

JOBBIK GOING MAINSTREAM; STRATEGY SHIFT OF THE FAR RIGHT IN HUNGARY

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Jobbik's 'rational radicalism' has delivered impressive results for the far right party. (1) It attained parliamentary representation a few years after its founding, in 2010, and then, by continuing the multi-faceted process of building its base, the Jobbik party was capable not only consolidating its political strength – primarily in impoverished Eastern Hungary – but expanded its support in the country's Western part. The different stages of this evolution are also marked by the mayoral seats won by the party. It is also of symbolic importance that in 2015 Jobbik won its first single-member constituency in Tapolca. This was a watershed for Jobbik since – on account of the Hungarian electoral system – winning single-member constituencies is one of the preconditions of the ability to govern. Another sign of the success of Jobbik's strategic work is the fact that since 2014 it has assumed the position of the second strongest party in opinion polls, overtaking left-wing MSZP (Hungarian Socialist Party) in the process. This has made Jobbik the leading force of the opposition and the main rival of the governing party.

This study focuses on Jobbik's mainstreaming campaign, which was launched in autumn 2013 and has been characteristic in the party's

(1) For a comprehensive overview of the rise of Jobbik, see A. BÍRÓ-NAGY and D. RÓNA, "Rational Radicalism. Jobbik's Road to the Hungarian Parliament", in *Alternative Politics? The Rise of New Political Parties in Central Europe* (G. MESEZNIKOV, O. GYÁRFÁSOVA and O. BÚTOROVÁ eds), Bratislava, Institute for Political Affairs, 2013, pp. 149-184. For the analysis of Jobbik in international comparison, see A. BÍRÓ-NAGY, T. BOROS and Z. VASALLI, "More radical than the radicals. The Jobbik party in international comparison", in *Right-wing Extremism in Europe* (R. MELZER and S. SERAFIN eds), Berlin, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2013, pp. 229-253.

communication since then. First, the underlying motivations of Jobbik's people's party strategy are analysed. Besides the opportunities that the new strategy offers to Jobbik, the limitations are also discussed. We also investigate the main characteristics of Jobbik's de-demonization strategy, both in terms of content and communication. Second, by comparing data on Jobbik's voting base in 2010 and 2015, we assess to what extent the strategy shift has contributed to address the strategic challenges of Jobbik. Third, the interaction between Jobbik and the traditional Hungarian mainstream parties will be analysed. Fourth, an overview of the institutionalised far right, Jobbik's subculture and intellectual hinterland is included in the study. Jobbik has carefully focused on building an extensive set of background institutions in the last few years with the aim to support the work of the national party. The last chapter will present the most important elements of the 'Jobbik empire'.

I. – THE MOTIVATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF JOBBIK'S STRATEGY SHIFT

In wide segments of Hungarian public opinion, Jobbik's strategy shift is referred to as the 'cuteness campaign'. This designation is due to the positive and kind messages emanating from the party, which are considered unusual for far right Jobbik. These messages first began to appear in autumn 2013, in various forms of Jobbik communication (in addition to statements by politicians, they were disseminated through short video spots, billboards and social media). The party announced a billboard and city light poster campaign aimed at Budapest and major towns. The posters featured smiling Jobbik politicians, along with the slogans 'You can't stop the future' and 'Already the most popular among youths'. Jobbik did not aim its message only at youths, however. It also displayed posters featuring a large family with the slogan 'Us, Jobbik supporters'. Jobbik used the 'Us, Jobbik supporters' message to show what it considered an average Jobbik voter. They wanted voters to see that in reality the faces shown as 'Us, Jobbik supporters' are people just like them.

Jobbik's new image was a radical departure both at visual level and in substance from Jobbik's campaigns and the party leadership's earlier opinions and statements. Jobbik leaders have come to call this process of Jobbik becoming a 'people's party'. The name is meant to project the anticipated outcome of the campaign, which is a scenario where Jobbik

appeals to even greater segments of the population. In other words, Jobbik's 'cuteness campaign' serves the repositioning of the party in the political market.

The change itself obviously charts a previously planned and logically coherent course. It began in time for the early preparatory phases of the campaign for the parliamentary elections in April 2014. Consequently, it was organically intertwined with the Hungarian general election campaign. Jobbik naturally persisted in its more moderate communication after the election. The party did not consider the 'cuteness campaign' as a one-off communication stunt. The goal was not only to improve its election return in the April 2014 ballot, but to realise long-term objectives. The moderate communication proved to be a persistent course for Jobbik. It has been a characteristic feature of the far right party's overall approach since autumn 2013.

Jobbik's leader, Gábor Vona, first spoke of this change in communication in September 2013. In an address to Jobbik's parliamentary group opening the 2013-2014 legislative season, Gábor Vona asked his MPs to rid their rhetoric of its radical edge. The party chairman requested Jobbik members to distinguish between substantial and formal radicalism. He said the problem was not what they said, but how they said it. Gábor Vona thus claims that the change in style could be the instrument to ensure that Jobbik's communication becomes attractive to broader segments of the population.

The goal of Jobbik's new communication strategy was to expunge the image that came to many in the public when they thought of Jobbik, namely one of a man in a uniform, which is a member of the militaristic Hungarian Guard that Jobbik had previously established. They sought to render the public image of Jobbik incoherent by presenting happy and nice-looking people on their billboards, and to thereby deconstruct the harsh and negative connotations associated with the party. Through this strategy, they also sought to impede their rivals' communication strategy, which had sought to deter the public from opting for Jobbik by highlighting its violent and aggressive character and views.

These new messages mark a sharp contrast with Jobbik's 2009-2010 campaign, which featured iron bars and the following message threatening the political elite: "20 years [in prison] for the last 20 years [in politics]". It is characteristic of this situation that while their campaign five years ago also featured – along with other far right extremist groups – the paramilitary Hungarian Guard (which was banned in 2009 on grounds that it violated the rights of minorities as guaranteed under the constitution), the campaign videos produced 3-4 years later were

devoid not only of such organisations, but in fact of any exclusionary or extreme statements generally understood.

The insight that undergirds this strategy shift is that insofar as the party is unacceptable – or in fact downright repulsive – to the majority of society, then it will not be able to exploit the opportunities stemming from the growing number of undecided voters in Hungary, or the fact that left-wing politics is incapable of attracting the support of these voters. For as long as this state of affairs persists, Jobbik will not be able to get their support, either. Though it is possible that a portion of these voters will agree with Jobbik on some issues, they will not consider Jobbik an alternative because of the associations that attach to the party. A rhetoric was needed that would help Jobbik rid itself of the stigma of broad social unacceptability. Hence the need for an image campaign.

The de-demonization strategy can also be perceived as a step towards improving its ability to govern. To take over the reins of government (which is obviously Jobbik's goal), it is not enough to appeal to the presence of a potential protest mood in the electorate. Instead, voters must come to believe that the party would be able to perform in a position of power. The lack of such a perception in wide swathes of the electorate constitutes a risk for Jobbik in that in a crucial election deciding who will exercise power, many voters would not consider it a serious option, with the result that they would ultimately vote for other parties that are better able to project an image of being able to discharge governmental responsibilities. A more moderate style of communication was also necessary because Jobbik's extreme communication was not conducive to win the confidence of large segments of the public, and thereby cast doubts on Jobbik's ability to lead. Thus the strategic change was likely also motivated by the belief that leaving the tough and radical tone behind could potentially give the public's trust in Jobbik's ability to govern a major impetus.

There is also a relatively new, peculiar element to Jobbik's repositioning efforts. In public pronouncements, the party has increasingly cast itself as a party of the 21st century, along with the green party LMP. In so doing, it contrasted these two parties with right-wing Fidesz and socialist MSZP, which Jobbik calls the forces of the 20th century. In the words of the party leader: "Fidesz and MSZP are preoccupied with the problems of the 20th century and have 20th century reflexes. Jobbik, by contrast, takes a 21st century attitude and wishes to address 21st century issues. The watershed issue in Hungarian politics is increasingly that the 19-20th century categories of 'right and left-wing,

conservative, liberal and socialist' are becoming meaningless." (2) By using this categorisation, Jobbik essentially sidelines the entire Hungarian political elite of the past 20-25 years. On the one hand, this is another formulation of the anti-establishment distinction that Jobbik had put forth before it entered Parliament, as well as during its early years in the legislature – though in light of participating in parliamentary work over the past five years, this critique would hardly be credible in its original version. On the other hand, its new self-understanding makes it possible to ensure that the party's image remains credible despite the fact that its programme and communication are an ideological amalgamation of far right, moderate conservative and left-wing socialist elements.

Another characteristic of Jobbik's rebranding exercise is that it lacks negative messages. The 2010 election campaign featured innumerable negative messages on the party's campaign posters, advertisements and events, which took aim in turn at the political elite, the Roma minority and the EU. But beginning in 2014, Jobbik's official communication was dominated exclusively by positive campaign slogans and messages. Even before the election campaign, the party declared that it would only engage in positive campaigns, in all three, the national parliamentary, the EP and the local elections. This promise was reiterated on several occasions during the campaign. Jobbik politicians contrasted their own campaign with what they saw as the 'dirty' campaigns of Fidesz-KDNP and the left-wing parties. During the 2014 election, Jobbik used its promise of a 'clean campaign' as a consciously designed campaign and image-building tool that was meant to tell voters that unlike its rivals, Jobbik would engage in an honourable and programme-based politics that would focus on the country's real problems rather than engage in dirty politics.

This meta campaign message was also used in the 2015 by-election in Tapolca, which provided Jobbik with a historical breakthrough, namely its first victory in a single-member constituency. For this campaign, the party drew up an ethics code consisting of five points and then asked the candidates to sign it. The document stated that the nominating organisations commit themselves to a positive, programme-based campaign. This implied that they would only avail themselves of authorised campaign instruments; they would refrain from infringements of the law; they would expect their activists to abide by the rules

(2) "Vona: A Jobbik nem náci párt", *Magyar Nemzet*, mno.hu/belfold/vona-a-jobbik-nem-naci-part-1283804, visited on 15 January 2016.

on election day; and they would account in detail for all the funds used during the campaign. Subsequently, already in the Tapolca campaign's final phase the party's deputy leader in parliament, Dániel Z. Kárpát, accused Fidesz and MSZP of a hate campaign. Kárpát argued that Fidesz and MSZP "are incapable of presenting a programme that serves public welfare. So what they do instead is to try to tear down other candidates".⁽³⁾ On behalf of Jobbik, he added that the party would not enter this mudslinging contest. This strategy, developed in Tapolca, could also be interpreted as Jobbik took the moral high ground vis-à-vis its opponents.

Jobbik's aspiration to become a people's party, stressed even more emphatically following the election in Tapolca, was most obviously manifest in the moderate messages. Jobbik's success in the by-election in April 2015 not only bolstered the party chairman's position within the party, but also confirmed Gábor Vona's thesis that becoming a popular party is Jobbik's only chance of emerging as a force capable of ousting Fidesz as the main governing party in 2018.

It is important to emphasise that in several statements Jobbik claimed that moderation pertained only to communication; it stressed that its programme had not changed. Jobbik politicians openly noted that though their communication had softened, the essence had remained as radical as previously. Based on the party leaders' own self-assessment, the programme did not change, only the rhetoric did; and even there the change was mostly that party members paid more attention to their public pronouncements and would not allow their emotions to take over, as they often had previously.

This image change was primarily a stylistic, formal change rather than a substantial shift away from the party's earlier position. In reality, the new strategy is about size. In Vona's words: "I'm looking for us to become a people's party of sorts. In other words, I expect us to gain strength among the elderly, those who live in western Hungary and female voters".⁽⁴⁾ This needed to be emphasised because in addition to drawing potentially moderate voters to Jobbik, the far right party also needs to reassure the more radically inclined core electorate that Jobbik is still the right party for them. Retaining the support of the latter is namely one of the preconditions of Jobbik's continuous expansion,

(3) Mandiner.hu, "Jobbik: Gyűlöletkampányt folytat a Fidesz és az MSZP Tapolcán", mandiner.hu/cikk/20150403_jobbik_gyuloletkampanyt_folytat_a_fidesz_es_az_mszp_tapolcan, visited on 15 January 2016.

(4) Index.hu, "Vona néppártosodást vár", index.hu/belfold/2014/02/24/valasztas14/vona_neppartosodast_var/, visited on 15 January 2016.

since its stability and force are among Jobbik's biggest drawing points for undecided voters, and those who became disenchanted with Fidesz-KDNP and the left.

In terms of content, there has been only a few major shifts in Jobbik's actual policy views. Even in these cases, however, the change often implies a rhetorical fine-tuning only. The first two changes are the party's new positions on anti-Semitism and anti-Roma attitudes. (5) Recently, extremely anti-Semitic and anti-Roma statements have disappeared from the party's communication, as a result of the process of Jobbik reframing itself as a people's party. Previously, the monopolization of the Roma issue was the main reason behind the rise of Jobbik. (6) The term 'gypsy crime', which was used heavily by Jobbik politicians especially during the years when Jobbik was out of Parliament, disappeared from official statements. Jobbik's leading politicians, who had not shied away from racist or anti-Semitic comments, (7) were now warned by the party's chairman that those who were hoping that Jobbik would make any distinctions between people based on their race, religion or any other basis would have to look for another party. (8) At the party's May Day event in 2015, Vona expressed the same idea again: "Jobbik makes distinctions between Hungarian citizens not based on ethnic or religious grounds, but along the lines of decent or indecent behaviour".

The other, more pragmatic shift in the party's positions concerns relations with the European Union. Previously, Jobbik was decisively anti-EU, and the party called for immediately exiting the organisation. At a campaign event in 2012, one of the party's deputy chairmen, Előd Novák, publicly burnt an EU flag, as Jobbik claimed that the European Commission had violated Hungary's independence when the Commission asked the Hungarian government to modify some of its controversial laws. (9) On another occasion, Jobbik politicians removed

(5) The Roma minority is the largest ethnic minority in Hungary. According to the 2011 census, they compose 3.16% of the total population. However, various estimations have put the number of Roma people as high as 5-10% of the total population. The Jewish minority composes approximately 1% of the population of Hungary.

(6) For more details on the importance of the Roma issue in the breakthrough of Jobbik, see G. KARÁCSONYI and D. RÓNA, "The Secret of Jobbik", *Journal of East-European and Asian Studies*, 2 (1), 2011, pp. 61-92.

(7) A collection of racist statements by Jobbik politicians in Hungarian weekly *Figyelő* (in Hungarian), fn.hir24.hu/itthon/2011/07/25/figy_ciganyozik_zsidozik_jobbik/.

(8) Mandiner.hu, "Vona: Le fogom nyesni a Jobbik vadhajtasait", mandiner.hu/cikk/20150413_vona_le_fogom_nyesni_a_jobbik_vadhajtasait, visited on 15 January 2016.

(9) Politics.hu: "Jobbik leaders urge Hungary to quit EU, burn union flag at demonstration in Budapest", www.politics.hu/20120115/jobbik-leaders-urge-hungary-to-quit-eu-burn-union-flag-at-demonstration-in-budapest/, visited on 15 January 2016.

the EU flag from the office building where MP's work. But even as recently as 2014, there was still a similar incident when two Jobbik MP's threw the European symbol out of the Parliament's window. (10) The idea of immediately withdrawing from the EU was also supported by Vona, who spoke at a public anti-EU event in 2012 and said the following: "Who dares stand up here and say that the Union is good for us?! Raise your hand if the Union has done anything good for you over the past eight years? I don't see any hands. Now please raise your hands if you feel we should quit the Union!" (11) Since 2013 Jobbik has changed its position on this question, and now its stance is one of soft euro-scepticism. The most important change is that they no longer advocate an immediate exit from the EU. Instead, similarly to David Cameron's Conservative Party in the UK, Jobbik urges renegotiation of Hungary's EU membership and a referendum on the issue. (12)

The moderation in communication has not been a process that extended to all levels of the party. Nearer to the base, extremist comments continued to be voiced even after autumn 2013. As a result, fault lines emerged pitting the party leadership against local organisations, and parts of the party elite against one another. The scandals of Jobbik MPs and mayoral candidates provide illustrative examples. In February 2015, just before a by-election, it turned out that János Kötél, a Jobbik candidate in Mezőtúr, had shared extremist contents on his Facebook page. He opined, among other things, that the Roma situation can only be solved by killing Roma. Gábor Vona issued a statement distancing himself from the candidate, and then ordered the candidate to move in for a period of three days with Kálmán Jonás, the party's chairman in Hajdúszoboszló, who is of Roma ethnicity. Yet at the same time the press soon revealed that Jónás' own Facebook feed featured anti-Semitic views. Regardless of moderation, manifestations of the presence of extremist fringe also continued to appear in the party's leadership. A well-known instance was a statement posted on Facebook by Előd Novák in January 2015, issued in the context of the first newborn of the year, Rikárdó. In reference to the baby's presumed Roma ethnicity, Novák noted in a Facebook post that fortunately Roma

(10) Politics.hu: "Radical nationalists hurl EU flags through Parliament window", www.politics.hu/20140213/radical-nationalists-hurl-eu-flags-through-parliament-window/, visited on 15 January 2016.

(11) "Jobbik's demonstration against the EU – the speech of Gábor Vona", www.youtube.com/watch?v=yCYNgu9WVzI, visited on 15 January 2016.

(12) "Vona Gábor: Évértékelő beszéd", alfahir.hu/itt_elolvashatja_vona_gabor_teljes_beszedet, visited on 15 January 2016.

are not the only ones who are reproducing. In “some cases Hungarians, too” are producing offspring, Novák said. In another post that day, he referred to the “Gypsy population explosion”, which would turn Hungarians into a minority.

An especially embarrassing episode for the new strategy was a speech – a recording of which was leaked to the press by another party vice-chairman, Tamás Sneider, who discussed the “essence of the cuteness campaign” in a conversation with party sympathisers. The politician, who became widely known for his past as a skinhead, noted that the party must avoid radical statements so as not to scare moderate voters. At the same time, Sneider added that there is a division of labour between the Brigand Army (*Betyársereg*), the Sixty-Four County Movement (*Hatvannégy Vármegye Mozgalom*) and Jobbik: what Jobbik cannot say publicly will be disseminated by these groups. This means that while Jobbik is “not allowed” to continue with racist messages due to its strategy shift, these smaller groups can go ahead with the same tone as before.

In practice, the party leadership obviously proved willing to distance itself from radical statements and to express that it finds these intolerable, occasionally ordering spectacular – though mostly just symbolic – sanctions against the ‘deviationists’. For now, it seems that the recently adopted moderate and youthful image, which now enjoys a dominant status in Jobbik’s public presentation, continues to coexist with a pre-existing image that persists under the surface. This image is that of a tough, anti-Roma and anti-Semitic political force.

II. – WHO ARE THE VOTERS OF JOBBIK?

As the strategy shift of Jobbik has been essentially about size, it is important to assess to what extent this move has proved to be successful so far. A comparison of 2010 Medián⁽¹³⁾ and 2015 Ipsos-Republikon⁽¹⁴⁾ data shows that despite the growing number of Jobbik voters over the last few years, the Hungarian far right still faces broadly the same strategic challenges in terms of its voting base as five years ago. Jobbik is relatively weaker in the older age groups, among women,

(13) For detailed data, see A. BIRÓ-NAGY and D. RÓNA, “Rational Radicalism. Jobbik’s Road to the Hungarian Parliament”, *op. cit.*

(14) For detailed data, see the analysis of Republikon Institute: republikon.hu/media/20993/partok2015_v4.pdf.

has lower support among the least and the most educated segments of the society, and the distribution of Jobbik voters still show geographical imbalances across the country.

As was the case in 2009-2010, young age is still the strongest characteristic of the Jobbik camp. The party is three times more popular among the under 30 generation (23%) than among the oldest one (8%). The youngest age group is the only one in which Jobbik is threatening the top position of Fidesz, Hungary's ruling party (the Socialists are giving a fight to Fidesz among pensioners). Should only the pensioners have the right to vote, Jobbik would be satisfied to pass the five percent threshold to Parliament. Jobbik is undeniably the strongest among those under 30, but has gained some new voters in the middle-aged generations (40-49 and 50-59). In the 40-49-age group Jobbik had 14% of support in 2010, this number is at 17 in 2015. Among those between 50-59, Jobbik has grown even more: compared to 11% in 2010, Jobbik is now at 16%. However, the far right party has not been able to overcome its major obstacle in terms of age, to grow significantly among those over 60. The old wisdom about Jobbik's voting base remains true: the younger the age group, the more popular Jobbik is.

Apart from age, gender is the most significant social variable. Men are much more likely to choose Jobbik. The far right party is at 18% among men, and at 13% among women in 2015. This tendency is rare in Hungary (in fact, Jobbik is the only party that has major imbalances in their support based on gender), but many European radical right parties have the same characteristics. What is more surprising, given the religious ideology of Jobbik, is that the more frequently a citizen attends church, the less likely he/she votes for the far right party (in the Hungarian context, Fidesz is the most common choice for religious voters).

The distribution of Jobbik votes based on the size of towns shows a non-linear picture, just like in 2010. The party is most popular in small and middle cities, it is somewhat weaker in the smallest villages, but its lowest results stem from Budapest. The current geographical imbalances make it impossible for Jobbik to aspire for winning elections. Without a stronger performance in bigger cities and especially in Budapest, Jobbik has no chance of winning enough seats to form a government. Despite the fact that Jobbik has managed to grow its support in Western Hungary (the most symbolic manifestation of this was the by-election win in Tapolca), Jobbik's stronghold is still North-East Hungary, the country's poorest region, which is also very densely inhabited by the Roma minority. Jobbik has been actively seeking to

improve its popularity across Hungary, and has managed to decrease the geographical imbalances in its supporting base, but it is far from even in terms of the size of towns and regions of East and West.

In the year of Jobbik's arrival to the Hungarian Parliament (2010), it was already possible to argue that revenue and wealth have no significant impact on the Jobbik vote. In the Hungarian case it was not true that 'modernization losers',⁽¹⁵⁾ the poor, desperate electors who cannot cope with the crises are the more likely to support the extreme right. As in 2010, the far right party has the lowest popularity among lowest-qualified group (those who have finished only primary school) in 2015 as well. The middle-qualified citizens are more likely to vote for them in 2015, even more so than they did in 2009-2010. In terms of education, Jobbik is the strongest among those with vocational education training and high-school background. Jobbik does not perform in the university educated segment of the society. However, it must be emphasized that the far right is more popular among those who are currently university or college students. As a consequence, it can be expected that in a few years Jobbik's support among those with university degree will grow.

III. – THE INTERACTION OF JOBBIK WITH MAINSTREAM POLITICAL PARTIES

The massive increase in Jobbik's popularity has fundamentally transformed Hungarian politics since 2009. This statement is true despite Fidesz's overwhelming victory both in the 2010 and the 2014 elections, when Viktor Orbán's party received 20-30 percentage points more support than Jobbik, and thus could form government with two-third majority in the Hungarian Parliament after both elections (*see* Hungarian election data in Table 1). However, Jobbik's huge impact on Hungarian politics is not based on its strength in the Parliament, but on its capability to set the political agenda and win over both former socialist and former Fidesz voters.

(15) H.G. BETZ, *Radical Right-wing Populism in Western Europe*, London, Macmillan, 1994.

Table 1: The 2014 Hungarian parliamentary election results

	Fidesz-KDNP		Left-wing Alliance (MSZP-Együtt-PM-DK-MLP)		Jobbik		LMP	
	2014	Change since 2010	2014	Change since 2010	2014	Change since 2010	2014	Change since 2010
Share of popular vote	44.87	-7.88	25.57	+5.87	20.22	+3.85	5.34	-2.14
Share of seats	66.8	-1.3	19.1	+3.8	11.6	-0.6	2.5	-1.7
Number of seats (2014 only)	133		38		23		5	

Source: National Election Office

The governing party Fidesz and the former governing party MSZP (Hungarian Socialist Party) have applied totally different strategies on how to handle Jobbik in the last few years. Below we will overview how these political forces reacted to Jobbik's increasing popularity and how Jobbik, in general has had an impact on the politics of these parties.

A. – *Jobbik's impact on Fidesz*

In the communication of Fidesz and Viktor Orbán, Jobbik does not play the role of an important political opponent, but of an insignificant party, which correctly points out the problems of the Hungarian society, but is unable to offer solutions to these problems. Fidesz has never wanted to create a *cordon sanitaire* around Jobbik or to label Jobbik as an extremist party. They have always underlined that Jobbik was insignificant and it would never be able to govern the country. However, fearing from the possibility that Jobbik can win over a part of Fidesz's more radical voters, the Orbán government has systematically taken over numerous elements of the programme of Jobbik. Viktor Orbán strongly believes that if they adopt the most significant and symbolic elements of Jobbik's programme and implement it in a softer, more moderate manner, then Fidesz can effectively stop Jobbik's

momentum. (16) In the framework of this strategy, the Orbán government has implemented several measures that were simply a copy from Jobbik's programme. (17) Among these were the crisis taxes levied on large corporations (mostly foreign-owned); the nationalisation of mandatory private pension-funds; the inclusion of a reference to the so-called Holy Crown (a historical reference with relevance especially to nationalists) and to Christianity in the new constitution; school visits to formerly Hungarian areas outside the current national borders; removing monuments and renaming streets as Jobbik had proposed; a national day of commemoration on the 1920 Treaty of Trianon, when Hungary lost large parts of its territory; and a more forceful policy towards the EU. In the first parliamentary cycle of Jobbik, these moves of Fidesz were not able to stop the rise of support of Jobbik, which reached its best ever electoral result in 2014 by gaining more than 20% of the votes. However, it must be emphasised that Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's tough reactions to the refugee crisis, the erection of a fence on the Hungarian border with Serbia and Croatia, and framing the refugee crisis as the influx of economic migrants and terrorists have been successful efforts to take the wind out of Jobbik's sails. Consequently, somewhat uniquely among the populist parties in Europe, Jobbik's popularity actually decreased during the refugee crisis, since the summer of 2015. (18)

B. – *Jobbik's impact on the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP)*

Hungarian left-wing parties, including the Hungarian Socialist Party, traditionally applied the 'cordon sanitaire strategy' against far right parties. Correspondingly, left-wing politicians did not participate in any public debate with Jobbik politicians, and did not challenge the politics of Jobbik, but simply called it 'fascist' and 'extremist'. This strategy was

(16) For an analysis of the Fidesz-Jobbik relationship, see P. KREKÓ and G. MAYER, "Transforming Hungary – Together? An Analysis of the FIDESZ-Jobbik Relationship", in *Transforming the transformation. The East European Radical Right in the Political Process* (M. MINKENBERG ed.), London/New York, Routledge, pp. 183-205. About the impact of radical right parties on public debates and mainstream policy agenda in Central and Eastern Europe, see B. PYTLAS, *Radical Right Parties in Central and Eastern Europe: Mainstream Party Competition and Electoral Fortune*, London/New York, Routledge, 2015.

(17) A list of these issues can be found in the following study: A. BÍRÓ-NAGY, T. BOROS and Z. VASALI, "More radical than the radicals. The Jobbik party in international comparison", in *Right-wing Extremism in Europe* (R. MELZER and S. SERAFIN eds), Berlin, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2013, pp. 229-253.

(18) "The popularity of far right Jobbik party leveling off", *Budapest Business Journal*, bbj.hu/politics/popularity-of-far-right-jobbik-party-leveling-off_102846, visited on 15 January 2016.

primarily based on the core values of the left (the Hungarian Socialist Party has coherently raised its voice against racism and antisemitism), but as they (mistakenly) also believed that Jobbik mainly won over former right-wing voters, the Socialists' political logic was for a long time that they should not take the increase of Jobbik's popularity too seriously.

However, it turned out very soon that the *cordon sanitaire* strategy not only did not stop the rise of the far right party, but actually helped to spread its political messages without any counterpoint or criticism. Moreover, after 2009, Jobbik's bastions became exactly those North-Eastern Hungarian counties that had been the strongholds of MSZP beforehand. For that very reason, MSZP drafted an extensive political programme focusing on the development this Northern Hungarian region and changed its economy policy in a more leftist (that is, less neoliberal) direction. Nevertheless, the Socialists were unable to meet *both* the needs of their core voters, who are basically open towards Jobbik's law and order rhetoric *and* the expectations of the left-wing and liberal elite who demanded a more liberal stance from MSZP both in terms of economy policy and cultural issues.

By 2014, Jobbik overtook MSZP in popularity and became the second most popular party in Hungary and the strongest rival of Fidesz. Although the total number of voters of all left-wing and liberal parties is larger than the number of Jobbik voters, five years after its political breakthrough, the far right party has become a real alternative for those people who want a new government in Hungary. Therefore, the most important impact of Jobbik on Hungarian politics and especially on the left is that the party has turned the previous quasi two-party system into a 'three-party system', in which it is not at all guaranteed that the left is the most important challenger of Fidesz.

IV. – THE INSTITUTIONALISED FAR RIGHT: JOBBIK'S INTELLECTUAL HINTERLAND

As we have described in the previous chapters, in the last few years, Jobbik has been characterised by rational radicalism, a deliberate planning process. This process helped the party to grow from being a small group of extreme right university students to become the second biggest political force in Hungary. This rational and systematic party building has been supported by a continuously growing and strengthening hinterland.

Since the party was for a long time excluded from access to mainstream media, it had no other choice but building its own far right media empire to reach out to its (potential) voters. This empire includes a wide variety of media outlets, from Internet-based media to print publications. These serves as the main channels of communication with party supporters, and as the most important sources of information for the latter. The party's intellectual hinterland now even boasts its own think-tank, and a network of varied groups representing different aspects of far right subcultures was also created and bolstered as a part of the process of building an extensive set of background institutions supporting the work of the party.

A. – *The media empire of Jobbik*

The most important institution of the extreme right's hinterland is undeniably the Kuruc.info website. It is also one of the most extreme in its content, often violates Hungarian privacy and libel laws and openly engages in hate speech. Though its positions are often more extreme than the official Jobbik line, Kuruc.info is completely loyal to Jobbik. It features advertisements of Jobbik events in prominent places and reports regularly in an exceedingly friendly tone about Jobbik. There is considerable speculation about Kuruc.info being controlled by Jobbik or even being edited by Jobbik members, but Jobbik denies this, though Jobbik politicians do admit mutual sympathies.

Both the website's texts and images are intentionally reminiscent of the racist propaganda common in the 1930s. On par with sections entitled "Economics" and "Humour" (mostly racist jokes), it has created sections entitled "Gypsy criminality" and "Jewish criminality", which are among the most active sections on the page in terms of articles published. Though the website mostly attacks Jews and Gypsies, often in articles that express a desire for killing individuals or groups of minorities, its racism is not limited to minorities that are present in Hungary in substantial numbers. It often refers to persons of colour as 'niggers' and comparisons of certain ethnic groups to animals (usually apes) are frequent.

Among the media outlets that are part of the Jobbik-aligned media empire, Kuruc.info clearly ranks among the most extreme, and is definitely less restrained than Jobbik's official organ, Barikád, in its expression of racist beliefs. The site's strong ties to Jobbik – as noted, it displays Jobbik campaign advertisements, reports duly on Jobbik's activities and completely lacks any critical distance to the party – suggests that

there is a division of labour between Alfahir.hu, as the official portal of Jobbik on the one hand, and Kuruc.info on the other. In this arrangement Kuruc.info's job appears to be to bind the more radical elements of the extreme right camp to Jobbik. The extreme right is known for its ideological fragmentation and the intensity of many believers' convictions, which could easily lead to internal divisions in the far right camp. Correspondingly, one of the most frequent charges against individuals or movements on the far right is that of moderation or selling out. As a successful parliamentary party, Jobbik especially walks a tight rope with voters who expect more drastic action. Kuruc.info is a useful instrument for satisfying the latter group's need for aggressiveness and hence in securing their ongoing support.

Barikád ('Barricade'), Jobbik's official organ, is a nationally distributed weekly that for all intents and purposes functions as Jobbik's party paper. At the same time, it is also one of the major far right press products with a circulation of 10,000. The paper was initially launched as a monthly in 2009, but since early 2010 it has been published as a weekly. From the very beginning, the print paper was paired with the news site barikad.hu, which later changed its name to alfahir.hu, and has emerged as one of the major news portals of the institutionalised far right in Hungary. The paper's orientation and the tone of its coverage are dominated by recurring anti-American, anti-EU and anti-left sentiments, and homophobia, incitement against Roma and Jews are also common. The Jobbik party foundation, the Gyarapodó Magyarorszáért Alapítvány ('For a Thriving Hungary Foundation') has generously funded *Barikád's* publisher, the Magyar Hírek Kft., giving the media company some 84 million HUF (270,000 €) in total over the past few years.

Jobbik's other official print paper is *Hazai Pálya* ('Home Turf'), complementing *Barikád*. It was launched two years after *Barikád*, in autumn 2011, that is after Jobbik had entered Parliament. Initially, it was published every two months. Subsequently, the frequency of publication increased to once a month between 2011 and 2014. 1.2-1.4 million copies of the paper, with a total of 16 pages per issue, are printed each month. Unlike *Barikád*, *Hazai Pálya* was established with the goal of addressing a wider audience. In addition to the extraordinarily high circulation figures, this is also manifest in the fact that it is delivered to Hungarian households for free. Another deliberate decision aimed at expanding the paper's reach beyond the core audience was that in contrast to the political/public affairs focus of other far right media outlets, *Hazai Pálya* openly seeks to be a tabloid paper. In addition to

political news and official Jobbik propaganda, it features interviews with prominent figures of public life, along with crosswords. This is complemented by a visual style befitting a genuine tabloid, including many photos and colourful content.

Although Jobbik doesn't own any 'traditional' TV-channel, the party is linked with N1TV (N1 stands for National 1) an Internet-based television channel. N1TV has been operating for a few years now, but it has recently undergone a facelift and added professional journalists, who previously worked for right-wing, pro-Fidesz HírTV (the Hungarian version of Fox News) to its staff. N1TV produces a variety of mostly brief shows including interviews, discussions and reports, which are shared on the channel's website and on YouTube. Many of N1TV's features focus on Jobbik politicians, Jobbik events and social issues that are particularly relevant to Jobbik. N1TV's interviews lack a critical distance from their subjects, and its shows emphatically cast Jobbik in a good light. Like the party itself, its content is more moderate than it used to be. Mainstream politicians – even those on the left – respond to queries by N1TV reporters, and thus it can be asserted that the channel enjoys some level of legitimacy as a 'regular' TV station. Still, a history of extremist shows remains, and even currently the channel seeks to portray Roma as criminals, for example.

B. – *Political institutions linked with Jobbik*

The official and unofficial political institutions linked with Jobbik have a dual role in the party's life. Older institutions, such as the Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom ('64 Counties Youth Movement') and Atilla Király Népfőiskola ('King Atilla People's Academy') help to motivate and train activists and voters. Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom was founded in 2001, and it defines itself as a national radical youth organisation, but in reality it is an extremist grouping that professes racist, anti-Semitic and anti-Roma beliefs. Most of the group's activities are aimed at the intimidation of Roma and spreading propaganda that seeks to stir hostility towards these minorities, but they are also often involved in the activities of other extremist groups and have extensive relations in the radical far right sphere, including groups such as the paramilitary *Betyársereg* ('Brigand Army'). Unlike the others, Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom however is considerably more active in terms of conducting propaganda in neighbouring countries. The other important pro-Jobbik institution, the Atilla Király Népfőiskola was founded in 2008, and the institution strengthens the

party's professional background, but it also serves as a point of contact with voters, which is underlined by an extensive national network. In addition to Budapest, it boasts educational facilities in 12 counties. These feature monthly or bi-monthly presentations. The public academy has no accreditation as an educational institution, but it nevertheless issues 'certificates' to its students upon conclusion of their classes.

When Jobbik became increasingly professional in its daily operation, the need for creating a pro-Jobbik think tank to help the party with opinion polls, background materials, political strategies and analyses has arisen. The Iránytű Politikai és Gazdaságkutató Intézet ('Compass Political and Economic Research Institute') was finally established in 2011. In its own words, it was "established with the goal of researching and analysing political and economic processes from a novel, national conservative perspective". Iránytű Intézet has undeniably strong ties to Jobbik. It works as a one-person ltd, whose CEO is the Jobbik leader Gábor Vona's personal adviser. In the last few years, Iránytű Intézet has become the organisation that received the most generous funding from Jobbik's party foundation among the various institutions that make up Jobbik's intellectual hinterland. (19)

V. – CONCLUSION

In 2013, Jobbik launched a new strategy with the aim of repositioning the party and get rid of the stigma of broad social unacceptability. The de-demonization campaign was not a one-off communication stunt, but has turned into the core of Jobbik's politics over the last two years. To reach out to wider segments of the Hungarian society and to become electable for the growing number of undecided voters, especially disillusioned Fidesz voters – these objectives motivated Jobbik when they left their aggressive and racist image behind.

The essence of the strategy has been to distinguish between substantial and formal radicalism. Jobbik has changed its style, but has remained radical in content. Despite the softer language, Jobbik is not less nationalist than before, keeps attacking the political elite with the same strength and commitment, has not changed its course on law and order issues, and has not become friendlier towards multinational companies and banks, and globalisation in general. The major change in Jobbik's politics is that anti-Semitic and anti-Roma messages have

(19) *Atlatzo.hu*, "A clear picture of party foundation funding in Hungary", english.atlatzo.hu/2015/05/31/a-clear-picture-of-party-foundation-funding-in-hungary/, visited on 15 January 2016.

disappeared from the party's official statements. Jobbik has also set a softer tone on European integration: it no longer wants to leave the EU immediately, but would prefer the renegotiation of the conditions of Hungary's EU membership and then have a referendum on the issue. The latter U-turn is due to the fact that the majority of Hungarians clearly prefer to stay in the European Union. However, it should be mentioned that the de-demonization strategy has not reached all levels of the party. Several scandals have indicated since the launch of image change that the old, racist characteristics of Jobbik co-exist under the surface with the new image.

Positioning Jobbik as the 'party of the 21st century' vs the 'parties of the 20th century' underlines that the Hungarian far right puts a special emphasis on anti-establishment politics. The new, less aggressive image, combined with tough anti-establishment messages has paid off for Jobbik. It reached its best ever general election result in 2014 and managed to win its first ever single-member district in a by-election in 2015. Despite the fact that Jobbik has been able to bring in new voters, the Hungarian far right still faces the same strategic challenges in terms of its voting base as five years ago. Jobbik has to strengthen its support in the older age groups, among women, and in both the less and the most educated segments of the society if it seriously aims to win elections. Although Jobbik has gained some strength in the Western part of country, there is still a lot to do for the Hungarian far right in terms of the geographical distribution of their voters as well.

The major obstacle to the further rise of Jobbik seems to be Fidesz's strategy to take away the issues of Jobbik, as it was apparent during the refugee crisis in 2015. Jobbik has been mostly a follower and not the trend-setter in the migration debate. The government's anti-immigration campaign worked with very tough messages and consequently for Jobbik it proved to be very hard to find its voice. In 2015, Jobbik found itself in a situation when they could not simply outmanoeuvre the governing party, Fidesz from the right, and their image campaign was rather an obstacle to appear tougher on immigration than Viktor Orbán's government. However, this strategy of Fidesz has the potential to backfire in the long run, since it can make it easier for their voters to choose 'clean' Jobbik if they make serious political mistakes and/or seem to be corrupt.

As previously Jobbik had no access to mainstream media (this has changed in the last two years), it had no other choice but building its own far right media empire to reach out to its (potential) voters. As a consequence of a rational institution building process, in 2015 this

empire includes a wide variety of media outlets, from Internet-based media to print publications. The party's intellectual hinterland now even boasts its own think-tank, and a network of varied groups representing different aspects of far right subcultures has also been created and bolstered. The far right has got a much more institutionalised intellectual background than before the arrival of Jobbik to the Hungarian parliament. This is primarily due to the careful use of the state funds available in Jobbik's party foundation. The more mainstream image complemented by the institutionalisation of the far right makes it more likely that the position reached by Jobbik in Hungarian politics since 2009 can be sustained in the next years as well.

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