

Early Consolidation and Performance Crisis: The Majoritarian-Consensus Democracy Debate in Hungary

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The current period of early consolidation has been a turning point in East-Central European democratisation. It has provoked, however, a majoritarian-consensual debate, first of all in Hungary, as is discussed in this article in a shorter theoretical and in a longer 'empirical' part. The introduction deals with the conceptual framework, followed by its application as a Hungarian case study in an East-Central European context. It is argued that Hungary may be the model for the competing conceptions of democracy in political practice, since (i) an extended version of consensual democracy was established in the early 1990s but opposed by the first government; (ii) there was an attempt by the second government to complete consensual democracy but it failed; (iii) an abrupt turn was made towards majoritarian democracy in the late 1990s by the third government. In Hungary there has been a long debate on majoritarian versus consensual democracy, involving politicians, experts and the general public. Finally, some broad conclusions can be drawn about the troubles of the young democracies.

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: EARLY AND MATURE CONSOLIDATION

In international political science there has been a long debate on majoritarian and consensual democracy as well as on democratic transition and democratic consolidation. As the East-Central European (ECE) countries progress more and more in democratisation, they meet more and more the difficulties that are characteristic of advanced democracies. The problem of the 'quality of democracy' is therefore connected to both consolidation and to the issue of majoritarian versus consensual democracy that has been widely discussed in the West. As such, it is hoped that the

following analysis of the ECE debates may also prove relevant to the Western experience of similar problems, even though these problems have their own regional and country specificity within ECE itself.¹

As a reflection of these current theoretical debates, this study intends to set up a conceptual framework for an understanding of the democratisation process by redefining its stages and introducing the concepts of fragmented democracy and asymmetrical democracy. Elsewhere, the distinction between democratic transition and democratic consolidation in the ECE countries has been treated by elaborating the concept of early consolidation in ECE.² First, distinguishable in the ECE between early and mature consolidation are substages of a development that has already been amply treated by the 'consolidology' literature on Southern Europe (SE), in which the process of consolidation led in the 1980s to the stage of consolidated democracies. This distinction is necessary in ECE for both external and internal reasons, since the external conditions are much less favourable and the tasks of the socio-economic transformations are much greater. The ECE countries have had more or less a common course of democratisation, while at the same time they have their own particular trajectories of development within the region, although at least Hungary and Poland have definitely entered the period of early consolidation.³

The main task of democratic transition was institution-building ('polity first'), while the task of democratic consolidation is a sort of 'cultural revolution', involving the emergence of civic culture and civil society. Democratic consolidation takes place unevenly in various social subsystems, that is, it begins in some parts of the polity and society earlier than in other parts. Thus, for a detailed analysis one has to identify those subsystems where consolidation begins and to describe the sequence of subsystems driven into consolidation. Whereas democratic transition has accounted for a short decade in ECE, democratic consolidation will obviously be a more prolonged stage. Hence, it needs its own internal periodisation, and above all the distinction between 'early consolidation' and the final 'mature consolidation'. Early consolidation in ECE actually overlaps in many ways with the end of democratic transition, since democratic institution-building still continues in meso- and micro-structures, although the basic macro-institutions have already been consolidated. Nevertheless, there has been a shift from institutionalisation to the routinisation of the patterns of democratic culture and to the emergence of a multi-actor democratic society. At the level of micro-institutions there is no dichotomy between institutions and political culture, but they are closely intertwined.⁴ In the period of mature consolidation, the 'building' of civil society comes manifestly to the fore, although its prehistory has already been very dynamic in the 1990s.⁵

Consequently, the ECE region needs its own special theory of democratisation. Instead of Huntington's notion of a Third Wave, it would be better to call the Central and East European democratisations a Fourth Wave. The Third Wave took place in a bipolar world, whereas the Fourth Wave occurs in a unipolar world. The ECE countries have currently experienced the same change between the periods of democratic transition and democratic consolidation that occurred in the SE countries in the early 1980s, but in a completely different environment. In international theoretical debates there has been a change from 'transitology' to 'consolidology', and in consolidology from the 'minimalist' concepts (the creation of formal democratic structures) to the 'maximalist' ones (the routinisation of the broad-based democratic culture).⁶ But given the fact that democratic consolidation in ECE lacks the strong European Community/Union (EU) support enjoyed by the SE countries, the process of democratic consolidation takes place in ECE under more difficult conditions, and will also obviously take more time. Therefore, it has to be separated into two major sub-stages. The early and the mature consolidation as separate periods have to be defined also according to the logic of pre-accession and accession as different, sequential stages of EU integration. Thus, the common process of internal and external developments in ECE needs a new conceptual framework in which the period of democratic transition largely overlaps with that of association to the EU and the period of early democratic consolidation corresponds to that of accession to the EU.

However, early consolidation is clearly distinct from democratic transition, since economic recovery has begun and has already produced sustainable economic growth in ECE. In spite of the robust development of civil society in the late 1990s, however, the criteria of a consolidation proper, that is, the full revival of civil society and 'invention of democratic traditions', cannot yet be met by the ECE countries. Sustained economic growth made democratic institution building in meso- and micro-politics possible, although the abrupt change from a mere multiparty to a real multi-actor politics has not yet taken place. The macro-political actors still occupy the central place in politics, although they are no longer able to monopolise that politics. It follows that, in general, the period of democratic consolidation is more difficult in ECE, both in domestic and international dimensions, than was expected to be the case during the chaotic period of democratic transition.

In the conceptual framework, early consolidation starts with a switch from a 'vicious' circle, in which economic, political and social systemic changes influence each other negatively, to a 'virtuous' circle, in which these subsystems mutually reinforce each other in a positive direction. The

decisive push came from the results of economic systemic change, that is, from the emergence of the dynamic market economies in ECE. The process of gradually overcoming democratic transition was generated by the sustained economic growth from the mid-1990s onwards. In Hungary, for example, the average annual growth of industrial labour productivity was above ten per cent, while economic growth from 1997 onwards has been around five per cent. This has produced a solid base for early consolidation in politics that has taken place through the emergence of relatively stable quasi-two-party systems by the late 1990s. In this way, the preconditions have been set for the emergence of a multi-actor democracy in meso-politics and for the accelerated development of civil society in micro-politics. With all of these transformations of society as a whole, including its civic culture, mature consolidation will begin only after a couple of years through the full working of the 'virtuous' circle. That is, finally, sustained economic growth and consolidated politics will create real systemic change in the entire society.

Second, the problem of consensual democracy has also appeared in 'consolidology' in an indirect way, since in most theories democratic consolidation actually means the establishment of a consensual – or 'substantive' – democracy. For example, although Wolfgang Merkel raises the question of 'which type of democracy' will emerge by consolidation (that is 'majoritarian, consensus or intermediary'), he still defines consolidation in a particular way that more or less coincides with the definition of consensus democracy. Thus he links and identifies consolidation and consensus democracy first of all through the notion of 'social and political inclusion', which means that 'no 'structural' minority group (racial, ethnic, linguistic or religious minorities) as well as relevant political minorities should be barred from or be at a disadvantage in gaining institutional access to political power'.⁷ In fact, the sequencing of development as stages of democratisation also means changing the types of democracies, such that the issues of consolidation and those of consensual democratisation largely overlap or are even treated as the same process. For Philippe Schmitter, the problem of democratic consolidation can be formulated also as one of the 'quality of democracy', by which he understands a consensual model with completed 'partial regimes'.⁸ Finally, in summarising the views of the leading analysts, Peter Mair notes that 'the likelihood of a successful consolidation of democracy depends in large part on the willingness of the protagonists to encourage a culture of compromise and accommodation. Winners should not take all'.⁹

The concept of early consolidation presents this 'consolidation-consensus democracy linkage' or 'equation' in its initial stage. Because of the deficiencies of democratic transition in ECE, early consolidation at the

political level produces a 'performance crisis' in the workings of democracy, as well as, according to the public opinion polls, an increasing number of 'dissatisfied democrats'. Democratic transition was associated with the poor performance of the newly built democratic institutions, and political modernisation was therefore placed high on the agenda. The EU accession process has also pushed the ECE countries towards more efficiency, as the basic documents of the EU – for example, *Agenda 2000*, *Hungary* – have emphasised more and more effective implementation through an increase in the institutional or administrative capacity of the state. Thus, international factors have also been employed to overcome this performance crisis of democracy through the improvement of efficiency and the enhancement of the capacity of the political system.¹⁰

The debate on majoritarian and/or consensus democracy has run through the entire history of the young Hungarian democracy. However, the acute crisis of the 'fragmented' and 'asymmetrical' democracy in the period of early consolidation, and the coming to power of the conservative-liberal government in 1998 have now turned this debate into a central issue and into a permanent controversy. The more elaborated explanation of the concept of fragmented and asymmetrical democracy leads us to the story of the negotiated transition in the late 1980s and to that of the establishment of consensual democracy in Hungary in the early 1990s.¹¹

ESTABLISHMENT OF CONSENSUAL DEMOCRACY IN HUNGARY IN THE EARLY 1990s

In Hungary, constitutional engineering for a democratic polity began as early as 1988–89 and produced a consensus about the consensus, that is, a general agreement of all political actors involved to establish a consensus-style democracy. The reasons for this consent were the following:

- (i) 'Openness': Hungary had a long pre-transition period, becoming a transparent and open country in the 1980s. In 1988–89 there occurred the so-called 'Spanish craze', with Spain becoming a model of successful transition for Hungarians, such that even the German 'imports' within the Constitution were deeply influenced by the Spanish model. There was also very early legislation on the market economy and democratic institutions in 1987–89, before the negotiated transition itself, that is, before the national roundtable talks took place between June and September 1989.
- (ii) 'Constitution-centrism': the negotiating parties had a lot of experts of constitutional law, both among their leading politicians and among their support teams. They were quite aware of the latest constitutional

developments in the West and brought in all kinds of ready-made constitutional devices from Western Europe. Indeed, some research on the constitutional alternatives for Hungary dates back to at least the mid-1980s and was already summarised in the Draft Constitution published in November 1988.

- (iii) 'Uncertainty': in Hungary there were real, multiparty roundtable talks that meant at the same time a high level of uncertainty about electoral outcomes and that also provoked mutual suspicions among political actors. This situation led to pressure on elaborating an oversized system of checks and balances.¹²

There is no doubt that this consensual process of negotiated transition produced a Constitution based on the principles of consensus democracy in Hungary. At the same time, because of the factors mentioned above, the new 1989 Constitution also comprised an extended set of checks and balances, although many of the imported institutions involved here were vaguely defined and/or overlapping. Thus, consensus democracy emerged in the form of a *fragmented* democracy with an overdriven separation of powers. On the other hand, consensus democracy was also institutionalised as an *asymmetrical* democracy. The Constitution as a blueprint for democratic institution-building remained only 'half-made', that is, it was not wholly completed, and therefore the emerging institutional system also remained 'half-made'. These are the typical disadvantages of the early comer, since Hungary began the political and constitutional changes simply too early. The Round Table negotiations produced already a fully amended Constitution, with a clear profile of a consensus democracy but without a coherent arrangement of 'imported' institutions and without completing institutional design for all institutions. When the historical moment of 'consensus about the consensus' was over, the politicians and the constitutional lawyers, as well as the political scientists, realised these contradictions, but the parties themselves have never been able to find a new consensus on how to correct the imbalances in the constitutional structure. Despite some very important corrections that have been made since then, the Hungarian polity has kept its infantile disease: a basically consensual democracy with many features of fragmented and asymmetrical democracy. It has to be noted that in Hungary the main political actors, the parliamentary parties, emerged in the late 1980s, and, with the exception of a later organised extreme right party, the same parties have also dominated the political scene since then.¹³

Consensus democracy has both institutional and cultural sides, that is, it presupposes an extended system of institutions and a certain level of democratic culture in the population. The institutional side embraces at the macro-political level a set of institutional checks and balances, the most

representative of which have been the constitutional courts in ECE. At the political meso-level an all-embracing system of social and political actors is required, involving diverse and autonomous organisations and interest representatives. Beyond the usual organised interests, various minority organisations and territorial self-governments also need to be created. At the micro-level the pluralisation of civil society organisations has to reach some maturity. The collective rights of smaller groups have to be confirmed and their civic associations ensured freedom of protection and representation. Correspondingly, the democratic culture of citizens has to develop to the degree that they can make use of these organisations at all three levels and activate them properly. As recent research points out, the closer we come to the realm of the pluralised civil society, the more the institutional and cultural sides become inseparable, while at the same time the macro-political institutions cannot work properly without active and participatory citizens. Both the institutional and cultural dimensions can only be created gradually, within a given consensual constitutional framework, but once they have been created, at least to some extent, they provide a safeguard against the attempt of some parties and governments to turn back towards some forms of majoritarian democracy. Simply said, consensus democracy in this sense represents a high-level balance in democratic structures, whereas majoritarian democracy represents a low-level balance. Finally, this process of the emergence of consensus democracy has usually been accompanied by fierce theoretical debates about the character and quality of democracy in the countries concerned.

In short, consensus democracy is a very sophisticated political structure and its completion has been a long process in all democracies. In addition, it needs renewed efforts of adjustment even in consolidated democracies. In young democracies one can identify its transitory and/or contradictory forms and stages. Fragmented democracy is a distorted version of the consensus democracy with an overdriven separation of powers and an overlapping system of institutional 'checks and balances'. Hungary imported from the late 1980s and later (during the cycles of the Transitory Parliament, 1985–90 and the First Parliament, 1990–94) all kinds of democratic devices from the West for its constitutional set-up, including, among others, a very powerful Constitutional Court, an ombudsman system, and a system of local-territorial self-governments that served as an independent branch of power. The competencies of these institutions have been partly overlapping, partly contradictory, but also partly missing as detailed regulation. This fragmentation of the polity has been one of the reasons for the relatively low performance of the new democratic regime in Hungary in the 1990s, a problem that has become even worse as a result of conflicts in intergovernmental relations.

The first freely elected government regarded this system of checks and balances as limiting its power, and generalised the problem as one of limits on governability as such. Actually, the introduction of the prime ministerial system or 'chancellor democracy' through a major amendment of the Constitution in 1990 enhanced the powers of the executive while keeping all the constitutional devices of checks and balances. Thus, the first government in the early 1990s advanced the concept of majoritarian democracy more and more assertively. In this view, regular free and fair elections every four years should be the only necessary institutional limitation on the government's power. The contradiction of 'democracy' and 'constitutionalism' rose very strongly in the First Parliament as a tension between the freely elected government and the basic constitutional principles.¹⁴

In the early 1990s, the debate began on what should be the constitutional limitations of a simple majority elected for a four-year parliamentary cycle. In this situation, in fact, the chief 'balancing' political actor was the Constitutional Court and not the parliamentary opposition. The Constitution introduced a clear distinction between acts passed by a simple majority or by a qualified, two-thirds majority. At the beginning of democratic transition, the most important acts were two-thirds majority laws. This meant, indeed, a limitation of the government's power, and obliged the government to reach compromises with the opposition. In fact, during that First Parliament the fiercest political struggles surrounded these acts, and because the national-conservative government was not ready to compromise with the opposition, only some were passed. The period of consent was over, and when the first freely elected government stepped in, it turned against the structure of the consensus democracy in elaborating the details of the system of democratic institutions.¹⁵

The first government claimed to represent the 'national interests' and wanted, on behalf of directly represented 'nation', to transcend its competencies by dominating the other centres of power. The national-conservative government had a series of conflicts with the president of the republic, the parliamentary opposition, the organised interests and the territorial actors: with the parliament about the new Standing Orders; with organised interests about social partnership; with the territorial actors about state control in the intergovernmental relationship; and, finally, with the president of the republic about the appointments of the new presidents of the Hungarian radio and television.¹⁶ This last conflict, involving the removal of the independent presidents of the public media by the national conservative government, triggered a media war. The far right within the largest coalition party took the 'winner takes all' principle seriously by extending it to the (public) media. Actually, the first freely elected Hungarian government

wanted to control the media and this media war carried on throughout the entire period of the national-conservative government.

While the fragmented structure in 1989 came from over-competition among the warring parties at macro-level, the asymmetrical character was caused by the marginalisation of social actors by the same parties at meso-level, and by the weakness of civic associations at micro-level. This 'over-participation' has remained a major feature of the young democracy in Hungary; that is, as an effort by the parties to monopolise political life and institutionalise their quasi-monopoly. The social actors were not really included in the process of negotiated transition, since they looked too strong at that time for the new and weak political actors. Actually, the old 'official' trade unions participated as the 'third side' at the negotiations, but had no influence. Furthermore, the national Round Table talks had a section dealing with the problems of social transition but did not conclude with any meaningful results, unlike the other section dealing with constitutional matters. Although organised interests play a very important role in democratisation, in this respect, indeed, the negotiations remained unfinished. The political actors neglected these unsolved social issues and marginalised social actors more and more as the founding elections in the spring of 1990 came closer and closer.

The same story of the half-made institutions applies also to the territorial actors. However, there had also been consent during the Round Table negotiations around the idea of creating local self-governments as a separate and independent branch of power. A sharp controversy surfaced later, after the first free elections, in the process of the detailed legislation, which should have served to entitle these local bodies to a real independence. The asymmetrical elaboration of institutional structures in this respect by the Constitution and through further legislation has appeared most markedly concerning the regulations of local and regional self-governments, and this also reflects the unfinished character of institution building. Basically, there is a huge contrast between the legal-political independence of territorial actors, on the one hand, and their financial dependence on the state, on the other. In addition, because of the drastic restriction of the public sector and the radical economic crisis management, the incomes of local and regional self-governments were curtailed throughout the 1990s, being allowed to keep only five per cent of the local personal income tax in 2000 as against 50 per cent in the early 1990s. With this creeping financial re-centralisation, territorial actors have become more and more dependent on the state administration and this has resulted in their own partial re-politicisation.

The first government wanted to establish a quasi-majoritarian democracy. The opposition was therefore forced into the position of representing the principles of consensus democracy by claiming that the

Constitution stipulated a multi-actor polity with many independent institutions and, in this way, democracy meant a permanent process of negotiations with compromise-seeking behaviour. After the negotiated transition the opposition wanted to complete the process of the import of a Western, mostly German, model, in order to institutionalise a 'negotiated democracy' (*Verhandlungsdemokratie*). At the same time, they took some counterproductive steps, when they forced some measures upon the government that further complicated the situation of fragmented democracy, for example, by fragmenting local self-governments. In fact, and at the insistence of the Alliance of Free Democrats, all Hungarian communities, no matter how small, have become quasi-independent 'republics'. Thus, 3,200 small republics have emerged in Hungary and, in the cases of the very small communities involved, it remains very difficult to organise the provision of their basic services. In this way, the long-term tendency to establish consensus democracy was partly overshadowed by the short-term demands of party politics.

In Hungary, one can notice a periodic change in the emergence of consensus democracy; that is, while in one period consensual efforts dominate, in the following it will be the majoritarian efforts that come to the fore. More generally, this trend is also apparent in many young democracies, with some basic compromises and consensual measures being initially accepted everywhere in the early 1990s, and with the first governments then making a turn towards a majoritarian model and the concentration of power. The specific character of Hungarian development is the early and extended constitutionalisation of consensual democracy that made the features of fragmented and asymmetrical democracy more marked than elsewhere. This was to prove a strong limitation on the efforts of the first, national-conservative government to establish a quasi-majoritarian democracy. Social and political resistance to the new concentration of power was even more pronounced than in Poland. Moreover, in the wake of the emergence of the extreme right as a political actor, a large mass movement called Democratic Charter was mobilised against the abuse of democratic principles by the government in 1992–93, and, as a result, the first government suffered a crushing defeat at the second free elections.

THE FAILURE OF THE SOCIALIST-LIBERAL GOVERNMENT TO COMPLETE CONSENSUAL DEMOCRACY

The next socialist-liberal Horn government (1994–98) made it clear from the very beginning that its aim was to return to consensus-type democracy by strengthening the consensual features of the constitution and the ensuing legislation. Yet, far from the crisis phenomena of the fragmented and

asymmetrical democracy in the mid-1990s decreasing, it actually increased in some respects due to the half measures of the government, since neither the political will, nor the common vision for a new, coherent Constitution were present in this coalition. In fact, the second government did make an attempt to pass a coherent Constitution by removing contradictions and legal gaps, but eventually failed owing to a lack of agreement concerning the necessary changes even among the coalition parties themselves.

Beyond macro-politics, the new socialist-liberal government pledged itself in favour of a social-economic pact along the lines of the Moncloa pact in Spain. This was abandoned in late February 1995, however, in the wake of the austerity programme (the so-called 'Bokros package', named after the Minister of Finance) that was announced on 12 March 1995 as a radical form of economic crisis management. The same failure occurred with regard to the territorial actors, since no solution was found for two interrelated problems - the fragmentation of local self-government and the relationship between the 19 traditional counties and the seven new macro-regions. Despite these failures, the efforts to further elaborate the system of democratic institutions and their regulations by the second government were evident, and there were partial successes in many fields. In the end, however, the overall result of the second government and Second Parliament, reflecting a prolonged and protracted period of institution building, appeared as unfinished business. In addition, due to the huge legislative burden, the parliament still worked as a law-making factory, at least in quantitative terms, since there was still no intensive or qualitative legislation.¹⁷

The socialist-liberal government failed to produce a new Constitution but, unlike the premature or 'rush to fix' constitutions, a constitutional state was nevertheless emerging in Hungary. If one makes a distinction between the Constitution as a document and constitutionalism as practice, then the same distinction can be, and should be, made between the constitutional principles of consensus democracy and the reality of a working consensus democracy. Just as in the theories of constitutional law we see the shift from the term 'legal security' being applied in the early 1990s to the situation of a stable legal system, becoming, as predictability came more to the fore, 'legal certainty',¹⁸ and then, finally, through the focus on the enforceability of rules by an independent judiciary, 'legal safety', so also when we approach consensual democracy from the perspective of its real existence, we find that constitutionalism developed a great deal in the cycle of the Horn government, although in this case complete safety was not reached. The workings of consensus democracy were improved by the vigorous development of local self-government, and by the other territorial and social actors, even if a proper and coherent Constitution was never elaborated. In

Hungary, unlike other ECE countries, the simultaneity of economic and political changes was managed in a piecemeal way. In fact, the emphasis was placed on the 'polity first' approach, since the Hungarian Constitution was conceived in the spirit of consensus democracy.

The establishment of consensus democracy led to a paradox in Hungary: the more consensus democracy a country has, the more detailed the regulations that have to be elaborated in its meso-structures, and, therefore, the more chance there is of disagreement concerning this detailed regulation. In fact, this paradox was characteristic of the entire activity of the socialist-liberal government. The coalition parties had no serious disagreement about the macro-political constitutional regulations (division or separation of powers), or, if they had any, they pushed them into background. For instance, The Hungarian Socialist Party (HSP) favoured the direct election of the president, but did not insist on its introduction when it was strongly opposed by the Alliance of Free Democrats (AFD). But the two parties had sharp disagreements about meso-politics, and above all about the role of social actors. Thus, while the HSP wished to include in the Constitution more social rights and more competencies for social actors, this was fiercely opposed by the AFD. This particular controversy led to the failure to pass the new draft Constitution, missing the two-thirds majority hurdle in the parliament on 27 June 1996.

Despite this controversy about corporatism, one can observe substantial developments in the mid-1990s in three fields that are very characteristic for a consensus model: minority rights, social rights and media freedom. First, in December 1994 at the municipal elections, minority self-governments were elected and, based on them, minority national councils were organised. Second, although the austerity package reduced its extension, the corrections of the Constitutional Court reconfirmed the vigorous existence of social rights in Hungary, including the participation of social actors and relevant organisations in its enforcement. Third, the 1996 media law established all-party steering committees (curatoria) to control the public media and invited social actor and civil society representation beyond parties into these bodies. But although such steps widened the horizon of consensus democracy and its effectiveness, the performance crisis was not solved.¹⁶

In fact, the various contradictory steps in institutional developments served to prepare and provoke the crisis of the fragmented and asymmetrical democracy. In this situation there were two directions that could be followed in order to get out of this developing performance crisis and thereby to increase the capacity of the political system: either that towards majoritarianism or that towards consensus.¹⁷ The socialist-liberal government in the cycle of the Second Parliament wanted to keep consensual democracy by enlarging it and, through fine-tuning in constitutional

engineering, to harmonise the competencies of the various institutions. They failed in this, but they did succeed in radical crisis management and in creating sustainable economic growth. However, crisis management was one of the reasons for their subsequent electoral defeat, and the result was that, after the third free elections, and during the cycle of the Third Parliament and the new national-conservative government, a new effort to create some kind of a majoritarian democracy clearly came to the fore.

'PRESIDENTIALISATION OF DEMOCRACY' BY THE CONSERVATIVE-LIBERAL GOVERNMENT

In 1998 a new attempt began to return to a basically majoritarian democracy by the new centre-right government under the leadership of the Alliance of Young Democrats (Fidesz). This new coalition intended to concentrate all executive powers in the central government in order to speed up the decision-making process and to enhance the policy-making capacity of the political system as a whole. The government has used all possible means in order to exclude – partially or completely – other actors, and most notably the opposition parties, from the policy-making process. The efforts to return to majoritarian democracy or to establish a presidential-style democracy in a parliamentary disguise can be noticed in three fields:

First, in the prime-ministerial system the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) plays a central role, as it also does in Germany and Spain. In Hungary, in fact, during the first and second governments, there was an incompatibility between the constitutional powers and the capacity of the office-organisation of the Hungarian prime minister, since the 'import' of this constitutional arrangement was not accompanied by a full provision of resources. The third government has completed this 'import' by establishing a big central organisation similar to the Chancellor's Office in Germany. This is a very powerful organisation, but in principle its working does not necessarily lead to majoritarian democracy, in that, at least in the other systems, it has been properly balanced by other institutions. Nor need the completion of democratic institutions with a proper PMO in itself have led towards majoritarian democracy in Hungary. In practice, however, this has become the case, in that the new office, by controlling closely all ministries and extending its powers well beyond the traditional competencies of its original German model, has actually become the symbol of the recent drive towards majoritarianism. Thus the PMO has developed a large department for political communication and it has also taken on the function of interest reconciliation. In both functions it has tried to influence and control civil society, putting pressure on the media and on the top civil organisations. The individual ministries have lost power and influence in a process that has

been translated onto the ministries themselves in a drive to weaken their various quangos and to reduce their relative independence. Some important independent agencies, like the National Board for Technological Development, have been turned into simple departments in ministries, and many public foundations have been directly attached to the ministries concerned. In such a way, the rather differentiated field of the central government has become much vertically concentrated. At the same time it has also been reduced horizontally through the extension of competencies of the Prime Minister's Office at the expense of the individual ministries.²¹

Second, in 1998 a simple majority rule began in the Third Parliament. When the new parliament was first elected, and during its first session when the parliamentary positions were distributed, the first conflict broke out, since the new government was not ready to allocate the committee seats proportionally as stipulated by the Standing Orders. HSP, the largest opposition party, received fewer committee memberships than its proportion of seats. This was not simply breaking with tradition or violating particular rules; it also had practical effect. One-third of committee members have special rights, such as, for example, the right to present their minority views in the plenary session. The reduction of opposition MPs below one-third in some committees is therefore a powerful tool to silence their voice in parliament. In addition, when, in early 1999, the government wanted to amend the police law, a two-thirds majority law, by a simple majority, the Constitutional Court ruled the bill unconstitutional. When this means of legislation was thereby barred to the government, it tried to circumvent the qualified majority laws in other fields by so-called 'reinterpretation'.²²

The central issue for 'reinterpretation' has concerned the schedule of parliament. The most effective idea to reduce the role of the opposition, the media and the public at large in parliamentary affairs has been the introduction of the three-week working cycle in the Third Parliament. The First and Second Hungarian Parliaments had a one-week working cycle, that is, every week began with a two-day plenary session, followed by a one-day meeting of parliamentary committees. In this way, both the public and the media had the opportunity to follow the parliamentary debate, parliament itself could react to all events directly, legislation was continuous, and the opposition had ample time to scrutinise the executive. The new system in the Third Parliament has a three-week cycle – the first week for plenary sessions, the second week for committee meetings and the third week for constituency work (although only 45 per cent of Hungarian MPs have their own single member individual constituency). This again contravenes Standing Orders, and the Constitutional Court ordered the parliament either to cease the practice or to amend the Standing Orders. As

yet, however, the orders have not been amended, since the governing coalition does not enjoy the two-thirds majority that is required. The practice of the three-week cycle has been continued, however, being justified by the claim that the Standing Orders have not been changed but simply 'reinterpreted'.²³ This new practice has served to reduce the time allocated to opposition MPs to criticise the government and scrutinise the current legislation. It also reduces the control function of the parliament itself. Legislation has become discontinuous, interrupted for up to two weeks, attendance at plenary sessions and parliamentary committee meetings has not improved, and many MPs have often been absent, including those in the governing coalition. As a result, the Hungarian parliament has been devalued and the parliament as a political actor has played a much less important role in the recent parliamentary cycle than was the case during the First and the Second Parliaments.

In the current parliamentary cycle, the image of the parliament has been blurred for the public anyway, in that the opposition has become very heterogeneous. While both the HSP and AFD are clearly opposition parties, the right-wing Party of Hungarian Justice and Life (PHJL) is usually supportive of the government. Having an ally outside the government has also been a powerful tool for the government in deciding the composition of the steering committees (*curatorium*) controlling public media. In principle, these committees are all-party bodies, but during the Third Parliament they have been composed of coalition parties only, and they have acted as a means of exercising government control over the media in a way that is contrary to the function that was assigned to them by the 1996 act on the public media. In fact, the PHJL has demanded more representatives on these bodies than proportionality would allow, and disputes over their composition has led to only the pro-government seats being filled, a development accepted by the Constitutional Court which ruled that an incomplete committee was better than no committee.²⁴ Encouraged by this decision, in late February 2000 the government elected incomplete, pro-government steering committees for all institutions of the public media with the assistance of the PHJL. In protest, the MPs of the HSP and AFD walked out of the plenary session on 29 February 2000. The issue was then sent back to the Constitutional Court and on 6 March 2000 the Chief Public Prosecutor resigned in protest.

In the Third Parliament the definition of party faction has also become vague and elusive. The electoral law places a threshold of five per cent for parties to enter parliament, whereas Standing Orders demand 15 MPs in order to establishing a party faction. These two criteria have come into conflict in the Third Parliament, since the PHJL reached the five per cent threshold but had only 14 (now 12) MPs, and since the Hungarian

Democratic Forum (HDF) did not reach the threshold but had 17 (now 16) MPs elected in single-member districts. The new coalition included the HDF, while the PHIL voted for the government's programme, 'with some reservations'. Hence, it was in the interest of the new government to grant faction status (with all the benefits entailed in financial and personnel resources and in the right to participate in House Committees and standing committees, and so on) to both parties. The Constitutional Court accepted this decision but instructed the Third Parliament to pass a coherent regulation on the faction status in the Standing Orders.²⁵

Third, the incumbent government has pursued a policy of confrontation not only with political actors but also with social actors. Meso-politics, as a site of asymmetrical democracy, has not been further developed or completed. On the contrary, its capacity and competencies have been reduced, and this has actually enhanced its asymmetrical character. The imperfect but still rather efficient system of the tripartite Interest Reconciliation Council (established in 1989) has been abolished and an Economic Council has been organised instead. This is only a consultative body without actual powers, convened twice a year. Parallel to this, the National Labour Council has also been established in the competitive sector with very restricted negotiating powers. Both changes have served to undermine the whole system of interest reconciliation and concertation, with not only the trade union confederations, but also the business interest organisations being marginalised. Territorial actors have also been marginalised. The independent tax income of the territorial and local self-governments has been further reduced, this time to a mere five per cent of the personal income tax of the residents. In 1998 the government lost the electoral fight for the post of Lord Mayor of Budapest, and the city soon faced drastic reductions in levels of infrastructural investment. The heads of the county administrative offices were fired in December 1999 and replaced by government loyalists. These county offices were established in 1994 to provide a legal control on the territorial actors without intervening in their internal affairs, and their heads are supposedly civil servants rather than political appointees. Thus, by removing the independent civil servants and appointing 'party soldiers' instead, the government has promoted its regional clientela and local patronage system, and again by 'reinterpreting' the legal regulations. In late 2000 the government appointed partisan 'development managers' to the 150 Hungarian small regions.

The marginalisation of social and territorial actors has not only run counter to the tendency towards multi-actor democracy in Western Europe and the European Union, but has also challenged the increasing pluralisation of the Hungarian civil society. One of the most important processes of democratic transition in Hungary was the robust development

of civil society. By the late 1990s, some 60,000 independent organisations had emerged – NGOs, foundations and other civil organisations – and had begun to play a vital role in the life of Hungarian society as a whole. These civil organisations as actors in ‘micro-politics’ closely co-operated with those in ‘meso-politics’, and expected enhanced opportunities for their autonomous actions in the next decade. In the spirit of consensus democracy, they sought to act as independent communities with their own collective rights, and demanded special treatment from the state authorities, offering themselves as partners in their special fields for the other social and territorial actors, including the central government. From the late 1990s, however, the government has tried to curb their autonomy, for example, by reducing their support in the state budget and/or by placing them under the control of the powerful Prime Minister’s Office.

All these efforts to establish a quasi-majoritarian democracy have met with strong resistance in Hungarian society. The majoritarian efforts can be summarised in the tendency to ‘presidentialise’ Hungarian democracy by the incumbent prime minister. The prime minister rarely attends parliamentary sessions and has also avoided parliamentary control in the cases of the interpellations and parliamentary questions by shifting the duty to answer them to the other ministers who function, in fact, as his secretaries. He has also introduced a series of annual ‘Messages to the Nation’, along the lines of the American State of the Union address, delivering these outside parliament to his followers in a ceremonial building, and for the benefit of the public TV channel.

This practical–political turn towards majoritarian democracy, what in effect has become the presidentialisation of a parliamentary democracy, has been accompanied by sharp theoretical discussions at three levels that have to be treated separately:

- (i) The new national-conservative government has tried not only to introduce a quasi-majoritarian democracy in its political practice. Its practical steps have induced an intensive political struggle and have also been accompanied by the official declarations on the necessity of majoritarian democracy. This approach has opened a political and theoretical debate on the future, and the optimal type, of democracy in Hungary. Some theoreticians of the new national-conservative coalition, such as Béla Pokol, a constitutional lawyer from the national-populist Independent Smallholders Party (ISP), have made an effort to explain the principles and reasons for the return to majoritarian democracy. He has argued in several publications, and also in newspaper articles, that the representatives of the former regime still control the major social sub-systems such as the media, organised

interests and territorial actors. The independence of these spheres from the central government, he argues, would therefore mean a continuation of the former communist regime. Hence their autonomy has to be abolished. In general, according to most representatives of the new conservatives, a real systemic change requires the concentration of power in the hands of the central government and, hence, a return to majoritarian democracy.²⁶

Opposition politicians, on the other hand, such as the president of the HSP, the largest opposition party, have emphasised that the biggest difference between the government and the opposition in the Third Parliament has been in 'the concept and the practice of democracy'.²⁷ The opposition has demanded consensual democracy and the continuation of its practices. Beyond this political conflict, new forms of social conflicts have arisen about the distribution of the gains coming from the accelerated economic growth. There has been a public debate about the role of social actors and their claim for wage increases. Among others, Gábor Obláth, the Head of Kopint-Datorg, one of the most influential policy institutes, has pointed out that a new and basic compromise is needed between government and society for further crisis management under the circumstances of sustained economic growth.²⁸ The government, however, has rejected the principle of social partnership.

- (ii) Throughout the 1990s an academic debate has been going on about the concepts of democracy and the sequencing of democratisation that has accelerated and intensified with the coming to power of the new government. Most Hungarian political scientists have taken consensual democracy for granted in Hungary. But in the late 1990s some scholars have supported the turn of the new government towards majoritarian democracy, and the idea of majoritarian democracy has been incorporated into the recent book by András Körösesny, *Government and Politics in Hungary*. At the same time, this idea has appeared in the papers of Körösesny and Béla Pokol written for the *Decade-book of Hungary*, while other contributions to this book on the ten years of democratisation in Hungary have represented the idea of consensual democracy.²⁹
- (iii) The public at large has had its own discussions about the types and performance of democracy in all public fora, including written, electronic and printed media. The majoritarian-consensual democracy debate has turned out to be the biggest public political controversy in Hungary. Its results can be detected from public opinion surveys. Public support for the third government has drastically declined and the

same has happened to its leading political figures. Among the 25 leading politicians, Viktor Orbán, the prime minister has usually ranked as the thirteenth or fourteenth and István Csurka, the president of the 'national-radical' PHJL as last. Two years into the Third Parliament this renewed attempt at creating a majoritarian democracy in Hungary is running into problems, and is likely to provoke a lot of tensions in the coming years.³⁰

CONCLUSION: PERSPECTIVES OF CONSENSUAL DEMOCRACY IN THE CONTEXT OF EUROPEANISATION

The Hungarian case study on the controversy between majoritarian and consensus democracy leads also to some general conclusions for democratisation theory in ECE and beyond. First, although there is a relative consensus about democratisation at the beginning of systemic change, this tends to evaporate as the growing strength of political parties becomes a focus for conflict within the newly established system of institutions. Second, although there is consent about the safeguards of democracy in the Constitution in general terms, incumbent governments tend to consider these limits to their power and their capacity to govern. Third, the type of democracy – consensus or majoritarian, or a particular mixture – will tend to be decided only in the period of early consolidation, and, correspondingly, this decision is part of what defines early consolidation rather than democratic transition.

Since the full conflict comes into being only after the successful completion of democratic transition, early consolidation as a new period has a higher level of political and social conflicts than before – except for the initial period of systemic change in 1989–90. In some ways, history does repeat itself, with the same conflict coming back 'on a higher level' as debates about the future of democracy become based on the experiences of the first decade of democratisation. Already in 1992, after the first round of free elections, Jon Elster realised the danger of majoritarian democracy for the democratisations in Central and Eastern Europe: 'In this region, majority rule is being adopted across the board ... there has been a shift from the despotism of the Party to the despotism of majority, both inimical to the protection of minority rights.'³¹ Some of his arguments concerning majoritarian problems and possible counter-majoritarian solutions can be briefly summarised. First, a majority government will always be tempted to manipulate political rights in order to increase its chances of re-election. The timing of elections, economic provisions for the population before the elections, abusing public media for self-presentation, and so on, may be used to prevent the popular majority from putting a new government in

place. Second, the government may have both a standing interest and 'momentary passion' that makes it deaf to the demands of the rule of law. It presents its particular interest as common or national interests to suppress other interests and, driven by the illusion of representing national interest, tends to silence minority or partial interests. Third, a majority type of government develops an ideology to exclude minority rights and to legitimise its claim for exclusivity. This may take the form of an emphasis on 'Christian Europe' or on claims to express monopoly of national traditions and interests.³²

The following counter-majoritarian, rights-protecting or constitutionalism-oriented devices can be used against the extremes of majoritarian democracy: First, constitutionalism in general can be used as a basic device against the short-term efforts of incumbent governments; or constitutional entrenchment of rights in particular, with special respect to various minority rights. The best protection is the system of the two-thirds majority laws, such as in the Hungarian case, where statutory legislation in a number of specific domains (for example, electoral laws) also requires a two-thirds majority. Second, judicial review by Constitutional Courts as *ex ante* or *ex post* review of legislation. In the Hungarian case, for example, Elster notes that the court has been by far the most active, being among the most powerful constitutional courts in the world. Third, the Constitutional Courts have to be able to protect first of all the separation of powers, including the independence of the judiciary from the executive. They also have to protect this system from themselves, in that, as Elster argues, their main task must be purely negative one of eliminating unconstitutional laws rather than becoming involved in positive law-making.

As we have seen, the problem of majoritarian democracy and that of the counter-majoritarian measures has appeared very markedly in Hungary, since 'the country that was least despotic – Hungary – is emerging as the one most strongly wedded to the principles of constitutionalism'.³³ The argument is that this contradiction between the most developed consensual democracy and the strongest effort for a return to majoritarian democracy has emerged here in the sharpest way, so Hungary can be considered in this respect a classical case. The 'separation of powers' and 'checks and balances' systems in Hungary cannot be reduced to the role of the Constitutional Court, as Elster suggests, even though there is no doubt that the Constitutional Court has become one of the major players. Other institutions are also important, however, including the ombudsman; the independent office of the Chief Public Prosecutor; the National Judicial Council separated from the Ministry of Justice and created to supervise the courts; the fully independent National Bank and the Audit Office. All these institutions have been attached to and controlled by parliament, so instead

of the traditional control of the executive power by the legislative branch, the Hungarian parliament controls the government mostly through these new institutions, including of course the Constitutional Court. On the one hand, this complex system of institutions has worked to counterbalance the tendencies by government to divert developments towards majoritarian democracy. But, as a fragmented democracy, it has also contained a series of contradictions, legal gaps and overlaps within the system that have hindered the performance of the democratic polity.

Beyond these domestic problems, there are two external factors that are currently pushing for the completion of consensual democracy and basically determining the 'forced course development' or 'path dependent development' in Hungary. First, Hungary has to accomplish a full structural adjustment to the institutional structures of the EU. In the EU, a new, extended meaning of representation has appeared and in the direct accession process it has been formulated as stringent and mandatory preconditions for entry, and the EU has clearly formulated the demand for an end to the 'performance crisis' or the 'implementation gap' in the ECE countries.⁵⁴ Second, the globalisation process has also been pushing for a consensual structure of decision-making, that is, for the involvement of all the interest groups concerned. 'No globalisation without representation' was also the slogan in the streets of Seattle during the World Trade Organisation meeting that confronted the new requirements of globalisation. In this sense, the ECE states have been shooting at a moving target because they have to secure a favourable business climate under the permanently changing conditions of globalisation.⁵⁵

This confrontation of the two concepts of democracy has surfaced under the new circumstances of globalisation and Europeanisation. Thus, it is not by chance that the efforts of the third government to establish a quasi-majoritarian democracy in Hungary have already met with strong international and internal resistance. Somewhat paradoxically, the EU has set higher standards for applicants than for members. The EU has always had a concept of consensual democracy, but the particular requirements as entry conditions have been constantly redefined by the main EU institutions, and also by the Council of Europe. This paradox, however, has played a positive role, since it is likely to push the ECE states, including Hungary, towards consensus democracy, including provisions for dealing with minority issues. In fact, the correction of the present 'asymmetrical' democracy means the establishment of those particular institutions in mesopolitics in Hungary that are vitally needed for the EU integration in order to fit into the system of the EU institutions (ECOSOC and Council of Regions).⁵⁶ In the end, therefore, and sometimes despite themselves, the governments of the new democracies are being forced to accept that winners should not take all.

NOTES

1. For a full discussion of consolidation and quality of democracy, see W. Merkel, 'The Consolidation of Post-Autocratic Democracies: A Multi-level Model', *Democratization* 5/3 (1998), and W. Merkel, *Systemtransformation* (Opladen: Leske and Budrich 1999). The blind alley in democratisation has been conceptualised by him in W. Merkel, 'Defective Democracies', Working Papers of Instituto Juan March (Madrid), No. 132, March 1999.
2. See A. Ágh, *The Politics of Central Europe* (London: Sage 1998), and A. Ágh, *Emerging Democracies in East Central Europe and the Balkans* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar 1998). For my elaboration of notion of early consolidation, see, e.g., A. Ágh, 'Early and Mature Consolidation in East Central Europe: The Case of Europeanization in Hungary', in Vladimíra Dvoráková (ed.), *Success or Failure? Ten Years After* (Prague: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung 1999), pp.39-55, and A. Ágh, 'The Early Consolidation in ECE: Parliamentarization as a Region-Specific Way of Democratization', *Aula* (Budapest) 21/3, pp.83-110.
3. Concerning the ECE developments, the focus of theoretical debates has shifted from transition to consolidation and there have been several attempts to define the criteria of democratic consolidation. This shift has taken place first of all through the seminal work of J. Linz and A. Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation* (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press 1996).
4. D. Fuchs and R. Edeltraud in their chapter, 'Cultural Conditions of the Transition to Liberal Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe', in S. Barnes and J. Simon (eds.), *The Postcommunist Citizen* (Budapest: Erasmus Foundation 1998), p.40, give an overview of the definitions of political culture. They summarise their approach as follows: 'the political culture of a democracy can be determined on two levels. The first is that of the structurally relevant values which are legally codified by a constitution. The second level is that of community commitment to the implemented values. Where there is a high degree of commitment, political culture is institutionalised. Common to both of these levels is a concern for values. And it is these values that are central to our conception of culture. The political culture of a democracy thus consists of implemented and institutionalized values.' J. Thomassen and J. Van Deth, 'Political Involvement and Democratic Attitudes' in the same book edited by Barnes and Simon, refers to the concept of Robert Putnam in his book *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1993) on the role of civic communities in democratic consolidation.
5. There has been a robust development of civil society organisations in Hungary since 1989, as briefly discussed later. In 1997 there were already 51,032 non-profit organisations and by 2000 more than 60,000. The Hungarian political and socio-economic developments have been documented in detail by the volumes of S. Kurtán, P. Sándor and L. Vass (eds.), *Political Yearbook of Hungary* (Budapest: Hungarian Centre for Democracy Studies, Volumes 1988-2000). See also S. Kurtán, P. Sándor and L. Vass (eds.), *Magyarország évtizedkönyve: A rendszerváltás (1988-1998)* [The Decade-book of Hungary: Systemic Change, 1988-1998] (Budapest: Hungarian Centre for Democracy Studies 1998).
6. See above all F. Plasser, P. Ulram and H. Waldrauch, *Democratic Consolidation in East-Central Europe* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998).
7. Merkel, 'The Consolidation of Post-Autocratic Democracies', p.48.
8. P. Schmitter and T.L. Karl, 'The Types of Democracy Emerging in Southern and Eastern Europe and South and Central America', in P. Volten (ed.), *Bound to Change: Consolidating Democracy in East Central Europe* (Prague & New York: EastWest Institute 1992), p.433.
9. See P. Mair, *Party System Change* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1998), p.197. In fact, the same effort is noted by Richard Rose and his co-authors. They have described the consolidation of democracy as 'completing democracy' by arguing that in the former stage there is only an 'incomplete democracy'. In this presentation consolidated democracy has been defined as completed with some consensual practices and high performance of the democratic polity. See R. Rose, W. Mishler and C. Haerpfer, *Democracy and its Alternatives: Understanding Post-Communist Societies* (Cambridge: Polity Press 1998), pp.199-200.
10. Agenda 2000, Commission Opinion on Hungary's Application for Membership of the European Union, Supplement 6/97 (Luxembourg: European Commission 1997), pp.72, 79.

11. I have described the fragmented and asymmetrical democracy in Hungary in greater detail in A. Ágh, 'Early Consolidation in Hungary and the Europeanisation of the Hungarian Polity', in G. Pridham and A. Ágh (eds.), *Democratic Transition and Consolidation in East-Central Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2001).
12. I have fully developed these ideas in A. Ágh, 'The International Context of the Emergence of Constitutional State in East Central Europe: The Case of Hungary', in G. Mangott, H. Waldrauch and S. Day (eds.), *Democratic Consolidation – The International Dimension: Hungary, Poland and Spain* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlag 2000).
13. The main political parties have been in Hungary as follows: Alliance of Free Democrats (AFD), Christian Democratic Peoples Party (CDPP), Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Party (Fidesz, earlier Alliance of Young Democrats), Hungarian Democratic Forum (HDF), Hungarian Socialist Party (HSP), Independent Smallholders Party (ISP) and Party of Hungarian Justice and Life (PHIL). The first government was a coalition of the HDF, ISP and CDPP, the second government comprised the HSP and ADF. The incumbent coalition embraces Fidesz, ISP and HDF.
14. These constitutional issues and debates have been closely followed in the *East European Constitutional Review* (henceforth *EECR*) in regular reports on Hungary as well as in a series of papers; in the above case see *EECR* 1/3 (1992), pp.19–24.
15. In April 1990 the then two largest parties (HDF and ADF) concluded a pact about some constitutional changes, including the introduction of the prime ministerial system and qualifying 20 acts to be passed as two-thirds majority laws (16 of them were already passed, so their number is altogether 36).
16. *EECR* 1/2 (1992), p.4.
17. In Hungary there has been a high level of political output between 1990 and 1999 in general and in the parliament in particular. The number of laws, all decisions of parliament and government decrees for these years are: 1990 (77-55-32), 1991 (93-73-188), 1992 (92-92-177), 1993 (121-103-185), 1994 (99-75-190), 1995 (126-128-179), 1996 (132-120-242), 1997 (159-126-288), 1998 (94-94-245) and 1999 (126-109-228). The numbers of the Constitutional Court's decisions between 1990 and 1999 are respectively 84, 180, 167, 145, 149, 169, 239, 191, 150 and 229; see Kurtán *et al.* (eds.), *Political Yearbook of Hungary 2000*, p.503.
18. *EECR* 1/1 (1992), p.8, and *EECR* 4/4 (1995), p.13.
19. E.g. Fuchs and Roller in their chapter 'Cultural Conditions' (p.48) note the salience of the term effectiveness of democracy. They quote its classical definitions as 'the extent to which the system satisfies the basic functions of government' (S.M. Lipset), or 'the capacity of a regime to find solutions to the basic problems facing any political system' (J. Linz) and, finally, 'the effectiveness of different regimes in dealing with the critical problems' (R. Dahl).
20. This alternative of majoritarian or consensual policy-making is an everyday problem also in advanced democracies because of too many 'veto points' in the political system, see C. Knill, 'Explaining Cross-National Variance in Administrative Reform: Autonomous versus Instrumental Bureaucracies', *Journal of Public Policy*, 19/2 (1999), pp.113–39.
21. *EECR* 8/4 (1999), p.14.
22. *EECR* 8/3 (1999), p.15.
23. *EECR* 8/1-2 (1999), p.16.
24. *EECR* 8/4 (1999), p.23.
25. *EECR* 7/3 (1998), p.15.
26. B. Pokol, 'Egy demokrata dilemmái' (The Dilemmas of a Democrat). *Napi Magyarország* [Budapest Daily], 23 Nov. 1999.
27. L. Kovács, 'Nem osztjuk a kormánypártok demokráciafelfogását és gyakorlatát sem' [We Share neither the Concept nor the Practice of Democracy of the Incumbent Coalition Government], *Magyar Hírlap* [Budapest Daily], 15 Jan. 2000.
28. G. Obláth, 'A gazdaság és a köz érdeke összecsiszolható' [The Interests of the Economy and the Public at Large can be Harmonised], *Magyar Nemzet* [Budapest Daily], 24 Dec. 1999.
29. A. Körösnéyi, *A magyar politikai rendszer* (Budapest: Osiris 1998); English-language edition published as *Government and Politics in Hungary* (Budapest: Central European

- University Press 1999), and A. Kőrösenyi, 'A kormányzati rendszer tíz éve' [Ten Years of the Government], in Kurtán *et al.* (eds.), *The Decade-book of Hungary*, 1998; and B. Pokol, 'Demokrácia, jogállam, konstitucionalizmus' [Democracy, Rule of Law and Constitutionalism], in Kurtán *et al.* (eds.), *The Decade-book of Hungary*, 1998.
30. The results of the latest public opinion surveys at the time of writing this paper by the five largest institutes show levels of support for the HSP and Fidesz among those who select parties and intend to cast their votes are usually around 48 per cent to 35 per cent.
 31. J. Elster, 'On Majoritarianism and Rights', *EECR* 1/3 (1992), p.20.
 32. See the following in *ibid.*, pp.20–22.
 33. *Ibid.*, p.24.
 34. A. Mayhew, *Recreating Europe: The European Union's Policy towards Central and Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998), pp.228–35.
 35. See T. Cox and B. Mason, *Social and Economic Transformations in East Central Europe* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar 1999). The ECE states have been rather effective in managing the global financial crisis so far, for example, in 1998 in the case of the Russian crisis. Still the Russian crisis was detrimental to their economic development, especially in respect to foreign investments, so the ECE financial ministers asked Western bankers to make a distinction between Central Europe and Eastern Europe.
 36. All the three regular reports of the European Commission (November 1998, October 1999 and November 2000) have criticised the non-consensual steps taken by the incumbent Hungarian government and the government has reacted to these criticisms rather angrily. These criticisms of the European Commission have focused on the restrictions of the organised interests and regional-territorial actors by the government and the government's intervention in public media.

