

Radicalism in Hungary of Today



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We often hear menacing prophecies that the 20th century was the “age of extremes”¹, that there is an ongoing “clash of civilizations”², and that the “end of history”³ is already upon us. Although these can be easily debunked both empirically and theoretically, it is without question that there are extremes in present day society, which, ironically often repeats and believes the abovementioned false prophecies.

The present day Hungarian radicalism is a topic worth investigating as it is often featured in the media, it frequently enters everyday conversations as well as expert debates. However, we do not even have a clear definition of the word “radicals” as it carries different connotations for different individuals. Most commonly, the word carries negative implications, but it would be a mistake to think that it only denotes unfavorable groups. *Radicalism* means a large deviance from the average, or – more precisely – from what is commonly accepted. This, however, does not mean that radicalism is always a negative phenomenon. Let us look at the case of Thomas Clarkson⁴ for instance, who raised his voice against the slave trade in the 18th century Britain – first as a student during an essay contest. His ideas were extreme and

radical at the time, they stood in opposition to the mainstream, generally accepted *status quo*. Nevertheless, as a result of his efforts slave trade was banned.

Let us then differentiate between harmful radicalism and beneficial radicalism. The former intends to stop or limit progress, the latter aims to speed it up. Harmful radicalism strives to curtail individual liberties, holds a collectivist view, is unwilling to acknowledge any potential differences in culture, views or morals, and attempts to consolidate a static, authoritarian system. Beneficial radicalism, on the other hand, puts emphasis on individual liberties, views freedom and tolerance as progress and advocates a dynamic system that is open to more innovation.

The presented article gives an overview of the Hungarian radical groups, with the focus on the harmful ones or to be more precise: the far-right (applying this term to those which self-identify as such), but also touching upon self-identified far-left groups and liberals as well, who (not being popular) also verge on being perceived as radicals. Finally, it shall also be demonstrated how populist politics leads to radicalization.

¹ <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/capsule-review/1995-07-01/age-extremes-history-world-1914-1991>

² <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/usa/1993-06-01/clash-civilizations>

³ <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/09/its-still-not-the-end-of-history-francis-fukuyama/379394/>

⁴ <http://fee.org/freeman/a-students-essay-that-changed-the-world/>

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

After the World War II, the formerly traditionalist Hungary of the Horthy era, where most people supported an authoritarian, collectivist, hierarchized and nationalist system, abruptly turned to socialism, which was deemed a polar opposite to the previous state. In fact, that system was still authoritarian, collectivist and hierarchized (as only in this way could the state enforce its preferred social order) but under a different banner, which people who focused strongly on nationalism – which this new system lacked – utterly disliked. It also brought extensive social changes for although the state was now still centralized, the central power was not in the hands of the previously ruling classes (the aristocracy, the intellectuals, and the educated upper middle class) but in the hands of the so-called proletariat. The notion of the nation state was exchanged for the idea of internationalism (which in practice meant the Soviet sphere of interest, so the puppet states of the Soviet Union), thus the strong nationalist ideas and feelings of the people were suppressed – but of course, they did



HUNGARIANS ARE AGAINST THE FREE MARKET AND HAVE MORE SOCIALISTIC VIEWS AS REGARDS ECONOMY THAN OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE REGION

not cease to exist. People were simply too afraid to express them openly, fearing the dire consequences.

After the democratic changes in 1989 and the early 1990s, the liberal, individualist elements appeared in politics – but the repressed nationalist ideas also resurfaced. Despite that, the socialist ideas did not disappear from *between* the options. After a while, people started to be disillusioned with democracy. Until then, they expected immediate changes in their economic and living conditions without having to lift their own fingers. Similar disillusionment occurred after Hungary joined the European Union in 2004 – people were hoping for an immediate and visible change and when it did not happen, the disappointment took over.

According to a survey⁵ conducted by Pew Research Center, fewer Hungarians approve of the shift towards democracy in 2009 than in 1991. When the first survey was conducted in 1991, 74% of Hungarian citizens claimed they are in favor of the changes, but in 2009 the approval rate dropped to a mere 56%. It shows that once the early zeal waned, it turned out that people's expectations were not met, which lead to a general indifference towards democracy and in many cases towards politics as such. [See Table 1]

This trend is even more worrying if we look at the opinions of the youth. A study⁶ conducted in 2015 by Aktiv Fiatalok Magyarországon Kutatócsoport shows that in April 2015 the far-right party Jobbik had the biggest approval rating among students (20% of support), next was a staunchly anti-cap-

⁵ <http://www.pewglobal.org/2010/04/07/hungary-dissatisfied-with-democracy-but-not-its-ideals/>

⁶ http://www.aktivfiatalok.hu/public/files/documents/gyorsjelentés_v20150510.pdf

Table 1: Approval of Change to democracy, % of people who approve of change to multiparty system

	1991	2009	Change
East Germany	91	85	-6
Czech Republic	80	80	0
Slovakia	70	71	+1
Poland	66	70	+4
Hungary	74	56	-18
Lithuania	75	55	-20
Russia	61	53	-8
Bulgaria	76	52	-24
Ukraine	72	30	-42

Source: Pew Research Center

istal green party Politics Can Be Different (LMP), with 14% and then the governing party, Fidesz (which defines itself as center right, but on many issues rapidly drifts towards the far-right), with 12%. The left-wing opposition parties are lagging behind, the most popular was rated at 4%. 19% of the surveyed students were undecided and 9% declared that they would not vote at all. Jobbik's approval rating and its popularity is growing among the youth.

The same research shows that in 2015 for 21% of active students under certain circumstances (not specified directly by the survey), dictatorship is perceived as a better option than democracy. As a comparison, back in 2011/2012, 33% of the students thought the same way. The trend is opposite with the active students who think that for them it does not really matter what political system they live in: in 2011/2012 28%, and in 2015 already 32% did not care

about it as well. The ratio of those who prefer dictatorship or do not care what system they live in was the biggest among the voters of Jobbik.

The survey⁷ of Pew Research Center also shows that Hungarians are against the free market and have more socialistic views as regards economy than other countries in the region. In 1991, 80% approved of capitalism while in 2009 only 46% – which is the most significant change among the post-communist countries. Moreover, 72% of Hungarians think they are worse off than under communism (which is the highest ratio among the post-communist countries in the region) despite the fact that 15% of the respondents were satisfied with life in 2009 – as opposed to the 8% in 1991.

⁷ <http://www.pewglobal.org/2009/11/02/end-of-communism-cheered-but-now-with-more-reservations/>

The nationalistic and socialistic ideas often mix together, while the early sparks of liberal thinking have failed to gain sufficient popularity. Today, the ideological acceptance is leaning towards the nationalist and at the same time socialist direction – and this process redefines what we may now call “radicalism”. [See Table 2, Table 3, Table 4]

TERMINOLOGICAL CONFUSION

Nowadays, there is a huge confusion of political terminology in Hungary. Fidesz, which defines itself as a center right, conservative party, economically is close to the left wing, with its collectivist policy often verging on the far-right *vis-à-vis* civic liberties and democracy. The leader of the party, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán declared for instance that he wishes to set up an illiberal democracy modelled on Russia⁸. His government also nationalized various assets, for example the pension funds⁹. These measures would be unacceptable for any conservative party in Western Europe or in the USA as nationalization is usually more typical of socialist parties, whereas conservatives are more eager to privatize. Along these lines Jobbik is not a right wing party if we look at their economic and collectivist social policies.

The difference between Jobbik and the typical far-left is that the former wants to implement its policies under nationalist pretences, excluding anyone who is not deemed a “true Hungarian”. On the other hand, sometimes in Hungary the self-proclaimed left wing represents values that are traditionally right wing, for instance (or at least compared to the so-called right wing) relatively more economic freedom and in-

dividual liberties. Nevertheless, defining political terms in Hungary is more confusing because of the ever changing political views of the parties as a consequence of populism which defines parties along the lines of popular measures rather than values.

Therefore, despite the fact that the terms left wing and right wing still shall be applied as regards the Hungarian context, the policies of both will be also further explained in order to make it clear where the later discussed parties actually stand.

THE FAR-RIGHT IN HUNGARY

Attributes

The Hungarian far-right of today draws from the traditional far-right ideologies of the Horthy era and from the Nazi movement in Germany. One of its typical features is inventing an artificial enemy. According to Carl Schmitt, a German political theorist of the 20th century, for the sake of defining ourselves and to retain cohesion, an enemy that poses a threat to our existence and against whom we can identify ourselves is crucial¹⁰. At present, the enemies are the Jews, Gypsies, immigrants, the USA and the liberals. These are the adverse buzzwords of the far-right which are often erroneous in their definitions. For example, everyone who does not agree with the far-right is a liberal, any educated person is automatically a Jew, and refugees and migrants who have no intention of staying in Hungary permanently are branded as “immigrants”.

The economic views of the far-right are most often socialistic, with the stipulation that only certain groups (“true Hungarians”, for instance) can benefit from socialism.

⁸ <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/06/hello-dictator-hungary-orban-viktor-119125>

⁹ <http://hungarianspectrum.org/2013/06/27/nationalization-hungarian-style/>

¹⁰ http://www.phil.vt.edu/HTML/events/Fall2005_grad-conf/matusek.pdf

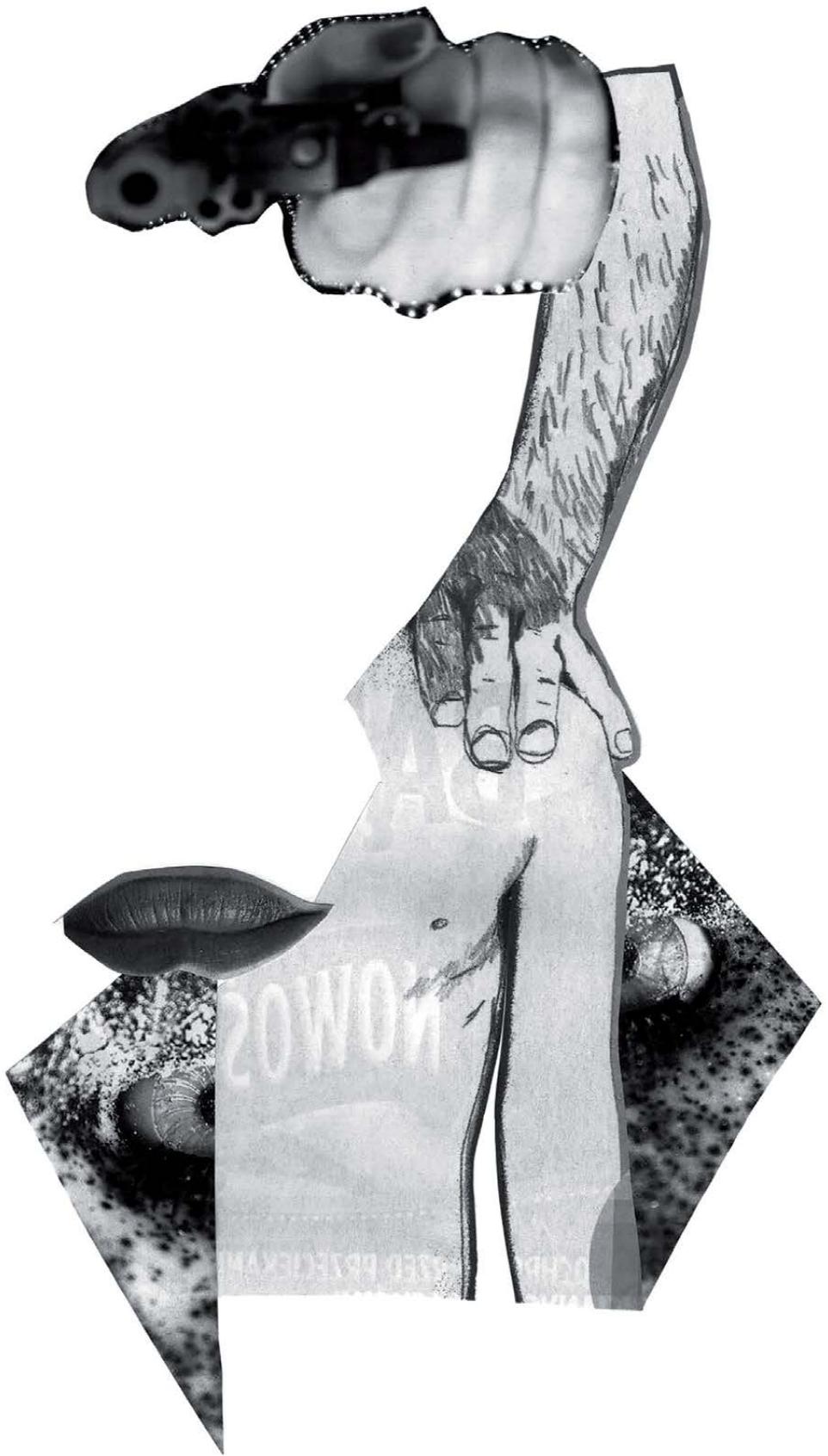


Table 2: Approval of Change to Capitalism, % of people who approve of a change to market economy

	1991	2009	Change
East Germany	86	82	-4
Czech Republic	87	79	-8
Poland	80	71	-9
Slovakia	69	66	-3
Bulgaria	73	53	-20
Lithuania	76	50	-26
Russia	54	50	-4
Hungary	80	46	-34
Ukraine	52	36	-14

Source: Pew Research Center

Table 3: % of people satisfied with life

	1991	2009	Change
Poland	12	44	+32
Slovakia	13	43	+30
Russia	7	35	+28
Czech Republic	23	49	+26
Lithuania	13	35	+22
Ukraine	8	26	+18
Bulgaria	4	15	+11
Hungary	8	15	+7
Germany	44	47	+3
East Germany	15	43	+28
West Germany	52	48	-4

Source: Pew Research Center

Table 4: People Worse Off Than Under Communism? (in %, in descending order, starting from the biggest ratio of "Worse" answers)

	Worse	About the same	Better
Hungary	72	16	8
Ukraine	62	13	12
Bulgaria	62	18	13
Lithuania	48	15	23
Slovakia	48	18	29
Russia	45	15	33
Czech Republic	39	12	45
Poland	35	12	47

Source: Pew Research Center

Table 5: Comparison of the set of values of capitalism and the far-right¹³

Main components	Capitalist ideology	Far-right ideology
What is in focus?	the individual	the nation
What is the perception of people?	people are predominantly good	people are predominantly bad
What is the primary value?	liberty	order
What is an ideal society like?	accepting	discriminative
What is an ideal state like?	minimalistic	totalitarian
What makes a community better?	competition	unity

Source: Free Market Foundation

They believe that the state must take care of its people in a paternalistic way, and that this kind of a "nanny state" should curtail liberties for the sake of security and morality. For them people are only instruments in the service of the nation. They lay emphasis on the collective (which in this case is the "nation") rather than on the individual.

The far-right groups differ significantly in the extent of their radicalism. They are not united. There are even ongoing arguments between many of them.

The largest such group is Jobbik, a party which started off as radical, but because of the gradually growing acceptance for its

actions – they are the second most popular party (with the exception of one poll¹¹, other polls place Jobbik as the second) – its radical status is being contested¹². The party tries to centralize, but the radical hardliners are still its members and even those who support centralization have a radical background. Still, overall, as far as the image of the party is concerned, Jobbik is moving towards the center.

Despite many differences between far-right groups, a common feature of the majority of them is that they are collectivist, xenophobic, traditionalistic and often esoteric, economically left wing, usually pro-Russian, more openly racist, anti-Semitic, authoritarian, militaristic, anti-Israel, anti-USA, homophobic and anti-EU. [See Table 5]

Ideological Background¹⁴

To understand the ideological background that feeds racism and anti-Semitism in Hungary and which nurtured the nation's second most popular party¹⁵, the far-right Jobbik, we must go back to the 1880s. Back then, one day in a small Hungarian village a young girl disappeared with no trace and in the light of this event the local community accused the Jews of committing a ritual murder. Although the Jews were eventually acquitted, the situation brought deep prejudice against Jews to the surface.

¹¹ <http://kozvelemenykutatok.hu/partpreferenciak-2016-januar-tovabbra-is-orzi-elonyet-a-fidesz-kdnp-az-ellenzeki-taboron-beluli-viszonyok-viszont-keplekenyek/>

¹² It is different, of course, if we look at it from an international point of view, according to which they are very radical.

¹³ <http://4liberty.eu/anti-capitalism-in-hungary-the-energy-reforms/>

¹⁴ http://www.esee.fnst.org/files/1096/Promoting_Tolerance_2015_Essay_M_t_Hajba.pdf

¹⁵ Although some recent polls place it as third while others as second.

Nowadays, many far-right groups continue to commemorate the death of the girl while others still believe that the Jews are behind her death.

Hungary implemented anti-Jewish laws in 1920, limiting the number of Jews and other minorities allowed to attend university. At that time, Hungary was led by Governor Miklós Horthy – an open anti-Semite who stayed in power until the second half of 1944 – when an even more horrid system took over.

Nowadays, there is a great nostalgia for the dark era of the World War II and Horthy is venerated not only by the far-right. Statues of Horthy were erected and history has been whitewashed, even by the government. The current governing party, the self-proclaimed conservative Fidesz party, has advanced this whitewashing, saying that Hungary is not in the least responsible for the Holocaust – at the same time bending culture and art to its version of the events. Recently, a statue of the German eagle striking down an archangel representing Hungary has been erected in Budapest. The sculpture of dubious artistic value is now widely criticized for blaming the Holocaust solely on Germany and pretending that Hungary was completely innocent, whereas, in truth, the German high command had to caution Hungarians to slow down deporting the Jews because they could not “process” them so fast.

Nevertheless, Hungary's problem with racism and anti-Semitism runs deeper than this. Whereas the popularity of Fidesz is somewhat declining (although tough measures and rhetoric against the refugees helped them rebound), another party is after its voters: the already mentioned far-right Jobbik. According to latest polls, the governing party still enjoys the



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support of 31-33% of Hungarians, while Jobbik is behind with 10-12% (one poll suggests they are the third most popular party)¹⁶. This far-right party (a term which they try to disassociate themselves from to the extent of taking the matter to court more than once in the last five years) developed from a neo-Nazi political entity. The party still has affiliations with militant groups, and they set up a paramilitary organization called Magyar Gárda (Hungar-

ian Guard), which marched in the streets in uniforms with Nazi symbols. This group has been outlawed but they still appear at events of Jobbik – despite the fact that the party claimed that the controversial formation had split from them.

Although many of these groups are more openly anti-Roma than anti-Semitic (simply because it is much easier to distinguish between Roma and non-Roma than from Jewish and non-Jewish), a number of their members believe in conspiracy theories such as that the Roma are criminals funded by the Jews so that their petty crimes would divert attention away from the more white-collar crimes of Jews. At the Hungarian national assembly, a Jobbik MP Márton Gyöngyösi said that there should be a list of all the Jews in Hungary so people would know who poses a threat to national security. Other Jobbik MPs have “spat” on Holocaust memorials, and even denied that the Holocaust ever took place as such. Moreover, the deputy speaker of the Hungarian Parliament, Jobbik MP Tamás Sneider used to be a skinhead gang leader. There is a neo-Nazi website supporting the party, where there is a whole section with the loosely translated title of “Hoaxocaust”.

Furthermore, there are other, even more radical groups¹⁷, which consider Jobbik (which now tries to lure voters by “cute” campaigns involving, for instance, puppies) too soft and pro-Jewish¹⁸. One of these neo-Nazi organizations commemorate Kristallnacht (the night when Nazis burned the books of Jewish authors back in 1938), by staging book burnings all around the country. They proudly post on social media and their website photos of the horrid bonfires fed by the works of great writers¹⁹.

¹⁶ <http://kozvelemenykutatok.hu/partpreferenciak-2016-januar-tovabbra-is-orzi-elonyet-a-fidesz-kdnp-az-ellenzeki-taboron-beluli-viszonyok-viszont-keplekenyek/>

¹⁷ http://athenaintezet.hu/en/hate_groups/

¹⁸ <http://nemzetiarcvonal.net/2015/04/19/nemzetkozi-zsido-nyomas-alatt-a-jobbik/>

¹⁹ <http://www.168ora.hu/itthon/30-varosban-tartanak->

Table 6: Feelings toward Jews among party-sympathizers²⁷ (data from 2013)

	Antagonist	Neutral	Sympathizer	Does not know/ no answer
Complete sample	28	26	34	12
Fidesz-KDNP (N=261)	33	27	22	18
MSZP (N=56)	31	15	45	9
Jobbik (N=129)	75	15	7	3
E14-PM (N=107)	14	26	48	12
LMP (N=37)	14	37	36	13
DK (N=49)	14	33	48	5
Undecided	10	31	44	15

Source: Free Market Foundation

Every year these flames burn higher and more and more people blame Jews for their own problems without any rational reason. According to a poll²⁰ conducted in 2014 by Medián on behalf of Action and Protection Foundation, in 2014, 73% of Hungarian would not want a Roma and 44% a Jew moving in next door. True, 76% would not want a skinhead there either, but this still does not make the level of racism or anti-Semitism any lower²¹. Jobbik is luring many voters by trying to be more centrist and less obvious in their intolerance. Many voters cast their ballots for them not knowing that they are voting for a latent neo-Nazi entity.

Despite the common belief that the voters of the far-right are uneducated unwealthy people, it must be noted that it is not necessarily

so. Jobbik has the second ratio of rich voters (after LMP), and they are the last but one choice among the poorest²². Moreover, Jobbik has the biggest voter base among those who ended their education with a high school diploma and the smallest voter base among those who have maximum eight years of elementary school (in this respect they are tied with LMP). They have an average number of supporters who received academic degrees²³. However, Jobbik is the most popular party among students.

Political Parties and Racism

None of the major Hungarian parties are exempt of racism, however within Jobbik these tendencies are more prevalent²⁴. Examples of racism can be traced in all major parties. For instance, the Minister for Hu-

konyvetest-a-hungaristak-85771.html?print=1&full-version

²⁰ <http://www.szombat.org/politika/antiszemizmus-magyarorszagon-2014>

²¹ In fact more people wouldn't want a Roma or a Jew to move next door in 2014 than in 2013

²² <http://24.hu/poszt-itt/2012/04/21/tevhitek-a-jobbik-rol-2-resz-szegenynek-kepzelt-radikalisok/>

²³ <http://24.hu/poszt-itt/2012/04/25/tevhitek-a-jobbik-rol-3-resz-az-iskolazatlansag-feltetelezese/>

²⁴ <http://pcb.blog.atlatszo.hu/2014/07/04/a-jobbik-tabo-raban-tovabbra-is-eros-az-antiszemizmus/>



Table 7: Support for certain anti-Semitic conspiracy theories among party-sympathizers (ratio of the percentage of those who agree completely and the value of the scale of anti-Semitic conspiracy)²⁹ (in 2013)

	1. Jews often operate behind the scenes	2. Jews often meet in secret to discuss what is important to them	3. Jews want to rule the world	4. Jews want deciding roles in international financial institutions	5. Jews want to extend their influence in the world economy	6. Jews want to achieve their goals by secret agreements	scale
In the complete sample	28	18	24	34	33	18	
Fidesz-KDNP (N=261)	38	27	35	49	49	25	3.73
MSZP (N=56)	36	34	34	36	37	28	2.78
Jobbik (N=129)	70	38	63	76	72	39	4.31
E14-PM (N=107)	9	6	9	23	22	8	2.29
LMP (N=37)	18	14	14	15	16	14	2.48
DK (N=49)	14	5	8	21	7	8	2.44

Source: Free Market Foundation

man Resources, Zoltán Balog (a member of Fidesz) denied that any Roma were deported from Hungary during the Holocaust²⁵, while the documents of MSZP (a left wing party) dealing with how to find the balance between anti-Roma and Roma voters as it must be acknowledged that most of the public opinion is prejudiced against the Roma²⁶ have leaked back in 2009. None of these instances really cause a considerable public uproar, so no heads had to fall so far.

The largest manifestation of racism constitute the anti-Roma tendencies, although anti-Semitism is also present in the parties and the attitudes of voters. [See Table 6]

Most of these anti-Semitic tendencies are paired with a belief in conspiracy theories. In fact, according to a survey conducted in 2013, 42% of Hungarians think that there is a hidden force behind the government that runs the country²⁸. among the voters of Jobbik this ratio is the highest – with 66% of all respondents; the second is the green party, LMP, which is very anti-capitalistic (51%) and the third is the left wing MSZP (49%). The governing Fidesz comes only at the fourth place (43%).

If we take a look at certain specific anti-Semitic conspiracy theories we see that the highest support for them is also among Jobbik sympathizers. [See Table 7]

²⁵ <http://444.hu/2014/08/04/balog-zoltan-szerint-magyarorszagrol-nem-deportaltak-ciganyokat-a-masodik-vilagaboru-alatt/>

²⁶ <http://www.168ora.hu/itthon/rasszista-mszp-szavazok-42946.html>

²⁷ http://szabadpiacalapitvany.hu/files/files/SZPA_Tanulmany_131231_140211.pdf

²⁸ <http://politicalradical.cafeblog.hu/2013/08/13/a-hatterhatalom-nyomaban/>

²⁹ http://szabadpiacalapitvany.hu/files/files/SZPA_Tanulmany_131231_140211.pdf

Although all Hungarian parties are affected by racism, it is mostly Jobbik that gets a bad reputation for it, as it has the highest rate of such atrocities, being at the same time the most open about it. They still use the phrase “gypsy crime” which means that certain violent crimes are more typical to Roma people – a claim which has been refuted categorically³⁰. Unfortunately however, according to a research conducted in 2008³¹, 91% of Hungarians believe that the “gypsy crime” is a real phenomenon.

International Perspectives

An interesting, unique feature of the Hungarian far-right (or at least of Jobbik and its satellite groups such as the Hungarian Guards or the website “Kuruc.info”) is that until the “refugee crisis” occurred, they did not really appear islamophobic. Quite the contrary, the leader of Jobbik Gábor Vona even referred to Islam as “the hope for humanity”³².

The most probable reason behind this shift is the fact that the party was back then receiving support from Iran. And thus, for example, Jobbik wanted to invite the Iranian Revolutionary Guards to observe the European Parliamentary elections in Hungary in 2009³³.

Interestingly enough, as regards the “refugee crisis”, Fidesz stole the show from Jobbik by leading a policy of fear- and hatemongering, and was talking about the need to defend the Christian Europe from the Muslim “immigrants”³⁴.

³⁰ <http://444.hu/2014/11/07/eloszor-kutattak-a-ciganybunozest-es-kiderult-hogy-nincs-olyan/>

³¹ <http://valasz.hu/itthon/a-kulcsszo-kozbiztonsag-19733>

³² http://mandiner.hu/cikk/20150905_az_iszlam_az_emberiseg_utolso_remenye_vona_idezettel_szembesitetek_a_jobbik_tuntetoit

³³ <http://politicalradical.cafeblog.hu/2014/03/31/a-jobbik-es-iran-kapcsolata/>

³⁴ http://index.hu/belfold/2015/10/23/orban_keresz-

It is typical not only of Jobbik but basically the entire far-right that such political parties and groups are strongly influenced by Russia³⁵ (even the governing party is suspiciously friendly with Vladimir Putin and often does what the Russian strongman wants). Putin's goal is to weaken Europe, for which purpose he uses the far-right as "useful idiots". Numerous Hungarian far-right websites are the mouthpiece of Russian interests. Jobbik Member of the European Parliament, Béla Kovács was even accused of being a Russian agent³⁶.

Many far-right groups do not position themselves in the context of left, right or liberal, but rather as a "fourth option" – as proposed by Aleksandr Dugin³⁷, a Russian far-right thinker who wants to get beyond the tainted image of the far-right by inventing a seemingly new ideology, but in fact representing far-right ideas with left-wing economics (which the far-right often adopts anyway).

Far Left

The far-left does not really play a significant role in Hungarian politics. As their economic views are being appropriated by the far-right they have no leg to stand on, to put it figuratively. Two minor parties which represent this tendency, and the popularity of both is so marginal that it is even difficult to measure. Moreover, neither of them is anywhere close to entering the Parliament.

One of them is Munkáspárt (Hungarian Workers' Party)³⁸ – a party which builds on the nostalgia for the communist era³⁹. Its

teny_europa_menekultek/

³⁵ <http://4liberty.eu/the-kremlin-connection/>

³⁶ <http://hungarytoday.hu/news/jobbik-mep-bela-kovacs-accused-spying-previously-lose-immunity-79900>

³⁷ <http://4pt.su/>

³⁸ <http://www.munkaspart.hu/english.html>

³⁹ <http://444.hu/2016/02/22/sosem-fogunk-mar-olyan-jol-elni-mint-kadar-alatt>



LIBERAL PARTIES ARE NEITHER WELL-REPRESENTED, NOR POPULAR IN HUNGARY

members still believe in the future communist revolution when the proletariat will once again rise up against the bourgeoisie. They even demonstrate together with the Hungarian National Front and claim that they can easily imagine cooperation with far-right groups along the lines of anti-capitalism and anti-Zionism. Munkáspárt is a nationalist communist party, very fond of Russia.

Another far-left party is 4K! Fourth Republic Movement. Although they advocate for certain liberties (such as the legalization of marijuana), they also represent openly Marxist, anti-capitalistic views⁴⁰. Their ideology resembles the Marxist hippie ideas of the 1960s.

Liberals

Liberal parties are neither well-represented, nor popular in Hungary. What is worth mentioning is that social liberal views are often appropriated by the left-wing parties, so it is not easy to gain popularity in this respect. Thus the support for liberal parties mentioned below was not enough to enable them to enter the Parliament, although the leader of the Hungarian Liberal Party managed to get elected on a socialist tick-

⁴⁰ <http://negyedikkoztarsasag.hu/program-english>



POPULISM IS A CATALYST FOR RADICALISM

et, as a part of a big coalition. The party⁴¹ is a member of ALDE group, and it represents chiefly a classical liberal ideology, advocating for human rights and individual liberties and (to some extent) free market.

Another liberal party of the Hungarian political scene is the Modern Hungary Movement (MoMa)⁴² – a party which defines itself as a liberal conservative party. In 2015, in a by-election in the Hungarian town of Veszprém and several nearby villages for a seat in the Parliament, an interesting event occurred which has challenged the then political status quo. The discontent of the constituency (which was traditionally a Fidesz stronghold) was so strong that people were desperate to find alternatives. As a consequence, an independent candidate, Zoltán Kész, a classical liberal and the former director of the Free Market Foundation won the by-election⁴³. Although he was backed by many opposition parties, what was really appealing to the voters was the fact that he was not tied or affiliated to any political party. Moreover, he was campaigning door to door, which is not a common strategy in Hungary. In the end, his victory shattered the two-third majority of the government and Fidesz could not continue with the uncontrolled building of an illiberal state.

⁴¹ <http://liberalisok.hu/>

⁴² <http://www.moma.hu/>

⁴³ <http://www.origo.hu/itthon/20150222-fele-annyi-szavazo-veszpremben-mint-tavaly.html>

POPULISM

Populism is a catalyst for radicalism. Usually, when politicians promise a lot and they cannot deliver, after a while people turn towards alternative parties, which are often more radical. This, however, frequently turns out to be a Hobson's choice as many of these parties are also populist and tend to tempt people with empty promises – even to a greater extent.

Populism feeds on fears and desires of the general public. It is best demonstrated by the recent "refugee crisis" when the governing party managed to regain popularity by claiming that they are going to protect not only Hungary, but also Europe from the "hordes" of "others". By adopting radical measures⁴⁴ Fidesz thus outbid Jobbik and started to invent often artificial problems so that the people would experience the influx of refugees first hand – all this to make Hungarians fear the migrants to such an extent that the intervention of Fidesz could be seen as a true blessing. And so the government kept⁴⁵ the arriving foreigners at a railway station by misinforming them about possibilities to leave for Germany, so that the government could make their point. Moreover, the government commissioned installation of large billboards⁴⁶ (which were supposedly messages to the migrants), with slogans such as "If you come to Hungary, don't take the jobs of Hungarians". This campaign met with a lot of resistance as the messages were clearly not directed at refugees (who obviously upon their arrival did neither speak Hungarian, nor did most of them want to stay in the country) but at the Hungarian citi-

⁴⁴ <http://www.amnestyusa.org/news/press-releases/commission-action-against-hungary-step-towards-restoring-rights-of-refugees>

⁴⁵ http://hvg.hu/itthon/20150904_Megoldhato_lenne_a_menekulok_tovabbkuldes

⁴⁶ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-33091597>

zens. The expensive campaign was clearly designed to advertise how much the government cares about the ordinary people – Hungarian people, of course.

In April 2015, as a result of the governmental anti-migrant campaign more people started to exhibit xenophobic and racist behaviours, believing that the “immigrants” want to overthrow the European values⁴⁷. However, by July the number of xenophobes began to wane⁴⁸.

BEST PRACTICES

Because of the excessive populist promises and the unverifiable conspiracy theories of the far-right, it is extremely difficult to combat either of them. There exists, however, a set of best practices to fight the harmful rhetoric of radicals⁴⁹. Leaving the foreign efforts on a side, let us focus on the Hungarian attempts.

Ridicule the Radical

Ridicule the Radical is a campaign launched in Hungary by the Free Market Foundation. Its main outlet is chiefly a Facebook fanpage⁵⁰ which uses humor to oust the far-right as anachronistic and ridiculous. Using satire is an excellent remedy for the hatred of racists and xenophobes. And because the far-right uses social media extensively, it is also a perfect means of counteracting their rhetoric.

Tools:

- Original content created by the far right in a ridiculous context (e.g. photos, modified advertisements, leaflets, posters etc.);

- Memes;
- Videos;
- Text posts;
- “Ridiculing” news.

Topics:

- Current issues in Hungarian domestic politics;
- Popular beliefs, sports and hobbies (e.g. the revival of traditional Hungarian archery and martial arts) of the far right;
- Symbolic figures of the far right (e.g. politicians, ideologists, musicians) dressed in ridiculous, traditional Hungarian clothing).

Let's Root Against Racism⁵¹

The Free Market Foundation together with its partner organization the Hungarian Civic Platform have set up a campaign to fight racism in sports – mostly in football. The discipline is considered to be the most popular in the country and is at times utterly racist. Through football people can be taught how to fight racism: first, in the stadiums, than in broader contexts.

The campaign shows the detrimental effects of racism (such as the decreasing number of fans attending matches as they are discouraged from attending by the radicals), draws attention to the need to combat it, and educates people on why racist ideas are wrong. The project involves social media but also *hands-on campaigning* with the participation of its supporters and volunteers. The campaign

⁴⁷ <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/07/opinion/hungarys-xenophobic-response.html>

⁴⁸ http://www.tarki.hu/hu/news/2015/kitekint/20151203_refugee.pdf

⁴⁹ http://szabadpiacalapitvany.hu/files/files/booklet_vegleges_140512.pdf

⁵⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/Turulpata/>

⁵¹ <https://www.facebook.com/szurkoljunkarasszizmusellen/>

encourages people to start a dialogue and discuss the issues related to all kinds of racism.

Counter-Billboard Campaign

In response to the populist, xenophobic billboard campaign of the government, a joke party, the Hungarian Two Tailed Dog Party started its own billboard campaign⁵². The posters featured statements such as "Welcome to Hungary" and "Sorry about our Prime Minister" (in English), along with even more ridiculous ones (in Hungarian), such as "A space station is going to be built here soon" – mocking the exuberant spending of the government. The campaign was crowdfunded.

Providing Alternatives and Issues That Unite

Many Hungarians are dissatisfied with the current political parties and the politicians. This is precisely why they are searching for an alternative to what the mainstream politics offers. Therefore, independent candidates should not fear running in the elections as the people who are not tied to any political party, who are not entangled in any political scandals stand a real chance of succeeding. The victory of liberal Zoltán Kész is an example of the effectiveness of such an approach.

Furthermore, identifying one concrete issue around which the fragmented voters can unite against populist politicians is crucial. It could be, for example, eradicating corruption. It goes without saying that the current Hungarian government is very corrupt⁵³. At the same time, people respond fiercely to the issue of corruption

as, in general, it affects their own money. Stemming from these observations, Zoltán Kész started a referendum procedure asking questions related to corruption⁵⁴. Referendums on specific topics that directly influence the dissatisfied people are a powerful tool for mobilizing the fragmented opposition.

It should also be noted that the views of the radicals cannot go uncontested. Many politicians (both from the governing party and the opposition) shy away from any debate, either because Jobbik is very good at it, or because many of Hungarian radicals do not respond to reason. Despite all this, a dialogue can truly teach people a lot⁵⁵. If radical views go unchallenged, the radicals themselves are not provided with a context which would show them how ridiculous their ideas are. Even if only a small number of them would respond to this, every chink in their armour must be exploited.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Despite the negative implications of the word, radicalism is not always a negative phenomenon. There are harmful radical and beneficial radicals. It is true that the former category boast with more supporters, but the latter is far more important, and as such must not be disregarded.

Historically, racism runs deep in the Hungarian society. After a period of an optimistic outlook following the fall of communism, the beginning of the 21st century brought a booming rise in the popularity of the far right. The biggest far-right group, the Jobbik party, is gaining more popularity by appearing more and more centralized.

⁵² http://transparency.hu/cpi_2015_eng?bind_info=page&bind_id=161

⁵³ <http://hungarianspectrum.org/2015/11/10/transparency-international-systemic-government-corruption-in-hungary/>

⁵⁴ http://hvg.hu/itthon/20160202_kesz_zoltan_lopas-gatto_nepszavazas

⁵⁵ <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/03/the-audacity-of-talking-about-race-with-the-klu-klux-klan/388733/>

The rise of the far-right can be explained by the people's disappointment with democracy – the changes were slow and painful for many. In fact, it seems that the Hungarian people are so disenchanted with politics that to many of them it does not even matter whether they live in a democracy or dictatorship. People are looking for alternatives, parties which have not yet been in power before. Precisely this niche was filled by Jobbik.

The party is undoubtedly appealing combination of anti-capitalism and racism. However, of course, not every supporter of Jobbik automatically hates minorities. Moreover, needless to say, none of the major parties are exempt from racism. Jobbik voters are usually well educated, well-off people. It is true that many of them are less tolerant than the voters of other parties. However, as the victory of Zoltán Kész in Veszprém proves, people truly are looking for alternatives, and if nothing better comes along (such as an independent candidate), they will vote for the far-right.

The far-left does not play any significant role in Hungary – they were unable to expand, partly because their economic policies were misappropriated by the far-right and now their popularity is so marginal that is actually difficult to measure at all.

Having mentioned all this, we shall also emphasize the fact that there are also Hungarian political entities which fall under the category of beneficial radicalism. Although they are not very popular either, they manage to achieve some small victories. The problem with the opposition in Hungary is that it is too fragmented – there are, however, certain issues (such as the fight against radicalism) around which the opposition can unite.

Unfortunately, populism further benefits harmful radicals – not only the far-right but the radicalizing governing party as well as it is trying to steal voters from Jobbik by implementing far-right policies. Populists feed on the fears of the people and therefore resort to telling them things they wish to hear. For this reason it is very difficult to combat populism and the far-right, but there is a set of best practices (such as using sports, laughter and satire, identifying issues around which people can unite) that can assist in counteracting them. Harmful radicalism, or more precisely the far-right, is undoubtedly a key issue in Hungary of today. However, by understanding them better more efficient ways of combatting them can be found. ●



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