

POLITICS

Hungarian Political History II Communism's Consolidation to Modern Hungary

A real, political-institutions history of Hungary from Kádár's post-1956 consolidation through to the country's own current, unresolved dispute with the European Union — goulash communism and the slow opening, the real 1989 Pan-European Picnic and border crossings, the negotiated 1989-90 democratic transition, the market democracy of the 1990s, real EU accession in 2004, Fidesz's 2010 supermajority and the 2011 Fundamental Law, the 2014 illiberal-democracy doctrine declared in Orbán's own words, and the real Lex CEU, "Stop Soros" package, and Article 7 rule-of-law dispute that followed — grounded throughout in real, WebFetch-verified dates, figures, and institutional mechanics, closing with a capstone tracing the full dispute end to end and every recurring thread from across both Hungarian Political History courses.

10 Chapters

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CHAPTER 1: KÁDÁR'S "GOULASH COMMUNISM": CONSOLIDATION AFTER 1956

Hungarian Political History II: Communism's Consolidation to Modern Hungary

Chapter 1 · Kádár's "Goulash Communism": Consolidation After 1956

Hungarian Political History I closed with János Kádár installed as leader from 4 November 1956, and Imre Nagy's own secret execution two years later. Kádár's later reputation for relative liberalization did not come first — real, harsh reprisals did.

The Real, Harsh Reprisals First

In the immediate aftermath of the Revolution, a real, documented 26,000 Hungarians were arrested, 22,000 sentenced and imprisoned, and 13,000 interned. The official figure for executions stands at **229** — though former Hungarian Foreign Minister Géza Jeszenszky has estimated the real total closer to 350. Roughly 200,000 people had already fled as refugees, per Chapter 9 of this course's own sibling course.

"Who Is Not Against Us Is With Us"

Only after this initial period of repression did Kádár's own real, documented governing philosophy shift. He regularly repeated the phrase **"Who is not against us is with us"** — a direct, deliberate reversal of the Rákosi-era logic Chapter 7 of the sibling course traced, where mere suspicion of insufficient loyalty was itself grounds for a purge. Kádár's own version offered real, broader political latitude: passive non-opposition, not active demonstrated loyalty, became enough to be left alone.

The New Economic Mechanism

In 1968, Hungary introduced real, genuine economic reforms under the New Economic Mechanism: easing foreign trade restrictions, permitting limited market mechanisms inside the wider Soviet-style planned economy, allowing small private businesses in the services sector, enabling horizontal business integration rather than only vertical state control, and giving individual businesses real autonomy in sourcing materials and pursuing exports. Central

planning controls loosened enough to let cooperatives operate in food processing, light industry, and services.

"The Happiest Barracks"

The real, comparative result earned Hungary a documented nickname among its own Eastern Bloc neighbors: "the happiest barracks." Real, concrete evidence backed the description — Hungary achieved the highest standard of living among Eastern Bloc countries, the easiest access to travel abroad in the entire bloc, the quickest access to Western products and culture, and the highest consumer goods consumption anywhere in the Eastern Bloc.

Finding: liberalization built on top of repression, not instead of it

Kádár's own real reputation for relative freedom did not replace the reprisals that opened his rule — it was built directly on top of them, roughly a decade after 26,000 arrests and hundreds of executions had already secured his own government's real political control. "The happiest barracks" is itself the honest description: real comparative prosperity and real continued one-party rule, existing together rather than one replacing the other.

Kádár's Own Real End

Kádár led Hungary for over three decades before being succeeded as General Secretary by Károly Grósz on **22 May 1988**, his own declining health cited as the reason for his retirement — the beginning of the real, final transition this course's next chapters trace.

Hands-On Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Explain why the real timing of Kádár's harsh reprisals — coming before, not after, his later reputation for liberalization — matters for accurately describing his own rule.

→ [Solution](#)

EXERCISE 2

Explain the real, specific difference between Kádár's "who is not against us is with us" and the Rákosi-era logic it deliberately reversed.

→ [Solution](#)

EXERCISE 3

Explain why "the happiest barracks" is a genuinely accurate real description of Kádár-era Hungary, rather than either pure praise or pure criticism.

→ [Solution](#)

Quick Reference

- **1956–57 reprisals:** 26,000 arrested, 22,000 imprisoned, 13,000 interned, 229 officially executed (Jeszenszky's own estimate: ~350)
- **Kádár's real governing phrase:** "Who is not against us is with us" — reversing Rákosi-era suspicion-based purges
- **1968:** the New Economic Mechanism — limited markets, private services, business autonomy in sourcing and exports
- **"The happiest barracks":** highest living standards, easiest travel, and highest consumer-goods consumption in the Eastern Bloc
- **22 May 1988:** Kádár succeeded as General Secretary by Károly Grósz

CHAPTER 2: THE SLOW OPENING: HUNGARY'S REAL PATH TOWARD REFORM

Hungarian Political History II: Communism's Consolidation to Modern Hungary

Chapter 2 · The Slow Opening: Hungary's Real Path Toward Reform

Chapter 1 closed with Kádár succeeded by Károly Grósz on 22 May 1988. What followed was not a single dramatic rupture, but a real, accumulating series of openings — new organizations, a startling reassessment of 1956 itself, and finally a negotiated path to multi-party elections.

Fidesz: A Youth Movement Born "Semi-Illegal"

On **30 March 1988**, a group of university students founded the Alliance of Young Democrats — *Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége*, Fidesz — as an underground liberal student activist movement opposed to the ruling party. Founding an independent political organization was, in the real, documented judgment of the time, "semi-illegal." The new movement capped its own membership at age 35 and positioned itself on the political center-left. Its founding members included Viktor Orbán, Gábor Fodor, László Kövér, and several others who would go on to shape Hungarian politics for decades.

Finding: a striking real reversal still to come

Fidesz began as a left-of-center liberal youth movement, formed at genuine legal risk to itself, with an upper age limit meant to keep it a genuinely young organization. That age cap was abolished in 1993. This course's own later chapters trace the same party's real transformation into the very different political force that would win a supermajority in 2010 — a reversal this chapter deliberately does not resolve, since it hadn't happened yet.

Pozsgay's Real Reversal

Imre Pozsgay, a leading figure in the party's own reformist wing, had personally called the events of 1956 "pure counter-revolution" back in 1957. On **28 January 1989**, he reversed that same judgment publicly, becoming the first member of the ruling party to describe 1956

instead as a genuine "popular uprising" — directly validating the real events Hungarian Political History I's own Chapters 8 and 9 already traced in full. The statement helped legitimize the opposition's own historical narrative and became a real, documented catalyst accelerating the country's transition. Pozsgay later took part personally in Nagy's own 16 June 1989 reburial.

The Round Table Talks

Formal National Round Table talks began on **13 June 1989** between the ruling MSZMP and a real Opposition Round Table bringing together Fidesz, the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ), the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), and the Independent Smallholders' Party — the same real party, per Chapter 7 of the sibling course, that had won 57.03% of the vote in the genuinely free 1945 election, now returning to the table forty-four years later. An agreement was signed **18 September 1989**, producing six real draft laws: a constitutional overhaul, a Constitutional Court, rules for party functioning, multi-party National Assembly elections, and penal code reform. The real electoral system settled on a hybrid compromise — roughly half of deputies elected proportionally, half by majoritarian vote.

Finding: blocking an election specifically to stop one man from winning it

How Hungary would elect its own president remained genuinely contested through the talks. Pozsgay had, by this point, become perhaps the country's most popular politician — and anti-communist parties, recognizing this directly, successfully pushed for a real constitutional rule preventing a directly elected presidency at all, resolved instead by a 26 November 1989 referendum favoring parliamentary election of the president. A real, concrete piece of political calculation: change the rules of the game specifically because of who would otherwise win it.

Hands-On Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Explain why Fidesz's own real 1988 founding as a left-of-center liberal youth movement is a genuinely important detail for accurately understanding the party's later political history, rather than an irrelevant footnote.

→ [Solution](#)

EXERCISE 2

Explain why Pozsgay's own personal history — having called 1956 "pure counter-revolution" himself in 1957 — makes his 1989 reversal more politically significant than if a different, uninvolved party member had made the same statement.

→ [Solution](#)

EXERCISE 3

Explain why blocking a directly elected presidency was a rational strategic choice for the anti-communist parties, given what this chapter establishes about Pozsgay's own real popularity.

→ [Solution](#)

Quick Reference

- **30 March 1988:** Fidesz founded as a liberal youth movement, membership capped at age 35
- **28 January 1989:** Pozsgay reverses his own 1957 judgment, calling 1956 a "popular uprising"
- **13 June – 18 September 1989:** the National Round Table Talks — MSZMP vs. the Opposition Round Table (SZDSZ, Fidesz, MDF, the Smallholders)
- **Real electoral compromise:** roughly half of deputies elected proportionally, half majoritarian
- **26 November 1989:** referendum settles a parliamentary, not direct, election method for the presidency

CHAPTER 3: 1989: HUNGARY'S OWN BORDER OPENING AND ITS REAL ROLE IN ENDING THE COLD WAR

Hungarian Political History II: Communism's Consolidation to Modern Hungary

Chapter 3 · 1989: Hungary's Own Border Opening and Its Real Role in Ending the Cold War

German Political History II's own Chapter 6 already told this real story from East Germany's side — a border opening on Hungarian soil that reactivated an emigration crisis the Berlin Wall had been built to stop. This chapter tells the same real events from the other side of that same border.

Dismantling the Fence

Hungary began physically dismantling its own Austrian border fortifications on **2 May 1989**. On **27 June**, Foreign Minister Gyula Horn and his Austrian counterpart, Alois Mock, symbolically cut through the remaining barbed wire together — a real, photographed moment that had, honestly, been planned months in advance, more ceremonial confirmation of a decision already made than the dramatic turning point it is sometimes remembered as.

The Pan-European Picnic

On **19 August 1989**, near Sopron, a real, staged event — the Pan-European Picnic — opened a border gate for several hours. A real, documented 661 people crossed that specific day.

100,000 People With Nowhere to Go

By that summer, roughly **100,000 East Germans** had gathered in Hungary, unable to return home and with no legal way forward. Prime Minister Miklós Németh later described the real dilemma plainly: Hungary "could not keep them here, and we could not send them back" — leaving opening the border, in his own words, "the only remaining option."

Horn's Real Legal Justification

When East German officials confronted Hungary over the growing crisis, Horn offered a real, specific legal argument: international treaties on refugees took precedence over a 1969 bilateral agreement between Budapest and East Berlin that had restricted freedom of movement. Financial reality reinforced the legal case — maintaining the automated border monitoring systems the old policy depended on required Western hard currency Hungary genuinely did not have.

Németh Tells Kohl, Not Moscow

Rather than seeking Soviet approval first, Németh personally informed West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Hungary's own real intentions. Kohl, in turn, contacted Gorbachev directly. Németh had already told Kohl that Hungary would handle its own border situation and that permission from Gorbachev was unnecessary — and Gorbachev's own real, documented response, once informed, was approving: Németh "was a good man."

Finding: a satellite state acting on its own authority

This is a real, striking sequence: a Warsaw Pact government made a major foreign-policy decision, informed a NATO chancellor of it directly, and treated Moscow's own approval as unnecessary rather than a precondition — with Gorbachev's own real response confirming after the fact that Hungary had judged the moment correctly. By 1989, the assumption that satellite states needed prior Soviet permission for major decisions had genuinely eroded.

11 September 1989

Németh announced the border fully open, effective **11 September 1989**. A real, documented 30,000 East Germans crossed into the West in the days that immediately followed.

Finding: the other side of the same real story

German Political History II's own Chapter 6 already covered these exact events from East Germany's own side — the same emigration crisis, the same Pan-European Picnic, the same September opening. Read together, the two chapters show the identical real history from both directions: Hungary's own real domestic reasoning (a stranded population, an

unaffordable border system, a genuine legal argument) driving a crisis that, from East Germany's own side, looked like the sudden reopening of an emigration pressure the Wall had spent 28 years trying to seal shut.

Hands-On Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Explain why the 27 June fence-cutting ceremony being "largely ceremonial" and planned months in advance does not diminish the real significance of Hungary's own border-opening decision.

→ [Solution](#)

EXERCISE 2

Explain why Horn's real legal argument — that international refugee treaties outranked Hungary's own 1969 agreement with East Germany — mattered practically, not just as a diplomatic formality.

→ [Solution](#)

EXERCISE 3

Explain why Németh informing Kohl before Moscow, rather than the reverse, is significant evidence about the real state of Soviet authority over its own satellite states by 1989.

→ [Solution](#)

Quick Reference

- **2 May 1989:** Hungary begins dismantling its Austrian border fortifications

- **27 June 1989:** Horn and Mock cut the fence — a ceremonial confirmation, planned months earlier
- **19 August 1989:** the Pan-European Picnic — 661 real, documented crossings
- **Summer 1989:** ~100,000 East Germans stranded in Hungary with no legal way forward
- **Horn's real legal case:** international refugee treaties over the 1969 Hungary–East Germany agreement
- **11 September 1989:** the border fully opens; 30,000 East Germans cross in the days that follow

CHAPTER 4: HUNGARY'S DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION AND THE 1989–90 CONSTITUTION

Hungarian Political History II: Communism's Consolidation to Modern Hungary

Chapter 4 · Hungary's Democratic Transition and the 1989–90 Constitution

Chapter 3 traced the real border crisis unfolding through the summer of 1989, parallel to the Round Table negotiations Chapter 2 already covered. That autumn, those negotiations produced a genuine constitutional transformation — proclaimed, deliberately, on a date this course's own sibling course has already made meaningful.

23 October 1989: A Deliberately Chosen Date

Mátyás Szűrös, Speaker of the National Assembly since March 1989, became Hungary's own provisional President the moment the old Presidential Council was dissolved under the newly amended constitution. On **23 October 1989**, he made the official proclamation: Hungary had removed "People's Republic" from its own constitutional name, becoming simply the "Republic of Hungary." The date was not incidental — it was the exact calendar anniversary of the 1956 Revolution's own outbreak, covered in Chapter 8 of this course's own sibling course, deliberately chosen to connect Hungary's 1989 transition directly back to that earlier uprising.

Amending, Not Replacing

The 1949 constitution — the same Stalinist-era document under which Rákosi's own regime had governed — was almost completely rewritten that autumn to remove its Communist character. Formally, this remained a real amendment of the existing document rather than an entirely new constitution, even as its actual substance was transformed into that of a genuine parliamentary democracy.

A Real Constructive Vote of No Confidence

The same October 1989 reforms introduced a real constructive vote of no confidence mechanism: any motion to remove the Prime Minister had to simultaneously nominate a specific replacement candidate, who would automatically become Prime Minister if the motion

succeeded. This structure — requiring an actual majority in favor of someone new, not simply the removal of the incumbent — closely mirrors the constructive-vote mechanism German Political History II already covered in depth for the West German Basic Law, adopted by Hungary at the very moment it was building its own parliamentary system from scratch.

The First Free Elections Since 1945

Hungary held its first fully free, competitive multi-party elections since 1945 in March–April 1990. The conservative Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) won decisively — 164 seats, 24.73% of the vote — ahead of the liberal Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ) with 92 seats (21.40%). The former ruling Communist party collapsed to fourth place with just 33 seats (10.89%). The Independent Smallholders' Party won 44 seats (11.73%), and the Christian Democratic People's Party 21 (6.46%).

József Antall, leading the MDF, became Prime Minister at the head of a coalition with the Smallholders and Christian Democrats — genuinely, in the real historical record, "the first government since the end of World War II with no Communist participation."

Finding: a forty-five-year loop, finally closed

Chapter 7 of this course's own sibling course traced the Smallholders' Party winning a real, overwhelming 57.03% in the genuinely free 1945 election — a victory Soviet-backed coercion made politically meaningless within months. In 1990, the same party returned to government, this time as a genuine, uncoerced coalition partner in Hungary's first fully post-Communist government. The party's own real electoral mandate finally mattered, forty-five years after it first won one.

The Antall–SZDSZ Pact

Antall also negotiated a real pact with SZDSZ, the main opposition party — an agreement that, in the real historical assessment, "laid the foundations for the parliamentary operation of Hungarian democracy." Under its terms, Árpád Göncz, an SZDSZ figure, became President while Antall's MDF led the government — a genuine, negotiated power-sharing arrangement between the two largest parties rather than one party claiming every lever of power outright.

Hands-On Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Explain why choosing 23 October specifically for the Third Republic's own proclamation was a meaningful political choice, not simply a coincidental date.

→ [Solution](#)

EXERCISE 2

Explain what a constructive vote of no confidence actually requires that an ordinary vote of no confidence does not, and why this distinction matters for government stability.

→ [Solution](#)

EXERCISE 3

Explain why the Smallholders' Party's own real return to government in 1990 is a meaningful historical closure, given what Chapter 7 of the sibling course already established about their 1945 election.

→ [Solution](#)

Quick Reference

- **23 October 1989:** Szűrös proclaims the Republic of Hungary — deliberately the same date as the 1956 Revolution's own start
- **October 1989:** a real constructive vote of no confidence mechanism introduced, requiring a named replacement PM
- **March–April 1990:** the first free elections since 1945 — MDF 164 seats (24.73%), SZDSZ 92 (21.40%), the former Communist party fourth at 33 (10.89%)

- **Antall (MDF)** becomes PM, leading a coalition with the Smallholders and Christian Democrats — the first fully post-Communist government
- **The Antall–SZDSZ pact:** Göncz (SZDSZ) becomes President while Antall's MDF leads the government

CHAPTER 5: BUILDING A MARKET DEMOCRACY: THE 1990S

Hungarian Political History II: Communism's Consolidation to Modern Hungary

Chapter 5 · Building a Market Democracy: The 1990s

Chapter 2 flagged, without resolving, a striking real reversal still to come in Fidesz's own history. This chapter delivers it — alongside two elections that reshaped Hungarian politics before the decade was out.

Fidesz's Real Reversal

At its own 1993 party congress, Fidesz formally changed its political position from liberal to "civic-centrist." The shift split the party — founding members Péter Molnár, Gábor Fodor, and Klára Ungár left, joining SZDSZ, the very liberal party Fidesz was now moving away from. In 1995, the party renamed itself from the Alliance of Young Democrats to the Hungarian Civic Party, cultivating real ties with the national-conservative Hungarian Democratic Forum. Viktor Orbán, as party chairman, was the real architect of this transformation.

Finding: Chapter 2's own flagged reversal, delivered

Chapter 2 established Fidesz's real 1988 founding as a left-of-center liberal youth movement with an upper age limit, deliberately leaving its later transformation unresolved. Five years later, that transformation happened: a formal 1993 congress vote, real founding members departing for the opposite side of the political spectrum, and a 1995 rebrand completing the shift from liberal youth movement to national-conservative party — the real foundation the rest of this course's own later chapters build directly on.

1994: The Socialists Return

The 1994 election delivered a real, extraordinary swing: the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP), the former Communist party's own direct successor, jumped from 33 seats to 209 — a real 176-seat swing — winning 32.99% of the vote and an outright parliamentary majority on its own. Antall's own MDF collapsed from 165 seats to just 38. Real, documented causes included poor

economic performance, perceived government incompetence, and genuine nostalgia for the social security of the communist era — balanced against MSZP's own real, reformed platform explicitly committing to a market economy.

Despite holding an outright majority, Gyula Horn — the same Horn whose real 1989 border decisions Chapter 3 already covered — chose to form a coalition with SZDSZ anyway, creating a real two-thirds supermajority. The real, documented reason was deliberate self-restraint: addressing genuine international concern about a former Communist party holding absolute, unchecked power so soon after 1990.

1998: Fidesz's First Victory, and a Warning Sign

In 1998, MSZP actually won more votes than Fidesz — 32.92% to 29.48% — yet Fidesz took more seats, 148 to MSZP's 134, a direct real consequence of the mixed proportional/majoritarian electoral system Chapter 4 already established. Fidesz formed a center-right coalition with the Independent Smallholders' Party — the same party whose own real arc this course has traced from a stolen 1945 mandate through a genuine 1990 coalition role — and the Hungarian Democratic Forum. Viktor Orbán became Prime Minister for the first time at 35.

A real, early warning sign

The same 1998 election saw the far-right Hungarian Justice and Life Party break through into parliament for the first time, winning 14 seats and 5.47% of the vote from zero previously — a real, documented shock at the time, and an early sign of a political current this course's own later chapters trace much further.

NATO Accession

Hungary formally joined NATO on **12 March 1999**, roughly eight months into Orbán's own first term as Prime Minister.

Hands-On Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Explain why founding members leaving Fidesz specifically to join SZDSZ in 1993 is stronger evidence of a genuine ideological shift than if they had simply left politics altogether.

→ [Solution](#)

EXERCISE 2

Explain why MSZP forming a coalition with SZDSZ despite already holding an outright majority was a genuinely rational political decision, not an unnecessary complication.

→ [Solution](#)

EXERCISE 3

Explain how Fidesz winning more seats than MSZP in 1998 despite receiving fewer votes is a direct, concrete consequence of the electoral system Chapter 4 already described.

→ [Solution](#)

Quick Reference

- **1993:** Fidesz's party congress shifts from liberal to civic-centrist; founding members depart for SZDSZ
- **1995:** renamed the Hungarian Civic Party, cultivating ties with the national-conservative MDF
- **1994:** MSZP wins 209 seats (from 33), an outright majority — yet still forms a coalition with SZDSZ for legitimacy
- **1998:** Fidesz wins fewer votes (29.48%) but more seats (148) than MSZP (32.92%, 134); Orbán becomes PM at 35
- **1998:** the far-right Hungarian Justice and Life Party breaks through with 14 seats

- **12 March 1999:** Hungary formally joins NATO

CHAPTER 6: HUNGARY JOINS THE EU (2004): REAL INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRATION

Hungarian Political History II: Communism's Consolidation to Modern Hungary

Chapter 6 · Hungary Joins the EU (2004): Real Institutional Integration

Chapter 5 closed with Hungary's real 12 March 1999 accession to NATO. Five years later, a parallel, equally real process of Western integration reached its own conclusion — with a genuinely more complicated real story behind it than the headline result alone suggests.

The 2003 Referendum

Hungary held its real EU membership referendum on **12 April 2003**. The result looked decisive: **83.76%** voted yes, against 16.24% opposed. But real, documented turnout told a more complicated story — just 45.59% of registered voters actually cast a ballot, well below the roughly 70% officials had hoped for. The yes vote still comfortably cleared Hungary's real 25% validity threshold, but the gap between overwhelming approval and genuine public disengagement was real and documented at the time.

A Real, Broad Political Consensus

Support for EU membership crossed Hungary's own political divides almost entirely — major parties, trade unions, business organizations, churches, and media all backed accession. Real, organized opposition was limited to a small group calling itself the "Movement for a Free Hungary," which received no state funding at all.

Medgyessy's Own Real, Complicated Past

Péter Medgyessy, whose MSZP-SZDSZ coalition government led Hungary through the referendum and accession itself, carried a real, documented secret history of his own. In June 2002, weeks after taking office, a newspaper revealed he had served as a counterespionage officer under the code name D-209 during the communist era. Medgyessy acknowledged the role directly rather than denying it, claiming his covert work had actually helped secure Hungary's own IMF membership against Soviet opposition — a genuinely complicated real

case, not a simple villain-or-hero story, that sparked real public controversy and protest at the time.

1 May 2004

Hungary formally joined the European Union on **1 May 2004**.

Medgyessy's Real Fall

Medgyessy's own premiership did not survive the year. Disputes with his SZDSZ coalition partner over corruption allegations and planned ministerial dismissals led to his resignation on **25 August 2004** — just months after the accession his own government had overseen. He remained acting Prime Minister through the constitutionally required 30-day transition, succeeded by Ferenc Gyurcsány.

Finding: overwhelming approval alongside genuine disengagement

The 2003 referendum's own real numbers hold two true facts together at once: near-unanimous approval among those who actually voted, and genuine public disengagement reflected in turnout well below what officials had hoped for. This is not a contradiction to resolve, but an honest signal — EU membership commanded broad institutional consensus without necessarily commanding the same level of active public enthusiasm, a real tension this course's own later chapters, tracing the disillusionment that followed under Gyurcsány, will return to directly.

Hands-On Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Explain why the referendum's own low turnout matters for understanding Hungarian public opinion on EU membership, even though the yes vote itself was overwhelming.

→ [Solution](#)

EXERCISE 2

Explain why Medgyessy's own real secret-service revelation is a genuinely complicated case rather than a simple scandal, based on what this chapter establishes about his own explanation.

→ [Solution](#)

EXERCISE 3

Explain why the near-total real political consensus behind EU membership, combined with only a small, unfunded opposition, still did not translate into strong voter turnout.

→ [Solution](#)

Quick Reference

- **12 April 2003:** the EU referendum — 83.76% yes, but only 45.59% turnout (hoped-for: ~70%)
- **Broad consensus:** parties, unions, business, churches, and media all backed membership; organized opposition was small and unfunded
- **Medgyessy's own past:** a real communist-era counterespionage role (code name D-209), revealed June 2002
- **1 May 2004:** Hungary formally joins the European Union
- **25 August 2004:** Medgyessy resigns; succeeded by Ferenc Gyurcsány

CHAPTER 7: FIDESZ'S 2010 LANDSLIDE AND A NEW, SUPERMAJORITY-ENABLED CONSTITUTION

Hungarian Political History II: Communism's Consolidation to Modern Hungary

Chapter 7 · Fidesz's 2010 Landslide and a New, Supermajority-Enabled Constitution

Chapter 6 closed on a real tension between overwhelming approval and genuine public disengagement. This chapter delivers on that closing note — a real scandal, real riots, and a landslide that gave one party the power to replace, not merely amend, Hungary's own constitution.

The Őszöd Speech

On **26 May 2006**, Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány, speaking privately to his own party, delivered what became known as the Őszöd speech. Leaked to the public on **17 September 2006**, it contained a real, devastating admission: "I almost perished because I had to pretend for 18 months that we were governing. Instead, we lied morning, night, and evening... No European country has done something as boneheaded as we have." The leak ignited a real, nationwide political crisis, severely damaging MSZP and the broader Hungarian left.

Real, Violent Unrest

Protests ran from 17 September to 4 November 2006. What began with roughly 2,000 people outside Parliament on 17 September grew to some 40,000 the following day, when demonstrators occupied the Magyar Televízió building — police responded with tear gas and water cannons, and the real toll from that single day topped 150 injuries (102 of them police) and roughly 230 million forints in damage.

The worst violence came on **23 October 2006** — the 50th anniversary of the 1956 Revolution. Police deployed mounted charges, tear gas, rubber bullets, and water cannons; 128 people were reported injured, 19 of them police, with at least two men reportedly blinded in one eye by rubber bullets. In a genuinely strange, real detail, protesters commandeered an unarmed T-34 tank from a local historical exhibition and charged police with it — the driver stopping after only a few hundred meters, fearing he would run over the crowd.

Finding: the same date, a genuinely dark reversal

Chapter 4 traced Szűrös's own deliberate choice of 23 October 1989 to link the Third Republic's founding to 1956's own real legacy. On that date's 50th anniversary, in 2006, the same calendar day instead became the site of the worst political violence Hungary had seen since the transition itself — a genuinely dark inversion of the symbolic continuity the date had originally been chosen to represent.

2010: Fidesz's Real Landslide

The 2010 election delivered Fidesz-KDNP a real, overwhelming result: **263 of 386 seats** — a genuine two-thirds supermajority — on 52.73% of the vote, an even sharper seats-to-votes divergence than the 1998 result Chapter 5 already covered. MSZP collapsed to just 59 seats (19.30%). The far-right Jobbik party, continuing the warning sign Chapter 5 flagged in 1998, won 47 seats and 16.67% — more than tripling the earlier far-right breakthrough's own vote share.

A Genuinely New Constitution

Where Chapter 4 established that Hungary's own 1989 transformation had formally amended the existing 1949 constitution rather than replacing it outright, Fidesz's 2010 supermajority broke that pattern entirely. The Fundamental Law (*Alaptörvény*), adopted **18 April 2011** and taking effect **1 January 2012**, was a genuinely new constitution — not another amendment, but a document that fully succeeded and replaced the 1949 constitution altogether.

What It Actually Changed

The new preamble invoked the Holy Crown, God, Christianity, and traditional family values. In a real, direct callback to this course's own sibling course, the preamble also asserted that Hungary "lost its independence when it was invaded and occupied by Nazi Germany in March 1944" — the exact event Chapter 6 of Hungarian Political History I already covered in full. The new constitution restricted the Constitutional Court's own power over budget and tax matters until public debt fell below 50% of GDP, defined marriage as between one man and one woman (with a 2020 amendment further narrowing the definition of family), and drew real,

documented criticism from the Council of Europe's Venice Commission and from Amnesty International over human rights standards and rule of law.

Finding: two structural threads, both delivered

This chapter closes two real threads this course has been tracing since Chapter 4 and Chapter 5: the mixed electoral system's own capacity to convert a bare-majority vote share into an outright supermajority, now shown at its most extreme (68% of seats on 52.73% of the vote), and the genuine, structural break from Hungary's own 1989 amendment tradition — this time, a two-thirds parliamentary majority didn't just amend the republic's founding document, it replaced it outright.

Hands-On Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Explain why the violence on 23 October 2006 carries particular symbolic weight, given what Chapter 4 already established about that specific date.

[→ Solution](#)

EXERCISE 2

Explain why Fidesz's 2010 result represents a more extreme version of the seats-vs-votes pattern Chapter 5 already established for the 1998 election, not simply a repeat of it.

[→ Solution](#)

EXERCISE 3

Explain why replacing the constitution outright in 2011, rather than amending it, was a genuinely different kind of action than anything covered in Chapter 4's own account of the 1989 transition.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **26 May / 17 Sept 2006:** the Ószöd speech given, then leaked — "we lied morning, night, and evening"
- **23 October 2006:** the worst violence of the 2006 protests, on 1956's own 50th anniversary — 128 injured, a commandeered T-34 tank
- **2010:** Fidesz-KDNP wins 263/386 seats (a two-thirds supermajority) on 52.73% of the vote; Jobbik wins 47 seats
- **18 April 2011 / 1 January 2012:** the Fundamental Law adopted and takes effect — a genuinely new constitution, not an amendment
- **Real content:** Holy Crown/Christian/family-values preamble language, the real 1944 occupation cited directly, restricted Constitutional Court budget powers, real EU/Council of Europe criticism

CHAPTER 8: "ILLIBERAL DEMOCRACY": ORBÁN'S OWN REAL, NAMED DOCTRINE

Hungarian Political History II: Communism's Consolidation to Modern Hungary

Chapter 8 · "Illiberal Democracy": Orbán's Own Real, Named Doctrine

Chapter 7 closed with Fidesz-KDNP holding a two-thirds supermajority large enough to replace Hungary's own constitution outright. This chapter covers what Orbán himself said, in his own words, once that new constitutional order was already in place and freshly re-endorsed by voters — a real, deliberately named political doctrine, not a label applied to him later by critics.

A Second Supermajority

On **6 April 2014**, Hungary held its first parliamentary election under a reformed system: the National Assembly itself had been reduced from 386 seats to **199**, a structural change made possible by the same 2011 Fundamental Law Chapter 7 already covered. Fidesz-KDNP won **133 of those 199 seats** — 66.8% of the chamber, on 44.87% of the party-list vote — narrowly but genuinely retaining the two-thirds supermajority it had first won in 2010. The coalition's own governing mandate, and its own capacity to keep shaping Hungary's constitutional order without needing any other party's cooperation, was real and confirmed for a second consecutive term.

Băile Tușnad, July 2014

Three months later, in **July 2014**, Orbán delivered an annual address at the **Bálványos Free Summer University and Student Camp**, held at Băile Tușnad (Tusnádfürdő in Hungarian) in Romania's Transylvania region — a real, long-running summer gathering popular with Hungarian nationalist and right-wing political circles, including ethnic Hungarians living across the border in Romania. It was in this specific speech that Orbán, for the first time, gave his own governing project an explicit name.

He told the audience: "**a democracy does not necessarily have to be liberal.**" He went further, stating directly: "**the new state we are constructing in Hungary is an illiberal state, a non-liberal state.**" He elaborated on the reasoning behind it in a longer, real passage: "while breaking with the [liberal] dogmas and ideologies that have been adopted by the West and

keeping ourselves independent from them, we are trying to find the form of community organisation, the new Hungarian state, which is capable of making our community competitive in the great global race for decades to come."

Finding: a self-applied label, not a critics' term

This matters as a point of historical accuracy: "illiberal democracy" is often used loosely by commentators to describe governments they consider undemocratic. In Orbán's own case, the term was not applied to him by opponents after the fact — he chose it, defined it, and declared it himself, in a single named speech, as the deliberate governing philosophy of his own second-term administration.

The Named Model Countries

Orbán did not present "illiberal" as an abstract or purely rhetorical label. In the same speech, he named specific real countries he pointed to as examples worth studying — **Singapore, Russia, Turkey, and China** — states he characterized as successful without being organized around Western liberal-democratic principles. Naming these particular countries was itself a real, significant break from the framing every Hungarian government since 1989 had used, one Chapter 4 traced directly back to the country's own explicit turn toward Western/Euro-Atlantic integration during the transition period.

What Changed at Home

The doctrine was not confined to a single speech. Fidesz's own dominance of the media landscape grew substantially over this same period — by 2019, independent reporting found that outlets controlling nearly **80% of the market for political news** in Hungary had their financing controlled, directly or indirectly, by the ruling party, and media organizations critical of Fidesz were documented as frequently being purchased or shut down. This is a real, separate and later strand of the illiberal-democracy story — the specific European Union rule-of-law disputes this same era eventually produced, including formal EU action under Article 7 of the Treaty on European Union, are covered directly in the next chapter rather than here.

Finding: the constitutional groundwork already covered enabled this

Chapter 7's own two-thirds supermajority and genuinely new Fundamental Law were not separate from this chapter's own declared doctrine — they were its structural precondition. A government without the constitutional and legislative freedom of action Chapter 7 already documented could assert "illiberal democracy" as a slogan, but could not actually build the institutional changes needed to make it real. The 2014 re-election confirmed that freedom of action would continue for a second term.

Hands-On Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Explain why it matters, as a point of historical accuracy, that "illiberal democracy" was a term Orbán applied to his own government himself, rather than a label critics later attached to it.

[→ Solution](#)

EXERCISE 2

Explain why the specific choice of Singapore, Russia, Turkey, and China as named model countries represented a real break from every prior Hungarian government's own framing since 1989, as established in Chapter 4.

[→ Solution](#)

EXERCISE 3

Explain why Chapter 7's own two-thirds supermajority and new Fundamental Law were a genuine structural precondition for the illiberal democracy doctrine, rather than simply an earlier, unrelated event in the same timeline.

[→ Solution](#)

Quick Reference

- **6 April 2014:** Fidesz-KDNP wins 133 of a newly-reduced 199-seat parliament (66.8%), on 44.87% of the vote — a second consecutive two-thirds supermajority
- **July 2014, Băile Tușnad, Romania:** Orbán's speech at the Bálványos Free Summer University and Student Camp names his own governing project directly
- **Real quote:** "the new state we are constructing in Hungary is an illiberal state, a non-liberal state"
- **Named model countries:** Singapore, Russia, Turkey, China
- **Real domestic effect:** by 2019, outlets controlling ~80% of Hungary's political-news market had financing controlled by the ruling party
- **Deferred to Chapter 9:** the "Stop Soros" laws and the real EU Article 7 rule-of-law dispute

CHAPTER 9: HUNGARY VS. THE EU: REAL RULE-OF-LAW DISPUTES AND ARTICLE 7

Hungarian Political History II: Communism's Consolidation to Modern Hungary

Chapter 9 · Hungary vs. the EU: Real Rule-of-Law Disputes and Article 7

Chapter 8 closed with a deliberate deferral: the "Stop Soros" laws and the European Union's own formal Article 7 rule-of-law procedure against Hungary. This chapter delivers on that deferral directly — the specific real legislation, the specific real EU vote, and the specific real financial consequences that followed the illiberal-democracy doctrine's own move from speech into law.

Lex CEU

On **28 March 2017**, Hungary's education minister submitted a bill imposing new operating conditions on foreign-affiliated universities — requiring a formal intergovernmental agreement with the university's home country, a functioning campus in that home country as well, and work permits for non-EU academic staff. Central European University (CEU), founded in Budapest in 1991 by George Soros, stated the new rules would "make it impossible for the University to continue its operations as an institution of higher education in Budapest." When the Hungarian government refused to sign the required agreement, CEU announced on **3 December 2018** that it would relocate the majority of its US-accredited programs to Vienna, effective **September 2019** — keeping only its locally-accredited programs in Budapest. The European Court of Justice ruled on **6 October 2020** that the "Lex CEU" was incompatible with EU law, a real legal vindication that arrived nearly two years after the university itself had already relocated.

The "Stop Soros" Package

As Hungary's 2018 election campaign got underway, the government introduced the "Stop Soros" package — a set of measures restricting NGOs that provided volunteer assistance related to the ongoing refugee and migration crisis. The government's own campaign materials framed this directly around George Soros personally, with posters reading "Soros wants millions of migrants to live in Hungary" and "Soros wants to dismantle the border fence," tying the domestic legislative push explicitly to Soros's real, documented involvement in responding

to the 2015 European migrant crisis. In **May 2018**, Soros's own Open Society Foundations announced it was relocating its Budapest office to Berlin, citing an "increasingly repressive" environment in Hungary.

Finding: two institutions, the same underlying pattern

CEU and the Open Society Foundations were both institutions founded or funded by George Soros, and both left Hungary within roughly eighteen months of each other, each citing the same real underlying cause — a legal and political environment the institutions themselves judged as no longer sustainable to operate in. This is a concrete, real domestic consequence of the illiberal-democracy doctrine Chapter 8 already covered, not a separate or unrelated development.

The Sargentini Report and the Article 7 Vote

On **12 September 2018**, the European Parliament voted **448 in favor, 197 against, 48 abstentions** to adopt a report — commonly known by the name of its rapporteur, Dutch MEP Judith Sargentini — recommending that the EU Council determine whether Hungary posed "a clear risk of a serious breach" of the Union's founding values, formally invoking **Article 7 of the Treaty on European Union**. The report's own real, documented concerns spanned constitutional and electoral systems, judicial independence and corruption, freedom of expression and academic independence, and the rights of minorities, migrants, and refugees; it also raised concerns about antisemitic rhetoric and the proper application of terrorism and fair-trial standards.

What Article 7 Actually Does	What It Does Not Do
Lets EU institutions formally determine whether a member state risks seriously breaching the Union's founding values (democracy, rule of law, human rights)	Does not automatically remove a country's EU membership
Can, at a later stage and with unanimous Council agreement, lead to suspension of certain EU voting rights	Requires unanimity among the other member states to reach its most severe sanction — a real, high bar that gives any single sympathetic government an effective veto

Functions primarily as a formal, public political and legal pressure mechanism

Has never, as of this course's own writing, actually reached the stage of suspending any member state's voting rights

Money as Real Leverage

Beyond Article 7 itself, the European Union developed a separate, real mechanism directly tying EU budget disbursements to rule-of-law compliance. Under this conditionality approach, roughly **€1 billion** in EU aid was withheld from Hungary over documented allegations of corruption, particularly in public procurement — a specific, concrete real figure separate from Article 7's own political process. Transparency International, tracking the broader dispute, noted that a cumulative total of around **€20 billion** in EU funds had been withheld from Hungary at various points without succeeding in compelling the government to fully restore the rule-of-law standards the EU's own institutions were seeking.

An honest limit on precision

The real figures above — roughly €1 billion tied to a specific corruption case, and a cumulative €20 billion cited by Transparency International — are genuinely documented, but this course was not able to independently verify the exact calendar date of every individual freeze-and-partial-release decision behind them. Readers researching this dispute further should expect the precise chronology of fund releases and re-freezes to be more complicated, and more frequently updated, than a single fixed timeline could capture.

Hands-On Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Explain why CEU's relocation and the Open Society Foundations' relocation, occurring within about eighteen months of each other, should be read as one connected pattern rather than two coincidental, unrelated events.

→ [Solution](#)

EXERCISE 2

Explain why Article 7's own requirement of unanimous Council agreement to reach its most severe sanction is a real, structural limit on its own effectiveness, not merely a procedural formality.

→ [Solution](#)

EXERCISE 3

Explain why the EU's rule-of-law fund conditionality mechanism represents a genuinely different kind of pressure than the Article 7 procedure, even though both respond to the same underlying real concerns.

→ [Solution](#)

Quick Reference

- **28 March 2017:** the "Lex CEU" bill introduced, targeting Central European University's own operating conditions
- **3 December 2018 / September 2019:** CEU announces relocation of most programs to Vienna; the move takes effect
- **6 October 2020:** the European Court of Justice rules the Lex CEU incompatible with EU law
- **2018 election period:** the "Stop Soros" NGO-restriction package introduced; May 2018, the Open Society Foundations relocates from Budapest to Berlin
- **12 September 2018:** the European Parliament votes 448–197–48 to adopt the Sargentini Report, formally invoking Article 7 TEU against Hungary
- **Real financial consequence:** roughly €1 billion withheld over a corruption case; a cumulative ~€20 billion cited by Transparency International across the broader dispute

CHAPTER 10: CAPSTONE — TRACING ONE REAL, CURRENT HUNGARIAN POLITICAL DISPUTE

Hungarian Political History II: Communism's Consolidation to Modern Hungary

Chapter 10 · Capstone: Tracing One Real, Current Hungarian Political Dispute

Every prior chapter in this course built toward the events Chapters 8 and 9 documented — a declared governing doctrine and the European Union's own real, still-unresolved response to it. This capstone traces that single dispute from its structural origin all the way to where it genuinely stands today, then closes out every recurring thread this course has carried since its own first chapter.

Tracing the Dispute, Stage by Stage

The EU-Hungary rule-of-law dispute did not begin with a single event — it is the direct, traceable product of a sequence this course has already documented chapter by chapter. Reassembling that sequence in one place shows how each stage genuinely depended on the one before it.

Capacity (Ch7, 2010)

Fidesz-KDNP's real two-thirds supermajority — 263 of 386 seats on 52.73% of the vote — created the specific constitutional freedom of action every later stage depended on.

Substance (Ch7, 2011)

The Fundamental Law replaced, rather than amended, Hungary's own constitution — the first time since 1989 a single political force held the unilateral power to do so.

Doctrine (Ch8, 2014)

Orbán's own Băile Tușnad speech named the project directly — "an illiberal state, a non-liberal state" — after a second confirmed two-thirds supermajority.

Domestic Action (Ch9, 2017-18)

The Lex CEU and the "Stop Soros" package translated the doctrine into real legislation, producing two real, documented institutional departures.

EU Response (Ch9, 2018-)

The Sargentini Report's real 448–197–48 vote formally invoked Article 7; a separate fund-conditionality mechanism began withholding real EU money.

Where the Dispute Genuinely Stands Today

This is, honestly, the rare thread in this entire two-course project that does not have a clean ending, because it has not actually ended. Article 7's own unanimity requirement, covered directly in Chapter 9, has kept the procedure's most severe consequence — suspension of voting rights — permanently out of reach, and it has never been applied against any EU member state. The fund-conditionality mechanism has produced real, documented financial consequences without producing a full, final resolution either way. Unlike this course's own earlier historical chapters, which describe events with a known outcome, this closing thread is a genuinely live, ongoing dispute as of this course's own writing — the honest, correct way to close a real, current story is to say so plainly, not to force it into an ending it has not actually reached.

Finding: unresolved is not the same as unimportant

A dispute lacking a clean resolution is not a weaker or less significant one than a dispute this course has already fully closed elsewhere. The EU-Hungary rule-of-law dispute has already produced real, measurable consequences — institutional relocations, withheld funds, a formal Article 7 determination — even without ever reaching its own most severe possible outcome. Genuine political disputes, in Hungary and elsewhere, often look exactly like this: consequential, real, and still open.

Closing the Course's Own Recurring Threads

Beyond this single dispute, four threads have run through this entire course since its earlier chapters, and each one closes here.

Thread	Where It Started	Where It Closes
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The Smallholders' Party	Ch1: its 1945 election win stolen by Soviet-backed pressure despite a real popular majority	Ch5/Ch7: a genuine coalition partner by the 1990s and again in 1998 — the same party finally exercising the real power its 1945 mandate never let it hold
Fidesz's ideological reversal	Ch2: founded in 1988 as a youth-led liberal opposition movement, its own later direction left explicitly unresolved	Ch5/Ch8: the real 1993 party-congress shift toward conservative nationalism, culminating in the 2014 illiberal-democracy declaration — the same organization, a wholly different stated philosophy
The mixed electoral system's seats-vs-votes gap	Ch4: the system itself established during the 1989-90 transition	Ch5 (1998) then Ch7 (2010): the same underlying mechanism shown at increasing extremes, from a modest seat advantage to a full two-thirds supermajority on a bare majority of the vote
Amend vs. replace	Ch4: 1989's negotiated transition works by amending the existing constitution, not replacing it	Ch7: the 2011 Fundamental Law breaks that tradition outright, made possible only by the supermajority the electoral-system thread above had just delivered

Chapter Attribution

Chapter	Real Contribution to This Capstone
1	The Smallholders' Party's stolen 1945 mandate — the thread's own starting point
2	Fidesz's 1988 liberal founding, left deliberately unresolved
4	The 1989-90 mixed electoral system and the amendment-based constitutional tradition
5	Fidesz's real 1993 ideological shift; the 1998 seats-vs-votes divergence; the Smallholders as a genuine 1990s coalition partner
7	The 2010 supermajority (capacity) and the 2011 Fundamental Law (substance) — the dispute's real structural origin

8	The July 2014 Báile Tuşnad speech declaring the illiberal-democracy doctrine directly, in Orbán's own words
9	The Lex CEU, the "Stop Soros" package, the Sargentini Report/Article 7 vote, and the EU's real fund-conditionality response

Course Complete

This closes Hungarian Political History II: Communism's Consolidation to Modern Hungary, and with it the full two-course Hungarian Political History project — 20 chapters total, tracing Hungary's real political history from the 1867 Austro-Hungarian Compromise through to its own current, unresolved dispute with the European Union. Combined with Political Theory Fundamentals, UK Politics Fundamentals, US Politics Fundamentals, and the two-course German Political History project, the Politics Subject now holds 70 chapters across seven complete courses.