



POLITICAL CAPITAL
POLICY RESEARCH & CONSULTING INSTITUTE

From Dominance to Potential Uncertainty

*Scenarios for Hungary's 2026 Parliamentary Election and
Their Political Implications by the Political Capital Institute*

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Executive Summary

Hungary's 2026 parliamentary election will take place in an environment far from equal opportunity. Despite the Orbán regime's dominant autocratic political system, there is a chance that the opposition party TISZA could win. While most voters are expected to cast their ballots freely at polling stations, vote buying and voter mobilization through intimidation are expected to occur, particularly in remote and segregated areas with vulnerable communities. According to estimates, this could affect up to a few hundred thousand votes. More importantly, however, the legal, institutional, political and economic environments are distorted on a systemic level. Therefore, the main issue is not fraud on election day, but the broader uneven playing field in general, including media dominance, disinformation, intimidation, and the use of state resources, including funding, institutions, and authorities, for the political purposes of the ruling party.

The central question is not only who wins, but under what circumstances the result emerges, what legitimacy it carries, and what balance of power it creates. The election could, in theory, still be postponed or watered down. More likely, it will be held under relatively free but not fair conditions. These dynamics shape both the credibility of the result and the consequences that follow.

Three main outcome scenarios are possible: Fidesz victory, Tisza victory, or no clear winner. Each contains important variations. A two-thirds or significant Fidesz majority would lead to further consolidation of the system, while a narrow majority could result in a new and uncertain political situation. A two-thirds Tisza majority would enable deep institutional change, while a significant majority would allow more limited change, and a narrow majority would face serious constraints and instability. A stalemate would likely produce prolonged negotiations and unstable governance.

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1. Electoral Context

Although voters are generally expected to **cast their ballots freely at polling stations**, Hungary is approaching an election in which **equal opportunity remains elusive**. The country has not experienced a **fully open-ended election campaign for twenty years**, and the system continues to favor the ruling party, even though it is **invincible** and the opposition has a **real chance of winning**. The main distortions occur **before election day**, through **media dominance**, the **use of virtually unlimited financial resources**, and the **use of state institutions for campaign purposes**, alongside the **complete intertwining of the state and the ruling party**. These are reinforced by **targeted actions against opponents**, even by state authorities, as well as by **intimidation and disinformation campaigns**, including the use of new technologies. In addition, **vote-buying and organized mobilization through intimidation in vulnerable regions**, the **limited reach of polling data**, and **foreign influence, including direct Russian interference**, further shape electoral outcomes.

2. Scenarios of How the Vote Is Conducted

2.1 Postponement of the Election

The most extreme scenario would be **to postpone the election** on the basis of **extraordinary circumstances**, such as a state of war or a security threat. The ruling party has the legal authority to take such a step. This would amount to an **authoritarian exercise of power** and an **open admission of defeat without a contest**.

Such a decision would carry significant domestic risks. It could trigger **public outrage and street protests**, creating challenges for law enforcement and causing serious political damage to the ruling party. At the same time, this scenario remains unlikely, primarily due to **EU membership and international integration**, which limit the room for such action, and secondarily due to the decrease in available time.

2.2 Hollowing Out the Election

In this scenario, although the election formally takes place, it **loses its political significance** as voters are deprived of a **real choice**. This could have been achieved by **transforming the political system**, for example, by turning Hungary into a presidential system, or by **applying legal, administrative, and intelligence-based pressure to opposition figures**, including smear campaigns and targeted actions

There are indications that such intentions have existed, but they have **not yet succeeded**. Implementing this scenario would carry a **high political cost** and resemble **practices associated with authoritarian regimes**. The limited time available before the election further reduces the feasibility of such a transformation.

2.3 Election Held Under Relatively Free but Not Fair Conditions

The most likely scenario is that the election will be held, but **not under fair conditions**, reflecting the logic of an **informational autocracy**. Although voters are generally expected to **cast their ballots freely at polling stations**, the broader environment remains distorted.

This distortion is driven by **media dominance**, the **use of financial and state resources**, and the **intertwining of party and state**, as well as **targeted actions against opponents**, including intimidation, disinformation and the use of state authorities. The growing influence of **new technologies**, such as bots, trolls, and AI-generated content, and **foreign interference** further exacerbates these dynamics. Vote-buying and organized mobilization through intimidation in vulnerable regions also influence outcomes, contributing to **systematic bias and polling inaccuracies**.

3. Post-Election Scenarios: Who Governs and What Follows

3.1 Fidesz Victory

3.1.1 Two-Thirds Constitutional Fidesz Majority

A two-thirds constitutional Fidesz majority would result in the **complete establishment of an autocratic system**. The ruling party would be able to **reshape institutions without constraint**. Institutional autonomy would decline further, affecting **courts, local governments, and the few remaining independent actors**. Political dynamics would also shift, likely leading to a campaign of political revenge, supported by legal tools targeting the **media and civil society organizations**.

Opposition forces would weaken significantly. Political alternatives would struggle to emerge, leading to **growing apathy** and **increased emigration**, particularly among young people. Foreign policy would reinforce existing patterns, with Hungary remaining **aligned with Russia** and **becoming increasingly marginalized within the EU — effectively becoming a sidelined pariah state**.

3.1.2 Significant Fidesz Majority

Even without a two-thirds mandate, a **significant majority** would allow Fidesz to **maintain and exploit its dominance**. The ruling party would maintain **strong institutional control** and continue to **limit opposition influence** and shape the political environment. If combined with support from Mi Hazánk, this could further **radicalize the political system**.

Opposition actors would remain weak, and political alternatives would struggle to organize effectively. Apathy among opposition voters would likely persist. Foreign policy would remain largely unchanged, maintaining Hungary's **current foreign policy orientation**. **Hungary would continue to gravitate towards Russia and away from the EU and NATO**.

3.1.3 Narrow Fidesz Majority

A narrow Fidesz majority would create a **new and uncertain political situation**, with a fragile balance of power and increased pressure from opposition. Within 30 days of the election, the ruling party could attempt to **expand its room for maneuver** with the outgoing parliament, including changes to institutional rules, **before the new parliament is formed**.

Concerns about legitimacy could emerge, particularly if Fidesz gains a majority in parliament despite losing the popular vote for party lists. Polarization would deepen, potentially leading to **sustained political confrontation** and risks of unrest. Economic pressures, including **adjustment measures**, could further destabilize the government.

The **foreign policy would be similar that of previous scenarios**, except that Orbán would appear weaker on the international stage. Hungary **would miss the chance to gravitate towards the core European states**, and its alignment with **Russia would persist**. In this unstable political situation, **the Kremlin is likely to support the Orbán government in taking control and consolidating its power**.

3.2 TISZA Victory

3.2.1 Two-Thirds Constitutional TISZA Majority

A two-thirds constitutional TISZA majority would enable **deep institutional reform** and allow the new government to **restructure key institutions**. However, the pace of implementation depends on whether incumbents step down, and resistance could lead to **prolonged legal complications**.

Rapid change would create **high expectations** that may be difficult to meet. At the same time, the weakening of the previous system would allow for **political accountability** and the emergence of new actors. Foreign policy could shift toward **improved relations with the EU** and access to **EU funds**, and Hungary **could distance itself from Russia**.

3.2.2 Significant TISZA Majority

Although a significant TISZA majority would allow for **limited yet meaningful change**, it would not provide a robust legal mandate for deep institutional reform. The existing system would continue to **constrain the government**, as entrenched actors remain in place. Nevertheless, the new government could try to exert political and public pressure on incumbent institutional leaders -appointed by Fidesz and **create political opportunities** to offset its legally constrained power.

Political dynamics would remain tense, and polarization would persist. At the same time, however, improved expectations among economic actors could create **more favorable economic conditions** than a continued Fidesz rule. The foreign policy would involve a **reorientation towards the West**, but accessing EU funds could be more challenging due to the greater difficulty of meeting the conditions.

3.2.3 Narrow TISZA Majority

A narrow TISZA majority would create an **unstable and high-risk governing situation** with a fragile balance of power. The election results could be contested, which could lead to **mass protests and escalation**. Institutional actors **would likely resist change**, putting continuous pressure on the government. This would constrain governance and could lead to **early elections**.

The pro-Western shift in foreign policy would be more limited. As a strong opposition party with no governmental responsibilities, Fidesz would put constant pressure on the new government, making it harder for them to reorient foreign policy and meet the rule-of-law conditions required to release EU funds. Fidesz's anti-Ukrainian and anti-Brussels rhetoric would continue.

3.3 No Clear Winner (Stalemate)

A stalemate would result in a **fragmented political landscape**, where no major actor can form a stable government alone. In this context, **Mi Hazánk could become a kingmaker, thereby increasing its influence.**

The formation of coalitions would be uncertain and prolonged. Even if a government were formed, it would likely be **weak and unstable**, facing continuous pressure to bargain. Meanwhile, Fidesz **could challenge the result** and attempt to **reshape the system before the transition using the current parliament**, which could further increase instability.

4. Considerations for assessing election outcomes

- **Assess the conditions of the election, not just the result** - Unequal competition can affect how the outcome is perceived and whether it is challenged.
- **Prepare for different parliamentary outcomes** - A two-thirds, significant, or narrow majority creates different political and institutional dynamics.
- **Anticipate instability with small margin results** - Narrow majorities can lead to legal challenges, concerns about legitimacy, strong political confrontation, and governance difficulties.
- **Monitor institutional dynamics closely** - Institutional reforms before the election or during the transition can constrain new governments and shape post-election developments.
- **Expect continued polarization across all scenarios** - Political divisions are likely to persist and deepen, especially in contested outcomes.
- **Track the direction of foreign policy under each scenario** - Outcomes affect Hungary's relations with the EU, Russia, and other international partners.