

## Votes and Seats: The Hungarian Electoral Law and the 1994 Parliamentary Election

*Kenneth Benoit\**

### Electoral Systems and Democratic Politics

Electoral systems constitute one of the most important political institutions in democratic systems, but they are also among the most manipulable. Accordingly, the initial choice of electoral structures ranks as one of the most critical institutional decisions a state can make in its transition to democracy. Electoral systems may be designed such that they resist subsequent manipulation, or such that they invite it. The difference between sound and poor design of electoral systems determines whether the institutions will influence the political parties or whether the political parties will continue to modify the electoral system in the pursuit of partisan advantage.

After their testing in the second democratic election of the Hungarian Republic, it appears that the electoral institutions designed in 1989 are both effective and robust. In Hungary, the institutions that the parties shaped now shape the parties, and the electoral system – despite its unprecedented complexity – has become a fairly permanent feature of the Hungarian political landscape.

The Hungarian electoral system became law in 1989 by act of the outgoing socialist legislature. The law had been designed in a series of Roundtable negotiations from June through August 1989 between the ruling Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSZMP) and the recently formed opposition. On October 20, the parliament passed Act XXXIV of 1989, ratifying what is perhaps the world's most complicated electoral law. The final version gave Hungary a unicameral 386-seat National Assembly elected from three tiers. Two-round majority voting for candidates would elect 176 seats from single-member districts (SMDs), party list balloting would provide up to 152 seats from 20 territorial lists, and national party lists would allocate compensatory seats from 58 reserved national list seats and the unallocated transfer seats from the regional level. Additional structural characteristics of the legislature include a four-year term and parliamentary elec-

tion of the president, an executive with limited power.<sup>1</sup> While provisions exist for dissolving the legislature before the end of its term, the possibility is strictly regulated and has yet to be exercised.

It is not an exaggeration to say that the complexity of Hungary's voting system makes its workings and its properties difficult to comprehend. While the general tendencies of the system are roughly understood, in practice few people are able to explain completely and precisely how the voting system operates. This holds true not only for average citizens and even political candidates who interact with the system, but also for political experts who are quite well educated about the details and history of Hungarian politics. Yet in spite of this complexity, Hungary's electoral law has proven to be institutionally stable. In addition, Hungary's political party system after two elections is one of the most developed in the region.

The goal of this retrospective on the 1994 parliamentary election is to evaluate the Hungarian electoral system in terms of the legislative representation it serves. In what follows I explain the law and its origins, trace the modifications of the law since its adoption, and assess its operation in the election of 1994 as well as its influence upon Hungarian politics.

### 1994: The Year of Electoral Turnover

Before the 1994 election, feeling in Hungary was widespread that the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) would score impressive results. Few political observers, however, anticipated the magnitude of its electoral sweep. In the single-member constituencies, MSZP captured 149 of 176 seats, nearly 85 per cent of the total (Table 1). Largely because of this relatively disproportional mechanism, the socialists won more than half the seats in parliament with less than a third of the popular vote. The electorate's choice gave MSZP its election lead, but it was the

\* The International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) provided financial support for this research in 1994-95. Personal thanks are due to István Stumpf, György Szoboszlai, Gábor Tóka, András Tóth of the MTA-PTI, and Zoltán Tóth for assistance with the electoral law and election data, and to John W. Schiemann for comments and invaluable help with understanding the electoral law's origins.

1 The issue of the power and method of election of the president has been a political football since the first discussions of this issue at the 1989 National Roundtable. The final Roundtable accord was a compromise which stated that the President of the Republic would be elected by parliament, but that for the first democratic election the presidential election would be direct and occur before the parliamentary election. A narrowly passed referendum sponsored by the Federation of Young Democrats (FIDESZ) and the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ), however, overturned this provision in November 1989. The socialists later introduced a plebiscite of their own to reverse the change, but it failed for lack of sufficient turnout. In the end it was the parliament that chose the first President of the Hungarian Republic, see also Tóka (1995: 35).

Table 1: Electoral turnover in 1994

Party	1994 Results					1990 Results				
	Terr.		National			Terr.		National		
	SMDs	List	List	Total	Total %	SMDs	List	List	Total	Total %
MSZP	149	53	7	209	54.15	1	14	18	33	8.55
SZDSZ	16	28	25	69	17.88	35	34	23	92	23.83
MDF	5	18	15	38	9.84	114	40	10	164	42.49
FKGP	1	14	11	26	6.74	11	16	17	44	11.40
KDNP	3	5	14	22	5.70	3	8	10	21	5.44
FIDESZ	0	7	13	20	5.18	1	8	12	21	5.44
ASZ	1	0	0	1	0.26	1	0	0	1	0.26
Joint	1	0	0	1	0.26	4	0	0	4	1.04
Independent	0	0	0	0	0.00	6	0	0	6	1.55
Total	176	125	85	386	100.00	176	120	90	386	100.00

Source: Prepared by Kenneth Benoit 5/12/96. Tables for this chapter were calculated on the basis of data provided in "Az 1994. évi országgyűlési képviselőválasztás hivatalos végeredménye" (The Official Results of the 1994 National Assembly Election), *Választási füzetek*, No. 13. Budapest: Belügyminisztérium, Országos Választási Iroda (Ministry of Interior, National Elections Bureau), 1994.

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electoral system which translated this lead into a dominant legislative force. The electorate's choice gave MSZP its election lead, but it was the electoral system which translated this lead into a dominant legislative force.

The election of 1994 represented a true electoral turnover in the sense that the ruling Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), the primary victor in the first democratic election, was turned out of office by a sweeping electoral victory of MSZP. The governmental change in 1994 was only the third time in Hungary's democratic history – the first two being 1905 and 1990 – that opposition parties swept out the governing coalition (Szoboszlai, 1995: 15). In 1990, the voters had carried the opposition to power in an election where the Socialist Party fared poorly. The events of 1994, by contrast, dealt a stunning victory to the socialists – many of whom had been part of the pre-1989 regime. If the 1990 election had exorcised the ghost of communism, then the 1994 comeback exercised it.

Regardless of the constituency of the government elected in 1994, the second democratic election signaled the completion of Hungary's transition to political democracy. Following the precedent established in the first parliamentary election, the voting was halted as free and fair by observers and participants alike. The outcome demonstrated that the 1990 election winners were willing to turn over power to the electoral victors in 1994 according to democratic procedure. The election of 1998 made Hungary's democratic consolidation decisive, meeting Samuel Huntington's "two-turnover test" (1993: 266).

Despite the socialist electoral sweep, however, incumbent Members of Parliament (MPs) on average did not fare poorly. Of the 386 representatives elected in 1994, 123 had been members of the first parliament.<sup>2</sup> So roughly a third of Hungary's first parliament remained in office despite the significant changes in votes. Table 2 examines the turnover rates of Members of Parliament elected in 1990, broken down by party. If only those who sought re-election are considered, then more than 50 per cent of the first-term Members of Parliament who sought re-election won seats in 1994. Excluding the MPs who did not compete in the 1994 election,<sup>3</sup> each party's incumbency pattern depended largely on its overall votes. MSZP, which swept the election, managed to re-elect all of its competing incumbent MPs except one (95.7 per cent). The Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ), the second-place party, re-elected 70 per cent of its competing incumbents. MDF,

<sup>2</sup> This figure varies slightly depending on whether MPs are counted who were elected to fill partial terms. The differences with Table 2 are because a few of the 123 incumbents came to office in by-elections during the middle of the first parliamentary term.

<sup>3</sup> This category includes the MPs who simply decided not to compete, plus MPs who left for other government posts such as Gábor Demszky, mayor of Budapest, MPs who died in office such as József Antall, and others who may have failed to meet the registration requirements in 1994.

whose parliamentary presence was greatly reduced by the socialist victory in 1994, fared much worse, electing only 28.8 per cent of its competing incumbents. The Federation of Young Democrats (FIDESZ) and the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP), whose total seats changed little between elections, had return rates of 78.9 per cent and 62.5 per cent respectively. The FKGP (Independent Smallholders' Party) re-election rate of 25 per cent is much lower, but reflects the fact that many of the MPs elected in 1990 as FKGP candidates splintered into various Smallholders' Parties which hampered their re-election.

Table 2: Incumbency in the second Hungarian parliament

Party	1990 Members of Parliament (MPs)		Total
	Re-elected 1994	Lost 1994	
MSZP	22	1	33
FIDESZ	15	4	21
MDF	26	64	164
KDNP	10	6	21
FKGP	4	12	28
SZDSZ	43	18	31
Other	1	3	7
Total	121	108	157
Per cent	31.3	28.0	40.7
			100.0

Note: I calculated this table by tracking the MPs elected in the 1990 parliamentary election, comparing them to the candidates in the 1994 election. While the "Lost" column is accurate, candidates who "Didn't run" may have died in office.

### Hungary's Uniquely Complicated Electoral System

The Hungarian electoral designers were not a coherent group embodying a single intent or representing a single and consistent bundle of political interests. Rather, the system emerged as the result of political bargaining during negotiations between the ruling MSZMP and opposition forces, held as part of the general process of regime transition in 1989. Responding to opposition demands for change, the ruling party agreed to negotiate the direction and shape of the institutions of political democracy with a group of united opposition parties (the Op-

position Roundtable<sup>4</sup>) and a series of socialist satellite organizations known as the Third Side.<sup>5</sup> From its beginning on June 10, 1989 to its conclusion on September 18, the three sides met at the National Roundtable to discuss and largely determine a series of issues central to the establishment of a new political system.<sup>6</sup>

The MSZMP's agreement in 1989 to negotiate the institutions of democracy was based on its perception that its institutional position and political leadership would enable it to shape significantly the electoral system, and to accomplish an electoral victory in the first election against the inchoate and poorly organized opposition. In addition, it hoped to conclude the negotiations quickly and hold an early election while it still possessed the upper hand. In the early spring the MSZMP had prepared a draft electoral law calling for 300 single-member districts and a 50 person compensatory national list (*Magyar Nemzet*, 1989: 8/9). The agenda of the National Roundtable, however, rapidly moved away from this preset plan and threw open the possibility for a new electoral law.

For both historical and political reasons, the ruling party desired to keep a majority of the seats in the new parliament elected through single-member districts. For a large part of its historical experience with elections (whether subject

4 The Opposition Roundtable was formed on March 22, 1989 by the largest opposition groups to coordinate opposition to the ruling party. Their objective was to unify political opposition in order to avoid a repetition of the divide-and-conquer strategies which the communists had used in the late 1940s to render the opposition ineffective. The basic operating principle of the Opposition Roundtable was a unanimity rule: all disagreements would be resolved prior to presenting the opposition demands at the National Roundtable. The opposition parties taking part were the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ), the Federation of Young Democrats (FIDESZ), the Independent Smallholders' Party (FKGP), the Hungarian People's Party (MNP), the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP), the Social Democratic Party of Hungary (MSZDP), the Bajcsy-Zsilinsky Friendship Society (BZSBT), and the Democratic League of Independent Trade Unions (Liga, possessing only observer status), see Bozöki (1993) for details.

5 The following organizations formed the third side: the National Council of Trade Unions (SZOT), the Left Alternative Association (BAE), the Patriotic People's Front (HNF), the youth organization of the communist party (DEMISZ), the Association of Hungarian Resistance Fighters and Anti-fascists, the Ferenc Münnich Society (MFT), and the National Council of Hungarian Women (MNÖT).

6 The National Roundtable consisted of six political and six economic subcommittees, with talks on the latter producing no results. The subcommittees were: (1) constitutional issues, (2) parties and party funding, (3) electoral law, (4) principles of modification of the penal code, (5) the public sphere and information policies, and (6) guarantees of a non-violent transition. For a fuller discussion of the National Roundtable negotiations, see Benoit and Schlemann (1995).

to real political competition or not). Hungary had used a single-member district system. Politically, the ruling party thought that its established position, its local organization, and the recognizability of its candidates would give it an advantage in the single-candidate contests. Opposition forces, led by the Hungarian Democratic Forum and other opposition parties, favored a proportional representation (PR) system to elect a substantial proportion of the representatives. Smaller parties argued that the system should be based strongly on PR, and that no or a very low threshold requirement should be used. The system that emerged was one of compromise, combining elements from different systems. The final Roundtable accord neither excluded nor codified any single participant party's political interests, making the law acceptable to all sides but also providing its complexity (Benoit and Schiemann, 1995).

The Hungarian voting system is a hybrid between a majoritarian, single-member district system, and a party-list proportional representation system. Voting is geographically based, but in two separate districting systems. Voters cast one ballot in each type of district in a first round of voting, and usually a third ballot two weeks later in a second round. Parties compete at three levels, through fielding their candidates in SMDs and by submitting candidates on territorial and national lists. These three electoral tiers provide:

- 176 seats from single-member constituencies;
- a maximum of 152 seats from 20 regional party lists; and
- a minimum of 58 seats from national party lists.

Inputs to the first two tiers come from separate balloting. SMD voting in two rounds determines the outcome of the seat in the 176 single constituencies. At the territorial level, up to 152 seats are allocated through quotas and a limited largest remainder proportional representation formula. The inputs to the national list tier come from surplus votes transferred from the two lower levels. Each electoral tier has its own set of qualifying rules, and except for the SMDs, depends on results reached at other levels. SMD candidacies are based on collections of signatures, for instance, but eligibility for territorial lists is determined by the number of SMD candidacies a party has established in that territory. Whether a party may gain seats from a territorial list it has established depends on its percentage of the nationwide territorial list votes. Eligibility for national list seat awards depends on this same list vote percentage, and the establishment of a national list depends on the number of territorial lists a party was able to establish. In short, the rules governing the eligibility for each tier are highly interlocking.

Reflecting the interests of its framers, the Hungarian electoral law permits an individual to be a candidate simultaneously in all three tiers. This agreement has roots in the 1989 Roundtable negotiations, at which the parties initially agreed to permit up to four simultaneous candidacies (the possibility of two regional candidacies was initially agreed upon). The historical precedent for this provision was the post-war electoral law permitting a candidate to be present at the same time on lists in every territory (Benoit and Schiemann, 1995: 17).

The electoral law in Hungary has the force of a constitutional law, requiring a two-thirds vote of parliament for amendment. The electoral law adopted on October 20, 1989, has been modified several times but none of these amendments have been substantial. Mostly these changes addressed procedural matters for counting ballots, verifying the validity of candidate registration, clarifying the by-election rules, and other technical non-seat related matters.<sup>7</sup> Only the amendment raising the minimum qualifying threshold was electorally substantive. On December 22, 1993, parliament raised the percentage of nationwide list votes required to gain regional or national list seats from 4 to 5 per cent, and raised the threshold for two-party joined lists to 10 per cent, and 15 per cent for joint lists of three parties or more.<sup>8</sup>

The stability of the Hungarian electoral law is rather remarkable when viewed in context. In the history of Hungarian elections, only two had been held according to the same electoral law – and those were in the 1970s during the one-party rule which made them a farce.<sup>9</sup> Comparing Hungary to its neighbors also underscores the electoral law's stability. Nearly all of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Republics adopted new democratic electoral rules in 1989 or 1990, but Hungary is one of the few countries whose electoral rules have remained substantially unchanged since its founding election.

An amendment that has been the topic of much debate but little decisive action has been one to reserve some number of parliamentary seats for ethnic and national minorities. Adopted in various forms by several of Hungary's neighbors, such a provision would guarantee a legislative presence for minorities who would otherwise be excluded from parliament because of their minor electoral status. In 1993, the National Assembly drafted an electoral law amendment to reserve 13 mandates, one each for Gypsy, German, Slovak, Croat, Romanian, Polish, Ser-

7 The law has been subject to official amendment four times since 1989: Act II in 1990, Acts XX and XLV in 1991, and Act III of 1994.

8 Joint territorial lists – those sponsored by two or more parties – may be submitted by parties who have jointly nominated the requisite number of candidates in that territory's SMDs.

9 For a detailed history of Hungary's electoral laws see *Historia* (1985). All of the communist era electoral laws were variations of the SMD/majoritarian system.

bian, Slovenian, Bulgarian, Greek, Armenian, Ruthenian, and Ukrainian representatives (MTA Bulletin, 1993: 3-5). This measure was never approved, however, because its corporatist strain ran counter to the principles of Hungarian representation. Instead parliament established a separate legislative system of national and local minority "self-governments" devoted exclusively to ethnic representation.<sup>10</sup>

The laws regulating the manner of voting remain largely unchanged since the communist period. Balloting is carried out during daylight hours on a day determined by the President of the Republic (in practice this has been a Sunday); ballots are secret and equal; and the voting age is set at 18. Eligibility for voting is based on a continuously updated electoral register, maintained by local electoral committees with the assistance of local councils. There are numerous technical provisions for insuring that eligible persons may vote (but that they vote only once), such as those permitting voters to cast ballots in electoral districts where they do not permanently reside. Many of the technical amendments to the election law were dedicated to clarifying these issues.

In 1990, a slow computer system connected by modems had delayed counting of the final results because of malfunctions, limited application, and problems with its use. Between the 1990 and 1994 elections, however, Hungary set up an impressive national high-speed network of computers, with fail-safe mechanisms and carefully detailed operational procedures, to collect, compute and disseminate election results. This system was first tested in the 1993 election for the social security self-governments and was later used with great success in the 1994 parliamentary election. The computers relayed a live television feed of results, so that hours after the polls had closed, continuously updated results were available on national television (NEO, 1994).

### Results in the Single-Member Districts

Single-member districts form the first primary tier of Hungary's electoral system. Based on single candidates elected from small districts, SMDs provide the most direct and most easily comprehensible contests prescribed in the law. A majoritarian system is used to award seats. If a candidate receives more than 50 per

10 The laws for election to these bodies are established according to Act LXXXVIII/1993 on the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities, with the specific rules specified in Act LXIV/1994 on the Election of Members of Municipal Governments and Mayors (local); and the 1995 law General Regulation of the Forming of Minority National Self-Governments as well as Interior Ministry Decree 25/1994 on the Procedure System for the Election of National Minority Self-Governments (national).

cent of the votes cast in the first round, the candidate is declared elected (Known as a *successful* first poll). If no candidate obtains a majority, then a second round of SMD voting is held two weeks later. All candidates with at least 15 per cent of the first round vote, or at least the candidates with the top three highest vote totals, advance to the second round of voting. Candidates may drop out of the race between rounds but no other candidates may take their places. The candidate with the highest number of votes cast in the second round is declared the seat winner (a *successful* second poll).

Hungary is divided into 176 SMDs, each containing approximately 60,000 residents. All SMDs are contained within territorial district boundaries, so that each SMD is contained within one and only one territory. The law charges an electoral commission with determining the exact boundaries of the SMDs within territories, although this apportionment has been performed less formally in the past. In 1989, both before and after the number of SMDs was raised before the electoral law's final passage, the SMD boundaries were drawn by small groups of experts with loose oversight and participation by party representatives. The mechanism for future SMD reapportionment is unclear, and the districts were unchanged between the 1990 and 1994 elections.

To register for the ballot in a single-member district contest a candidate must collect 750 signatures from district residents. Each citizen may sign only one candidate petition. Candidates may be registered either as party candidates or as independents. Independent candidates, however, may have difficulties gaining the signatures needed to establish a candidate. Sponsorship by more than one party – a joint candidacy – is one way to overcome this hurdle by combining the organization and voter base of more than one party.

In 1994, there were four joint candidacies in the first SMD round; yet only one, Péter Zwack in Kecskemét's second district, won his contest. In practice the system tends to discourage independent candidacies, although many framers of the electoral law thought that this tier would aid independents (Benoit and Schiemann, 1995: 26). In 1994, there were 103 independent candidates in the first SMD round, but only three of these won enough first round votes to advance to the second round. None won seats. This contrasts with the six independent candidates who won seats in 1990 (from 203 independent candidates). The change seems to indicate an institutional learning process, where the costs to independent candidacies became known; it also reflects the increased political strength of the parties that were victors in the first election. In addition, some of the independents in that election had been ex-communists unwilling to run under socialist colors. That was hardly a problem in 1994.

The eligibility rules for establishing lists in the regional and national tiers provide strong incentives for parties to establish as many SMD candidacies as possi-

ble. Accordingly, the largest six parliamentary parties participated in at least 90 per cent of all single-member district contests. Table 3 lists the candidacies of each party in both SMD rounds. The four largest parties fielded candidates in at least 171 districts each, and MSZP ran candidates in all 176 districts.

Table 3: SMD candidacies by party, 1994

Party	Round 1	Round 2	Party	Round 1	Round 2
MSZP	176	174	KFKP	7	0
MDF	174	98	ZA	6	0
FIDESZ	172	5	CSSZ	5	0
SZDSZ	171	158	Joint	4	2
KDNP	163	18	DP	4	0
FKGP	158	47	CSZP	4	0
MP	155	2	DK	4	0
ASZ	131	2	MTU	2	0
Independent	103	3	TFKP	2	0
KP	83	1	SZDP	2	0
LPSSZ-VP	67	0	MSZMP	1	0
MIÉP	66	0	NP	1	0
NDSZ	58	0	MVVSZ	1	0
EKGP	54	0	MMP	1	0
MSZDP	53	0	NYP	1	0
MZP	19	0	MEP	1	0
KOP	13	0	TMP	1	0
PP	8	0	MANP	1	0
Total candidates – round 1:	1,872				
Total candidates – round 2:	510				

Source: Prepared by Kenneth Benoit 5/12/96.

For SMD voting to be *valid* there are turnout requirements for each stage. In the first round at least 50 per cent of eligible voters<sup>11</sup> must cast ballots for the poll

11 Eligible voters are all Hungarian citizens at least 18 years of age except the mentally handicapped, criminals serving their sentences, and persons under court injunction or court-ordered curatorship. No provisions are made for absentee voting for Hungarians who are abroad on election day. Registration is automatic and is determined by residency, although provisions exist for citizens to vote in districts where they have not been preregistered.

to be valid. If the first poll is *invalid* then all candidates advance to the second round. A *successful* second round requires that at least 25 per cent of the eligible electorate participate. If the second poll is invalid then a by-election is held. The other circumstance under which a by-election may be called is if the second round plurality contest results in a tie. In 1994, there were no invalid first or second rounds. SMD turnouts in the first round ranged between 55 and 82 per cent, with a nationwide total of 69 per cent. This compares with a national SMD turnout of 65 per cent in 1990; in that election, four first round contests in Szabolcs county and one in Hajdú were declared invalid because of low voter turnout. Second round SMD turnout was considerably lower, ranging from 40 to 72 per cent, and averaging 55 per cent in 1994.

The Hungarian electoral system is a "double-ballot" system in the sense that a runoff election is held when no first-round candidate wins an absolute majority. In Hungary's multi-party political contests, nearly all SMD seats are determined in the second round. In 1994, only two contests were won in the first round, both by MSZP candidates with 50.9 and 51.4 per cent of the vote, barely passing the absolute majority hurdle. Yet, the MSZP had placed first in 160 of the first round contests, and appeared poised to win nearly as many second-round contests (see Table 4).

The effect of passing of the torch to the second round, held three weeks later because the second Sunday after the first round was the religious holiday of Pentecost, was to spur a flurry of political maneuvering in an attempt to mitigate the magnitude of the socialist electoral sweep. The political right moved quickly to prevent what it saw as two successively worse outcomes. First, if the socialists won all of the contests in the second round in which they had previously placed first, then MSZP would obtain the simple parliamentary majority needed to pass most legislation. The second possibility, however, more feared by the Hungarian rightist parties, was that MSZP would form an alliance with the centrist SZDSZ, the party which had placed a firm second in the first round contests. Together the coalition would have the two-thirds majority of seats (258) needed to pass constitutional laws, including the electoral law. Anecdotal evidence and the reports of a few commentators (Araó, 1994: 28) suggest that right-of-center parties partly responded by focusing on discrediting SZDSZ rather than on combating MSZP to which they were more ideologically opposed, although these reports were exaggerated. Even if the right did pursue such a strategy, it was ineffective: MSZP lost 11 of the seats in the second round for which it had led in the first, while SZDSZ gained four seats in the second round for which it had not led in the first (Table 4).

Table 4: Party ranks in single-member districts (SMDs), 1994

Party	Round 1					Round 2		
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	1st	2nd	3rd
MSZP	160	15	1	0	0	147	22	5
SZDSZ	12	125	25	8	1	16	104	38
MDF	1	18	81	50	17	5	21	72
KDNP	1	7	10	28	47	3	10	5
FKGP	0	5	42	33	35	1	12	33
FIDESZ	0	1	11	46	54	0	1	4
Joint	1	2	0	0	1	1	1	0
ASZ	1	0	2	0	1	1	1	0
MP	0	1	2	2	7	0	0	2
Independent	0	1	2	6	1	0	1	2
KP	0	1	0	3	3	0	1	0
PP	0	0	0	0	5	-	-	-
LPSZ-VP	0	0	0	0	1	-	-	-
MtEP	0	0	0	0	1	-	-	-
CSZP	0	0	0	0	1	-	-	-
MSZDP	0	0	0	0	1	-	-	-
Total	176	176	176	176	176	174	174	174

Note: Empty cell entries for round 2 indicate that no candidates from these parties advanced to the second round contests. "Joint" denotes parties sponsored by multiple parties.

Source: Prepared by Kenneth Benoit 5/12/96.

This between-round strategy was only partially effective. MSZP, which had placed first in 160 first round SMD contests (and won two outright), lost only 11 of the second round districts it contested. In four of these districts it was displaced by the centrist SZDSZ, in four by MDF, and in two by KDNP and in one by FKGP. Whether the strategy of minimizing the SZDSZ second round victories was successful depends on the significance one attaches to its winning the four districts in the second round in which it had not led in the first.

Overall results from the SMD balloting in the first round indicate that approximately one-third of the voters cast their ballots for socialist candidates, slightly more than one-fifth voted for SZDSZ, and about one-eighth supported MDF, FKGP, KDNP, and FIDESZ each received about 7 per cent of the SMD vote. Other parties' votes were under 4 per cent and even lower.

### List Results in the Territorial Balloting

Each voter casts a second ballot based on the territory (*terület*, corresponding to divisions of county, or *megye*) in which he or she lives. There are 20 such territories, comprising Budapest and the 19 counties (Table 5). List voting entails selecting a party's list of candidates rather than a single candidate; before the election parties submit lists of candidates whose ballot order they determine. Party lists are "closed," meaning that voters are unable to express preferences for individual candidates by altering their order. Candidates may be placed on only one territorial list at a time. A party may submit a regional list only if it was able to register candidates in one-fourth, or a minimum of two of the single-member districts in the region.<sup>12</sup> For a territorial list vote to be valid at least 50 per cent of the territory's electorate must participate. If this fails to occur a second poll is held in which one-fourth of the electorate must participate. If turnout in the second round is less than one-fourth, then the first round votes all become national surplus votes and the region's seats are added to the national tier.

Once they determine the number of valid ballots cast for each party, election officials in each territory calculate several quantities. First, they sum the territorial list votes for each party for all 20 territories, and divide this sum by the total number of valid territorial list votes cast. If the resulting percentage of national list votes for a party is less than the legally established quota of 5 per cent, then that party is ineligible for any seats at the territorial level. For joint lists the threshold is 5 per cent per party to a maximum of 15 per cent. Next, a quota ( $Q$ ) is calculated for each region by dividing the total number of votes cast in the territory by the number of mandates available in the territory plus one ( $Q = v_i / (m + 1)$ ). This is known as the Droop quota in Ireland but called the Hagenbach-Bischoff formula in Hungary and most of continental Europe. For each quota of votes a party has in that territory it wins one seat. Candidates on the lists receive seats in the order they appear on the list.

Remaining seats are distributed through a form of limited remainder allocation. Any seats not allocated by parties having met the initial quota are distributed to parties according to the number of votes they have remaining after "spending" quotas of votes to purchase initial seats. This remainder process, however, applies only to parties whose remainders are at least two-thirds of the initial quota. Usually this results in unallocated seats in a territory, in which case they are — in a literal translation of the Hungarian — "bumped up" to the national tier.

<sup>12</sup> In practice the requirement rounds down after dividing by the number of SMDs in the region. The requirement is thus two for every region except Budapest (8), Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén (3), and Pest (4).

Table 5: Seats and votes proportions at different tiers

Party	Total SMD votes	Total list votes	SMD vote %	SMD seat %	Territorial list vote %	Territorial list seat %	National surplus vote %	National list seat %	Total vote %	Total seat %
MSZP	1,688,835	1,781,504	31.27	84.66	32.99	42.40	6.33	8.24	32.13	54.15
SZDSZ	1,005,658	1,065,889	18.62	9.09	19.74	22.40	20.94	29.41	19.18	17.88
MDF	649,872	633,770	12.03	2.84	11.74	14.40	13.10	17.65	11.88	9.84
FKGP	425,346	476,272	7.88	0.57	8.82	11.20	9.27	12.94	8.35	6.74
KDNP	397,873	379,523	7.37	1.70	7.03	4.00	11.96	16.47	7.20	5.70
FIDESZ	416,116	379,344	7.70	0	7.02	5.60	11.31	15.29	7.36	5.18
MP	177,416	172,109	3.28	0	3.19	0	6.96	0	3.24	0
KP	104,253	137,561	1.93	0	2.55	0	4.86	0	2.24	0
ASZ	132,173	113,384	2.45	0.57	2.10	0	4.91	0	2.27	0.26
MIÉP	67,162	85,737	1.24	0	1.59	0	3.04	0	1.42	0
MSZDP	32,912	51,110	0.61	0	0.95	0	1.67	0	0.78	0
EKGP	43,186	44,292	0.80	0	0.82	0	1.75	0	0.81	0
LPSZ-VP	42,951	33,367	0.80	0	0.62	0	1.53	0	0.71	0
NDSZ	32,258	28,075	0.60	0	0.52	0	1.20	0	0.56	0
MZP	4,766	8,809	0.09	0	0.16	0	0.27	0	0.13	0
KFKP	4,386	5,918	0.08	0	0.11	0	0.21	0	0.10	0
KOP	5,240	2,046	0.10	0	0.04	0	0.15	0	0.07	0
ZA	2,638	849	0.05	0	0.02	0	0.07	0	0.03	0
PP	5,459	635	0.10	0	0.01	0	0.12	0	0.06	0
FMDP	2,366	0	0.04	0	0	0	0.05	0	0.02	0
NP	188	0	0.00	0	0	0	0.00	0	0.00	0
MTU	334	0	0.00	0	0	0	0.00	0	0.00	0

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Table 5: (continuation)

Party	Total SMD votes	Total list votes	SMD vote %	SMD seat %	Territorial list vote %	Territorial list seat %	National surplus vote %	National list seat %	Total vote %	Total seat %
DP	1,150	0	0.02	0	0	0	0.02	0	0.01	0
MVSZ	211	0	0.00	0	0	0	0.00	0	0.00	0
MMP	190	0	0.00	0	0	0	0.00	0	0.00	0
CSZP	3,282	0	0.06	0	0	0	0.07	0	0.03	0
DK	2,117	0	0.04	0	0	0	0.04	0	0.02	0
NYP	1,245	0	0.02	0	0	0	0.02	0	0.01	0
CSSZ	2,005	0	0.04	0	0	0	0.04	0	0.02	0
TFKP	1,792	0	0.03	0	0	0	0.04	0	0.02	0
MEP	416	0	0.00	0	0	0	0.00	0	0.00	0
TMP	203	0	0.00	0	0	0	0.00	0	0.00	0
SZDP	1,197	0	0.02	0	0	0	0.02	0	0.01	0
MANP	265	0	0.00	0	0	0	0.00	0	0.00	0
MSZMP	704	0	0.01	0	0	0	0.01	0	0.00	0
Independent	122,190	0	2.26	0	0	0	-	0	1.13	0
Joint	22,571	0	0.42	0.57	0	0	-	0	0.21	0.26
Total	5,400,926	5,400,194	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Note: Some territorial list votes are included in the national surplus votes, since remainder votes from territories transfer to the national tier. In addition, the surplus votes may be slightly inaccurate because these figures were estimated using computer simulations, and because the information about joint parties' surplus vote allocations was unavailable. "Total vote %" is based on a sum of the SMD and list votes for a party. Independent and Joint candidates are ineligible for national surplus votes by nature. Although no national surplus votes are counted for parties with less than 5 per cent of the national list vote, they are listed here in order to show the consequences of this national threshold rule (indicated by the dashed line).

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Remainder votes that are not used are also transferred to the national vote pool. These are always less than two-thirds of the quota in the territory from which they come; but if the party did not meet the 5 per cent threshold requirement then its remainder votes are lost. The rule is that each party's transfer or surplus votes (SV) from a territory are its total votes less the product of the number of seats it was awarded in that territory and that territory's quota:  $SV_i = V_i - s_i Q$  for party  $i$ , in each territory. This rule applies even when it results in a negative transfer of "unused" votes to the national pool, a situation which occurs when a party has received a seat through the limited largest remainder allocation.

Table 6: Proportional representation allocation example in a territory

$m$	6	Csongrád County 1994					
Quota	30,819	Valid	Party's	Quota	Remainder	2/3 Lt.	Transfer
2/3 Limit	20,546	Votes	National	Seats	Votes	Seats	to
Party	Valid	Party's	Quota	Remainder	2/3 Lt.	Transfer	National
	Votes	National	Seats	Votes	Seats	to	
		List (%)					
MSZP	57,980	33.0	1	27,161	1	-3,658	
SZDSZ	44,531	19.7	1	13,712	0	13,712	
MDF	22,956	11.7	0	22,956	1	-7,863	
FKGP	24,543	8.8	0	24,543	1	-6,276	
KDNP	15,535	7.0	0	15,535	0	15,535	
FIDESZ	14,922	7.0	0	14,922	0	14,922	
MP	7,492	3.2	-	-	-	-	
KP	5,698	2.5	-	-	-	-	
ASZ	6,181	2.1	-	-	-	-	
MIEP	4,359	1.6	-	-	-	-	
MSZDP	4,424	0.9	-	-	-	-	
EKGP	3,413	0.8	-	-	-	-	
LPSZ-VP	3,026	0.6	-	-	-	-	
KOP	677	0.0	-	-	-	-	
Total	215,737		2	118,829	3	26,372	
Seats added to national list pool: 1			2	118,829	3	26,372	

Note: Negative numbers indicate negative transfers in final transfer column. National percentages for party lists do not total 100 per cent because not all parties established lists in Csongrád County. Parties below the dashed line were ineligible for PR seats because their nationwide list vote percentages were less than the 5 per cent threshold.

Table 6 examines an actual district allocation from the 1994 election to illustrate the peculiar Hungarian PR formula. Csongrád County is a medium-sized district where up to six seats may be allocated by law. A total of 215,737 list votes were cast in this county in 1994, leading to a quota of  $215,737/(6+1)=30,819$  (decimal remainders are truncated). From this figure the two-thirds limit is calculated:  $2/3(30,819)=20,546$ . For allocation, the first step is to disqualify all parties whose nationwide percentages of list votes from all 20 counties were less than the 5 per cent threshold. This leaves six parties in Table 6, above the dashed line denoting the disqualified parties.<sup>13</sup> Next, the total valid vote for each qualifying party is divided by the quota, and each party receives its corresponding whole number quotient of seats. In the example, MSZP and SZDSZ each receive one seat from meeting the quota.

Subsequent seats are awarded through remainder votes: votes not spent previously on a seat. These are the original vote totals for all parties except MSZP and SZDSZ, whose remainder votes are now their original votes minus one times the quota. Now the leftover seats are awarded to parties in descending order of their remainder votes, provided that their remainder votes exceed the two-thirds limit. This was the case for MSZP (receiving a second seat), MDF, and FKGP. Finally, remainder votes are transferred to the national pool for each qualifying party. For the three parties that received "discount" seats from the remainder allocation, the surplus votes transferred to the national pool are negative.

District sizes in the territorial list tier range from 4 to 28, with a mean of 7.6 and median of 6. Table 7 lists the PR districts and their magnitudes along with some electoral statistics. District magnitudes are based on population in that district, averaging 51,787 voters per seat. This is slightly higher than the average of 45,222 voters per SMD seat. The average quota in a territory was 30,092, with small variation relative to the variation in district magnitudes. This property makes proportional representation directly proportional to district magnitude. In Budapest, for instance, 3.4 per cent of the votes in the territory was sufficient to win a seat, yet this percentage rose to 20 per cent in districts where only four seats were available. Because of the two-thirds limit, a total of 27 seats from the territorial level were added to the those reserved for national allocation.

There were no invalid first polls in the list voting, meaning that no second list polls were necessary. Turnout averaged 69 per cent in 1994, with a low of 62 per cent (Bács-Kiskun and Szabolcs) and a high of 74 per cent (Budapest). These figures differ slightly from the first round SMD voting because of citizens voting

13 It is possible for a party to place first in a territory but not meet the national threshold; this would be the case for a regional party with strength primarily in that county.

Table 7: Constituency sizes and statistics, 1994

Territorial lists Region	District size	SMD threshold	Registered electorate	Voters per seat	Valid votes	Actual quota	Quota as % of votes	Trans- ferred to NL	Awarded in terri- tory
Budapest	28	8	1,516,284	54,153.0	1,113,865	38,409	3.4	4	24
Baranya	6	2	322,451	53,741.8	220,440	31,491	14.3	2	4
Bács-Kiskun	8	2	426,159	53,269.9	258,036	28,670	11.1	2	6
Békés	6	2	319,605	53,267.5	213,383	30,486	14.3	1	5
Borsod-Abaúj- Zemplén	11	3	582,839	52,985.4	395,391	32,949	8.3	0	11
Csongrád	6	2	336,227	56,037.8	215,737	30,819	14.3	1	5
Fejér	6	2	319,064	53,177.3	214,237	30,605	14.3	0	6
Gyor-Moson- Sopron	6	2	331,138	55,189.7	238,111	34,015	14.3	1	5
Hajdú-Bihar	8	2	417,795	52,224.4	261,365	29,040	11.1	1	7
Heves	5	2	259,232	51,846.4	181,206	30,201	16.7	2	3
Jász-Nagykun- Szolnok	6	2	330,738	55,123.0	218,445	31,206	14.3	1	5
Komárom- Esztergom	5	2	240,620	48,124.0	166,813	27,802	16.7	2	3
Nógrád	4	2	177,158	44,289.5	121,744	24,348	20.0	1	3
Pest	14	4	747,839	53,417.1	489,957	32,663	6.7	2	12
Somogy	5	2	266,624	53,324.8	178,031	29,671	16.7	1	4
Szabolcs- Szatmár-Bereg	9	2	430,497	47,833.0	259,517	25,951	10.0	1	8
Tolna	4	2	196,680	49,170.0	129,351	25,870	20.0	2	2
Vas	4	2	211,193	52,798.3	154,785	30,957	20.0	2	2

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Table 7: (continuation)

Territorial lists Region	District size	SMD threshold	Registered electorate	Voters per seat	Valid votes	Actual quota	Quota as % of votes	Trans- ferred to NL	Awarded in terri- tory
Veszprém	6	2	289,184	48,197.3	207,202	29,600	14.3	1	5
Zala	5	2	237,901	47,580.2	162,578	27,096	16.7	0	5
Sum	152	49	7,959,228	5,400,194				27	125
Mean	7.6	2.5	397,961.4	51,787.5	270,009.7	30,092.5	13.9	1.4	6.3
Standard de- viation	5.4	1.39	295,866.5 0	3,136.3	216,362.3	3,162.1	4.4	0.93	4.93
Minimum	4	2	177,158	44,289.5	121,744	24,348	3.4	0	2
Maximum	28	8	1,516,284	56,037.8	1,113,865	38,409	20.0	4	24
Single-member districts (round 1)									
Sum	176	-	7,959,206		5,400,926				
Mean	1	-	45,222.8	45,222.8	30,687.1				
Standard de- viation	1	-	5,926.61	5,926.6	5,053.5				
Minimum	1	-	26,817	26,817	19,100				
Maximum	1	-	58,832	58,832	46,589				

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in different SMDs than where they were officially registered, and because of different rates of invalid ballots. Generally everyone casting one ballot tends to cast the other, so the overall turnout and total votes figures for the territorial list voting tend to match closely the SMD voting (refer to Table 5). Evidence at the aggregate level indicates that voters tend to cast their SMD ballots for candidates of the same party for which they cast their list ballots. The percentages of votes by party for both category of ballot tend to match very closely (see Table 5). "Split-voting" in the sense of casting each ballot for different parties, therefore, does not appear to be widespread.

### National List Results

The awarding of compensatory seats from national lists constitutes the final tier of the Hungarian electoral system. Originally designed to mitigate the disproportional consequences of the system's majoritarian tendencies, the national list has proven in practice to provide a dependable bonus for the largest parties.

The electoral law reserves a minimum of 58 seats to be allocated from national lists, although in practice this expands by about half because the two-thirds largest remainder limit in nearly every territory causes seats to be added to the national tier. In the 1994 election, 27 seats were added to the national pool by this mechanism (22 in 1990). To submit a national list, a party must have been able to establish at least seven territorial lists. There are no votes cast directly for national lists; instead, national tier votes come from primary tier votes that have not already been used in the election of a candidate. These include the first round single-member district votes for party candidates who did not win the seat, and the votes cast for territorial lists that were not spent acquiring mandates. Only votes cast during a valid poll (according to turnout requirements) are transferred to the national pool, except in the case of two successive invalid territorial list polls.<sup>14</sup> Finally, any party that gains less than 5 per cent of the total (territorial) party list vote is excluded from the national list allocation.

As on the territorial lists, the order of candidates is determined by parties and is closed to the voters. National list candidates may be listed also on regional lists, as mentioned previously, since there is no prohibition on simultaneous candidacies at multiple levels. If the candidate wins the SMD contest then his or her name is removed from any territorial and national lists. Likewise, a candidate

<sup>14</sup> If the second round of territorial list balloting is also invalid, then all of the seats assigned to that territory are added to the national pool to be awarded from the national list.

who was not running in a SMD or who lost a SMD contest, but won from the territorial list, is removed from the national list.

One effect of the national list is to provide insurance to political parties that their cadre will gain access to parliament. Introduced by the socialist regime in its 1983 electoral law reform, the national list was originally intended as protection for important party figures from the risks introduced by the limited competition in the SMDs. Since national lists are drawn by parties and since no ballots are cast directly for this list, the preferences of parties determines the makeup and rank of the national lists more than do considerations of candidate electability. Because candidates who win from primary tiers are simply removed from the national lists to make room for subsequently ordered list candidates, there are no disincentives to using the national list as a complete preference ordering for all of the party's candidates. As a consequence, candidates which a party considers most essential will generally be at the head of both their regional and national lists.

In 1994, it can be seen that the most important party figures gained parliamentary access from list rather than the SMD ballots. The heads of the major parties at the time of the election, for instance, were all elected from the first place of their territorial or national lists: Gyula Horn (MSZP), Lajos Für (MDF), and László Surján (KDNP) were elected from the first place of their parties' territorial lists; József Torgyán (FKGP) was elected from the top of the FKGP's national list. The national list mechanism also made MPs of party stalwarts István Balsai (MDF), János Áder (FIDESZ), and Imre Kónya (MDF), even though none of these were candidates in any SMD contest. Several important party figures who did chose to run in SMDs lost at that level yet gained seats from the safety mechanism of the party lists. Party heads Iván Pető (SZDSZ) and Viktor Orbán (FIDESZ) were SMD candidates, yet both became MPs from the first places on their territorial lists after losing their SMD contests. The same thing happened to Peter Tolgyessy, former head of SZDSZ and an important figure in the design of the electoral law. Such examples indicate the general tendency of parties to use the lists as a last resort for candidates considered important by the party machinery but who may fail to gain election from their geographic constituencies. This feature of the law drew not a little criticism upon its announcement following the Roundtable accords in 1989.

Although surplus votes for the national list come from both the candidate and the party based balloting, surplus votes from the SMD tier outnumber territorial tier transfer votes nearly three to one. (In 1994, 72 per cent of the national tier surplus votes came from SMDs before the application of the threshold, and 79 per cent after.) SMD surplus votes are also structured differently than territorial list surplus votes: they preserve their original ordinal ranking and their original

disparities arising from direct voting. Territorial list surplus votes, on the other hand, come from proportional allocation remainders which tend to be sized independently of the party's original vote rankings. As a consequence it is the second and third place parties<sup>15</sup> which transfer the bulk of these votes, since the second place party's votes were already used to win primary tier seats.

In 1994, this pattern was clearly manifest in the national list results (see the percentage columns in Table 5). The rank ordering of the national list surplus votes was identical to the total SMD vote ranking if the first party in the latter is shifted to the last-ranked party on the former (with the exception of FKGP whose territorial list votes were stronger relative to its SMD votes). The socialists who had led the polls by a wide margin, winning 149 of the 176 single constituencies, consequently had the fewest surplus votes and placed last on the national list. The biggest national list winner was SZDSZ, which had placed second in over two-thirds of the first-round SMD contests (see Table 7).

Despite the proportional aspirations of the national list, small parties tend to be excluded entirely from its compensating effect. This is because the national list is the apex of a complicated system which filters out small parties at each successive level. Parties too small or too regional to establish territorial lists will not meet the nationwide threshold of list votes required to participate in the national list allocation. Parties who fail to establish at least seven regional lists will also be ineligible even to submit a national list. In 1994, 16 parties failed to establish any territorial lists (not including the joint and independent candidacies); of those with territorial lists, four had fewer than the seven required to submit a national list. Finally, of the 15 parties with at least seven territorial lists, nine had less than the legal minimum of 5 per cent of the nationwide list balloting needed to qualify for compensatory seats. In the end only the six largest parties met all of the requirements to win seats from their national lists. The main effect of the requirement, is to provide a healthy bonus to the top runners-up, but it does very little to reduce the disproportionalities of the electoral system as it affects smaller parties.

### Global Electoral System Performance

Summary indexes of proportionality and parliamentary composition offer an additional means to assess the aggregate performance of Hungary's electoral system. The notion of numerical proportionality, a measure of the disparity between

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Here and in the discussion that follows, I refer often to parties in terms of their ordinal rank while ignoring the specific party which occupied that rank. This is to emphasize the interaction of the electoral law with parties according to their vote shares. Thus, the "first-place party" was MDF in 1990 and MSZP in 1994.

parties' shares of votes and seats in an election, is commonly applied to the study of electoral system consequences (Lijphart, 1994; Gallagher, 1991).

Numerical indicators of proportionality exist in many forms. Two such measures are used here: the Loosemore-Hanby Index and the Sainte-Laguë Index, shown in Table 8. These are explicit measures of disproportionality. The Loosemore-Hanby measure averages the absolute discrepancies between each party's share of votes and seats. The method was devised by Loosemore and Hanby (1971) and has become the more widely used index of disproportionality.<sup>16</sup> It is obtained by summing the absolute differences of seat and vote proportions and dividing by two:  $1/2 \sum |v_i - s_i|$  for all parties  $i$ . The Loosemore-Hanby Index ranges from zero to 100. One problem of the index, however, is that it treats differences in seats and votes as absolute, regardless of party size. This equates the disproportionality between a party winning 55 per cent of the seats with 50.1 per cent of the votes, and a party winning 5 per cent of the seats with 0.1 per cent of the votes (Gallagher, 1991: 41). For this reason the Sainte-Laguë Index may be preferable, because it focuses on relative differences in seats and votes for each party. This index is based on the sum of squared differences for each party compared to the total seats-votes ratio, calculated as  $\sum (v_i - s_i)^2 / v_i$  for all parties  $i$ . Its minimum of zero indicates perfect proportionality, and theoretical maximum of infinity indicates that a party with no votes somehow won a seat. In practice its score is less easily interpreted than the Loosemore-Hanby Index, but it has the merit of highlighting the relative differences between parties' shares of seats and votes.

Hungary's complex, multiple tier electoral system displays similar proportionality characteristics to much simpler laws used in other countries. Table 8 provides summary information profiling the Hungarian and several comparative elections in terms of their proportionality. From this selective sample it is evident that the Hungarian elections were neither the most nor the least favorable to the largest parties in Central and Eastern Europe. In comparison with older democracies, Hungary's system appears more disproportional than even all-SMD electoral systems: its Loosemore-Hanby score of 22.07 is higher than that for the average scores of elections in the United States, New Zealand, or the United Kingdom. An election in which more parties compete, of course, has a greater potential for disproportionality. That is why France, with more parties contesting its elections from 1958-1981, produced a Loosemore-Hanby score of 20.89, much closer to the Hungarian elections.

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The index is subject to several paradoxes and also has the problem of always being minimized by the largest remainders method. For a discussion see Gallagher (1991).

Table 8: Proportionality profiles compared

Tier/election	Disproportionality indexes				
	Loosemore-Hanby	Sainte-Laguë	"Effective" parties competing	Parties elected	"Effective" parties elected
Hungary 1994:					
SMDs	53.54	135.66	35	7	1.38
Territorial lists	17.12	18.55	19	6	3.73
National list	27.09	37.22	35	6	5.22
Overall 1994	22.07	30.01	35	8	2.90
Bulgaria 1991	33.25	33.25	37	3	2.41
Hungary 1990	22.77	30.71	29	7	3.78
Czech Republic 1992	19.11	23.75	21	6	4.80
Slovenia 1992	16.59	22.21	25	8	6.59
Poland 1991	8.67	8.10	> 90	27	10.85
France (1958-81)	20.89	-	(4.97)	-	3.50
United Kingdom (1945-87)	12.91	-	(2.65)	-	2.10
New Zealand (1946-90)	12.47	-	(2.47)	-	1.95
United States (1946-90)	5.90	-	(2.03)	-	1.92
Sweden (1970-88)	2.55	-	(3.57)	-	3.40

Note: National list tier includes votes for parties not meeting the legal minimum threshold of 5 per cent of the nationwide list vote. Source for other countries data is Benoit (1994: 12) for Eastern Europe and Lijphart (1994) for other countries.

Comparing Hungary's 1994 scores with the 1990 election shows that the profile is nearly indistinguishable for the two elections. The difference lies in the number of "effective" elected parties, 2.90 in 1994 compared to 3.78 in 1990, caused by the fact that the largest party in 1994 captured over 8 per cent more of the national vote than the largest party in 1990. This made the composition of parliament more concentrated in the largest party's hands. The effective number of parties considers the size of parties and weights them according to their seat or vote shares. It is computed by squaring each party's seat or vote proportion, summing the results, and taking the inverse  $(1 / \sum s_i^2)$ , where  $s$  represents proportions of seats or votes (Laasko and Taagepera, 1979).

Profiling each tier of the Hungarian electoral system provides insight into the characteristics of its constituent mechanisms. The single-member districts proved

to be highly disproportional, higher in fact than nearly all of the older Westminster-style democracies in the sample. This occurs for two reasons. First, the proportionality figures presented in Table 8 are from the first round of voting, where more parties competed, yet nearly all seats are awarded in the more restricted second round. Second, the Hungarian SMD races were generally contested by more parties than was the case in the other democracies, and the votes were relatively fragmented. Only one party's candidate can win the SMD seat, and this causes the disproportionality measure to rise in proportion to the number of parties contesting the election.

The territorial list tier's proportionality score is similar to those for elections from district-based PR found in the Czech Republic<sup>17</sup> and (in modified form) in Slovenia. The national list's higher score comes from the threshold requirement that eliminated most parties' surplus votes from consideration. Viewed separately, the territorial districts vary highly in their proportionality. Proportionality in the Hungarian territorial list contests is inversely related to the number of seats apportioned to that district. Gabel (1994: 209) quantified this relationship for the 1990 election, showing the Loosemore-Hanby disproportionality to range from 38 for Nográd county ( $m=4$ ) to 11 for Budapest ( $m=28$ ).<sup>18</sup> Even the smaller district sizes called for in the original Roundtable plans led the framers to raise the number of seats from 150 to 152. They also adopted the allocation limit rule that to gain a territorial list seat a party must have at least two-thirds of the quota in a district. Otherwise, Péter Tölgyessy calculated, in a district where one party has three times the votes of another, each might still receive only one seat (Benoit and Schieman, 1995: 23).

### Conclusions

From its second performance in the 1994 election we can draw several conclusions about the Hungarian electoral system.

First, the Hungarian electoral law tends to produce a certain configuration of party representation through its filtering mechanisms. Despite a significant shifting of votes toward MSZP, the profile of the 1994 parliament looks similar in many ways to the parliament elected in 1990. For instance, the proportionality

<sup>17</sup> The election listed in Table 8 refers to the June 1992 election to the (former) Czech National Council.

<sup>18</sup> Gabel's calculations are based on a full seat allocation in each district, instead of transferring seats to the national list tier which could not be awarded because of the two-thirds limit rule. The calculations in Table 8 are based on actual seat awards, which are affected by the two-thirds rule.

profile is nearly identical, even though the party with the largest vote share in 1994 had nearly 33 per cent of the vote, compared to 24.7 in 1990. In addition, the same six parties present in parliament in the first legislative term are present in the second. These six parties were the only ones meeting all of the requirements for seat awards from the territorial and national lists. Shifts in the ranking of these six parties' representation in parliament took place among the top four of these parties, with the bottom two (FIDESZ and KDNP) maintaining nearly the same seat shares. This occurred despite nearly a two-point drop in vote share for FIDESZ. The reason is that the number of parties that can meet the list threshold is limited, and those who fail to meet the threshold present no competition to even the smallest parties that did. In other words, the smallest parties in the national list still receive electoral spoils, taken not from the parties that bested them but from the numerous even smaller parties that are excluded by stringent hurdles from eligibility for list seats. This occurred even though the parties excluded from parliament polled more than 13 per cent of the total nationwide votes (defined in the manner of Table 5) — nearly twice that of each of the two smallest parliamentary parties. Yet, because the largest of these non-parliamentary parties won only 3.2 per cent of the vote, it and the other small parties effectively do not exist for purposes of the (nominally) proportional list allocations. And in the SMD tier in which tiny parties are, from a qualification requirement, on an equal footing with large parties, by definition their smaller size will insure that they are almost never "first past the post."

Consequently Hungary's electoral system, in its present political environment, institutionalizes a six-party parliament, with between three and four of these parties having a significant legislative presence. MSZP proved in 1994 that less than one-third of the national vote is sufficient to gain a parliamentary majority. What other conditions which might lead to a majority, or to the even more significant two-thirds super-majority necessary to pass constitutional-level legislation, remain to be seen. But the results in 1994 indicate clearly that while electoral swings do significantly affect the relative position of the top three or four parties in parliament, all six parties from 1990 merely experienced a reshuffling in the order of their parliamentary strength. The reshuffling, moreover, left the parties at the bottom of this sextet largely unaffected.

A second, related observation about the Hungarian electoral law is that the mechanism for translating votes into seats did not become significantly more disproportional as the top vote-winning party gained significantly in vote share. While seats-votes curves often become steep in the middle range of vote shares, for the largest party, Hungary's law actually provided diminishing marginal returns to the first place winner. This pattern can be seen by the comparing disproportional payoffs of seats for votes from the two elections. The top party in 1990

had 24.73 of the list vote, winning 6.63 seats for each point of its vote share. In 1994, the largest party polled 32.99 per cent of the list vote and won a slightly lower average of 6.33 seats for each point of its vote share. The difference of 8.26 points to gain 45 seats represents only 5.45 seats for each point of the vote gain.

This relatively unusual proportional increase in the observed 25 to 33 per cent vote range is caused by the interactions of the multiple tier structure. Part of this reason is that even in 1990, when the first place party had a considerably smaller lead than in 1994, the most disproportional mechanism in the electoral system had already taken effect. In both 1990 and 1994, at least two-thirds of the SMD seats were won by the first-place party. Because the SMD tier is the greatest source of disproportionalism in the Hungarian electoral law, this means that the region of steepest increase in disproportionalism had already been climbed.

Yet, this is not entirely true, however, since 35 of the 45 additional seats won by the first-place winner in 1994 were won in SMDs. Here, the national list tier played a role in compensating for this potential increase in disproportionalism from these SMD seats. While it does little to help small parties achieve a more proportional outcome, the national list does wonders for second and third place parties who were beaten in the SMD contests by the first place party. This compensatory effect becomes stronger in direct proportion to the magnitude of the first place party's electoral sweep. When the 1994 election is compared to its predecessor, the parties finishing second and third both lost vote share in the list balloting, yet both increased the number of seats they won on the national list. The first-place finisher in the SMDs, because it has the fewest unused votes to transfer to the national list tier, obtains the fewest national list votes. The national list, therefore, is effective as a compensation mechanism among parties with sufficient votes to meet its qualification requirements.

A third conclusion about the Hungarian electoral law's performance in the 1994 election is that its legal vote thresholds are but a small part of the barriers the law presents to small parties. Although the list threshold of 5 per cent is generally singled out by critics of the Hungarian electoral law, in practice other qualification requirements pose even greater obstacles. For instance, establishing a list in a territory depends entirely on the number of SMD candidacies a party can establish, and eligibility for a national list depends in turn upon territorial lists. These requirements pose high initial hurdles to parties before vote percentages are even considered. Put simply, the minimum vote threshold makes no difference to a party which cannot qualify for the ballot. The legal vote minimum was raised by amendment from 4 to 5 per cent between elections, yet no party in 1994 had between 4 and 5 per cent of the list vote. Had the old law been in effect

it would not have helped any of the small parties already excluded by the restrictions imposed on submitting party lists.

Some of the consequences of the threshold amendment, however, may have affected the behavior of parties and voters prior to the election. It has been suggested that voters, reluctant to waste votes on parties with little chance of meeting the thresholds, cast their ballots for large parties when the expected vote of their most preferred party was small (Szoboszlai, 1995: 28), although this remains to be substantiated. Several parties, in fact, provided behavior which is evidence against a process of electoral learning. Baset by personality conflicts, for instance, the Independent Smallholders' Party (FKGP) split into several smaller parties for the 1994 election. As a consequence FKGP won 18 fewer seats in 1994; three-quarters of its 1994 MPs (running on an FKGP or other Smallholders' Party ticket) lost their re-election bids; and its splinter parties (United Smallholders' party - EKGP, Compromise Independent Smallholders' party - KFKP, and Historical Independent Smallholders' Party - TFKP) failed to win any seats. Another example is the split from MDF of MP incumbent István Csurka to form the Party of Hungarian Justice and Life (MIÉP). He and his party failed to win any parliamentary seats and captured less than 1.5 per cent of the total national vote. If voters did steer away from these small parties in a desire not to waste their votes, then the fact has not been fully grasped by political parties. The disincentive to support small parties, a version of Duverger's "psychological effect" (Duverger, 1951; Reed, 1990) for Hungarian elections, has yet to take full effect.

A final observation about the 1994 operation of the Hungarian electoral law has to do with its similarity in performance to other electoral systems in the region. Hungary's electoral law is more complicated than those of its neighbors by orders of magnitude, yet the results it achieves are largely similar. Using district-based proportional representation (with the d'Hondt formula known to favor large parties), Bulgaria's 1991 election looks similar to Hungary's and has three fewer parties in the legislature. In the Czech Republic, where party votes were less fragmented, the 1992 election produced a six-party parliament with a similar score on the disproportionality index. There are many ways to balance the goals of representation and governability, and comparative results prove that the complex set of Hungarian rules is not the only method for doing so and that similar results can be accomplished through simpler means. The Hungarian electoral law's complexity has more to do with the circumstances of its birth (Benoit and Schiemann, 1995) than a conviction held by its framers that such complexity was necessary to accomplish a particular political objective. Yet, the Hungarian electoral law has proven remarkably stable as an institution. Some discussion of electoral law reform exists in Hungary; yet it is hardly high on the agenda of the ruling coalition - a coalition with the super-majority needed to pass electoral law

amendments. Even the socialist campaign pledge to eliminate the second round of SMD voting has been largely dropped from political discourse. The electoral law in Hungary, like much Hungarian cuisine, is a complicated combination of elements which may seem odd to foreign tastes but has become a Hungarian staple.

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## The 1994 Hungarian Election in Historical Perspective

Jason Wittenberg

### Introduction

In the spring of 1994 Hungarian voters, following their counterparts in Poland and Lithuania, returned the former communists to power. The victory of the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) was indeed impressive. More than tripling its 1990 result, MSZP captured an absolute majority of seats in parliament. For the first time in history, Hungarians had freely voted a leftist party into power. The parties of the right, victors in the first post-communist election, suffered a crushing defeat, their support falling to an all-time low. Yet, contrary to MSZP's parliamentary landslide (and popular perception), this "left turn" did *not* represent a historic breakthrough in leftist support within society: the percentage of the popular vote received by MSZP in 1994 (33 per cent) was not significantly different from the support given to the Social Democratic Party and the Hungarian Communist Party together in each of the two elections prior to the advent of state-socialism in the late 1940s. Ironically, as we will see, it is the 1990 outcome, touted by Szelényi and Szelényi (1991: 123) as reflecting the strong Hungarian "taste for Christian-nationalist political rule," that turns out to be the historical anomaly.

This contribution explores trends in Hungarian voting behavior between 1945 and 1994 through analysis of settlement level electoral results from the 1945, 1947, 1990, and 1994 national parliamentary elections.<sup>1</sup> The database contains outcomes on approximately 3,000 communities. My intentions in this essay are relatively modest: to describe patterns of electoral continuity and discontinuity between 1945 and 1994. Ultimately, of course, I seek to explain these patterns as well. I would like to know, for example, whether stable loyalties arise from

<sup>1</sup> The 1994 data used here, as well as selected data from the 1990 census, has been keyed in by the author. The data for 1990 were made available by the Alliance of Free Democrats. I am grateful to the Institute for Political History, and in particular to László Habay, for generously offering the 1945 and 1947 data while they are still in preparation for publication. While I have made every attempt to ensure the accuracy of these data, no guarantee can be given. I also thank Suzanne Berger, Zsolt Einyedi, Abby Innes, and especially Gábor Tóka for their comments on earlier drafts. László Pálházy and István Szakadát provided much appreciated help in constructing the list of villages used in the analysis.