: Hungary' in by K. Schubert, P. de Villota and J. Kuhlmann (eds) *Challenges to European Welfare Systems*, Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 325-50 (https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-07680-5_15).

3 Tóth, G. C. and Virovác, P. (2013) 'Nyertesek és vesztesek' in *Pénzügyi Szemle/Public Finance Quarterly*, 58 (4), pp. 385-400.

4 Gábos, A., Tomka, Z. and Tóth, I. G. (2021) 'Társadalmi Indikátorok: Szegénység, Kirekesztettség, Társadalmi Kohézió' presented at the Konferencia a Nemzeti Fenntartható Fejlődési Keretstratégia negyedik előrehaladási jelentéséhez készült kutatásokról, Budapest, 11 October (www.tarki.hu/sites/default/files/2021-10/Szegenyseg_kirekesztettseg_tarskohezio_TIGY_prez.pdf).

5 Eurofound (2021) *Wealth Distribution and Social Mobility*, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union (www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef20034en.pdf).

6 Scheiring, G. (2021) *The Retreat of Liberal Democracy: Authoritarian Capitalism and the Accumulative State in Hungary*, Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Nowadays, Hungary is one of the most socially immobile countries in the EU,⁷ where the status of the family practically determines people's future possibilities, and where the usual mobility channels are largely closed.

Second, as part of its austerity packages, the former socialist-liberal government froze or drastically cut the amount of family allowance and paid parental leave. After winning power in 2010, it was among Orbán's first decisions to restore and expand the paid parental (maternal) leave system and to introduce family taxation.

Under Orbán today, support to families even justifies anti-immigration slogans, as the government claims that Hungary ensures its reproduction by increasing fertility through a solid financial backing of Hungarian families instead of accepting refugees or migrants into the country.

The importance and success of its family policies have become the cornerstone of the government's rhetoric. In the last few years, the family support system and fertility policies have become one of Hungary's most symbolic political products. Even Márki-Zay has claimed he intends to keep most of the elements of the current family policy system. He has nevertheless not mentioned that the current system favours the wealthy, wage work-intensive, heteronormative (and non-Roma) nuclear families.

In the last few years, the family support system and fertility policies have become one of Hungary's most symbolic political products

It is not a surprise that in the last couple of years Orbán, Fidesz and the Christian Democrats have discovered the mobilising potential of anti-gender, or more precisely, of anti-LGBT rhetoric. Fidesz repeatedly warns Hungarian families of the alleged 'LGBT-lobby from Brussels' and claims that Hungarian children are endangered by 'forced sex transitions' and 'sexualisation through sex education'. Orbán stands firmly behind the law he introduced in June 2021 that implicitly equates homosexuals with paedophiles. A few weeks after passing this 'Child Protection Act,' Orbán then announced his plans for an upcoming national referendum to make the already introduced law even more severe.

With a change in the electoral law in October 2021, Fidesz has now made it possible to hold parliamentary elections and a referendum on the same day. This opens the gates to using the anti-LGBT topic to mobilise voters in the parliamentary election too. The opposition either dismisses this topic as a red herring that distracts public attention from serious political scandals and corruption cases, or it reacts according to its own ideology. The formerly far-right Jobbik thus strongly opposes any emancipation of sexual and gender minorities, while other opposition parties set up a progressive, inclusive, and emancipative tone. Márki-Zay is an outlier in this regard as he has picked up on rumours and allegations about the alleged homosexuality of Orbán's son and some prominent Fidesz politicians, and keeps alluding to their sexual orientation to highlight the hypocritical nature of Fidesz politics. Although Márki-Zay is

⁷ Eurofound (2017) *Social Mobility in the EU*, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. (www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef1664en.pdf).

criticised by most opposition parties and some of his voters for this, he continues to exploit the homophobic attitudes of approximately half of Hungarian citizens for his own purposes.⁸

In the last couple of years, Fidesz has moved with full speed to build a double power structure, which is aimed at ensuring that the party keeps its powerful positions in institutions, should it lose the parliamentary elections

Alongside all these strategies, Orbán and Fidesz nevertheless still use a belt and braces approach. In the last couple of years, Fidesz has therefore moved with full speed to build a double power structure, which is aimed at ensuring that the party keeps its powerful positions in institutions, should it lose the parliamentary elections. One of the most recent examples has been the restructuring of the extremely underfinanced higher education landscape. Over the last two years, most of the formerly state-funded public universities have started to be governed and controlled by private foundations and management boards of trustees, most of whom are current ministers, state secretaries, and other party cadres.⁹ Furthermore, until the recent elections, and with its two-third majority in the parliament, Fidesz has renewed appointments at the top of powerful political institutions, like the State Audit Office and the National Media Authority, as well as renewing the posts of the Attorney General and

the President of the Republic in order to ensure its continuity and power, even if the party loses the elections.

As a result of these changes, even if the opposition wins the elections, they will find Fidesz-loyalists at the top of the most important political institutions. Given the instability of the opposition coalition, it is hard to imagine how the opposition will govern the country.

Takeaways

Politically, 2021 was surprising and turbulent in Hungary, and there is no doubt that the upcoming months will bring a nasty campaign. Even if the opposition manages to take the power from Orbán and Fidesz, many questions remain open.

First, with a relative majority of the liberal Democratic Coalition inside the united opposition, and with a neoliberal Christian conservative as prime minister, it is unclear how much room there will be for green, social democratic, socially and structurally transformative politics to ensure fair redistribution and to attempt a fast repair of the systems of social protection (including education, public healthcare and social services).

8 European Commission (2019) *Discrimination in the European Union*, Special Eurobarometer 493, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union (<https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/api/deliverable/download/file?deliverableId=71115>).

9 Inotai, E. (2021) 'Fidesz Makes Hungary's Universities an Offer They Can't Refuse', *Balkan Insight* (blog), 23 February (<https://balkaninsight.com/2021/02/23/fidesz-makes-hungarys-universities-an-offer-they-cant-refuse/>).

Second, Fidesz is doing everything to preserve its political and economic position, should it lose the election. This requires extra preparation from the opposition in order to be able to restore institutions that guarantee the rule of law.

Third, while the opposition parties can find more common ground in symbolic or cultural issues, serious tensions could arise between them on social or economic policies, including the reconstruction of the redistribution systems. The internal division of the opposition could easily lead to a situation where questions of redistribution are sacrificed in order to avoid conflict, but this would result in untenable political compromises.

Fourth, Márki-Zay's self-identification as the inside opponent of the opposition is an ephemeral position because the more time he spends as part of the unified opposition, the more difficult it becomes for him to uphold this position. He is just as dependent on the current opposition as the opposition parties are dependent on his mobilising potential among hesitant or disappointed voters. While Fidesz can bring 2.5-3 million supporters to the ballots at any time, especially if it combines the parliamentary election with the anti-LGBT referendum, the opposition cannot win without convincing hundreds of thousands of formerly inactive voters. For this, it must address the social problems of this forgotten group of voters.

Fifth, the opposition must consequently map, address and firmly represent social problems that have been under-discussed or forgotten in the last decade.

Sixth, Márki-Zay does not shy away from striking a populist chord. His paternalistic tone regarding the Roma citizens, or his allegations of the homosexuality of Orbán's son and of some prominent Fidesz members, are alarming. Márki-Zay and his team claim that Fidesz must be beaten at its own game. However, while this tone might resonate with many people's frustration, anger and disappointment, it strengthens the populist sentiment further. There is no sign of considering the long-term effect of such communication.

But even if the opposition find solutions to these issues, it remains to be seen if voters will consider the opposition credible when it is dominated by faces that are already well-known.