

# Historical Memory and Democratic Resilience

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# Key Insight

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*When we speak about history, we are in fact speaking about the present — and we are shaping the future. Also: Memory is never static; it is indeed a democratic resource.*

- History is never only about the past; it reflects the democratic character of the present.
- Memory is a form of governance: how societies remember shapes what they can protect.

# 1. Democratic Capacity of the Present

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Autocratic backsliding begins with institutional hollowing-out, not formal abolition.

Elections may persist, yet alternation of power becomes unrealistic.

Judicial and narrative spaces narrow as history becomes a test of loyalty.

When dialogue erodes, memory work becomes fragile and contested.

## 2. Memory Transmission and Resilience

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Historical transmission requires institutional trust and pluralism.

Young people disengage when memory appears predetermined or instrumentalised.

Participatory approaches deepen engagement and strengthen democratic capacity.

In Taiwan, memory work functions as a form of democratic security under external pressure.

# 3. Parallel Democratic Transitions

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Taiwan and CEE democratized in the same historical period (late 1980s–1990s).

Both faced post-authoritarian challenges: institution-building, transitional justice, identity reconstruction.

Divergent outcomes: Taiwan demonstrates resilience, but it takes constant effort – (parts of) CEE illustrate autocratic backsliding.

→ Institutions matter, political culture matters, and the quality of transitional justice matters.

# 4. 1956: Taiwan– Hungary Solidarity

Taiwan's Solidarity with Hungary in  
1956 – A Story Emerging from Oblivion

by *Gábor Rácz and Dr. Bernadett Szél*

<https://telex.hu/eszkombajn/2025/10/24/1956-magyar-forradalom-tajvan-szolidaritas>



ÉSZ  
KOMBÁJN

**„Támogatjuk a magyar nép  
bátor harcát az elnyomás ellen”  
– Tajvan elfeledett kiállása az  
1956-os forradalom mellett**

ÉSZKOMBÁJN 2025. október 24. – 22:39 frissítve

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tea kánaán!



Forradalmárok egy tankon az Országház előtt 1956  
októberében – Fotó: Hulton Archive / Getty Images

# Rediscovery and Its Significance

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1956 was a moment when the world watched Hungary — but Taiwan acted.

Archival rediscovery reveals donation campaigns, relief shipments, and public demonstrations.

It is historically unusual: an authoritarian regime showing solidarity with another nation's struggle for freedom.

## 5. Shared Lessons for Taiwan and CEE

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History misinterpreted produces vulnerability; history confronted strengthens resilience.

CEE's recent experience shows the risks of underestimating authoritarian intentions.

De-risking represents disillusionment with earlier assumptions and a return to realistic assessment.

# Conclusions

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Memory strengthens democracy when rooted in dialogue, not power.

Pluralistic institutions sustain transitional justice and long-term resilience.

Democratic memory becomes a shared resource when societies listen to one another.