CFPA’s 5 points on 2016

1. Two factors play a major role in democracies, institutions and personalities. After the transition of the 1990’s, institutions played a greater role. Nowadays personalities have become dominant. It is worth analyzing this change in a more in-depth way and not just regard politics based on personalities as inherently inferior to that of institutions.

2. It is a global trend that the former balance of liberalism and democracy – vital for liberal democracy – no longer holds. It has become evident this year that concerning the development of Hungarian democracy the main conflict is also between liberalism and democracy: that is, the unity of liberal democracy that seemed inseparable over the past two decades is now a thing of the past. In effect, populism is democracy without liberalism (or post liberal democracy). Liberalism also needs to reevaluate its relation to democracy.

3. There has been a change of course in international politics. The previous turnaround was in 1990 with the “end of history” theory of Francis Fukuyama. The point of it was that the western and Soviet, later Russian elites cooperated to sweep away the bipolar world order. It is evident by now that the global world order based on the hegemony of the United States stands before a change and Russia will once again play a greater role in it. On the other hand, as a result of the growing economic, social and other inequalities, there have been realignments of power within the individual nation states as well. These devalue mainstream parties and valorize the role of the so called populist parties. Populist parties however are the products of the separation of the two elements of liberal democracy, that is, they are also symptoms.

4. The current European crisis is also the crisis of social cohesion. During the era of welfare states Western European societies achieved a high level of inner cohesion which has disappeared over the past decade and has never evolved in Hungary. Effective democracies can not exist without a high level of social cohesion however. The migrant crisis called attention to this lack of cohesion while it highlights the fact that immigration poses a further challenge to the already weakened cohesion.

5. The dichotomy of the large governing party vs. fragmented opposition is becoming more and more visible in Hungarian party politics. Only a close-knit opposition concentration could overwrite the large governing parties’ strength, however the tentative steps in this direction have met with resistance from the side of the opposition. In this way however, it is imminent that today’s politics follows the historical trends of Hungarian politics with long reigning unseatable mammoth parties and an opposition which is at war with one another as well.