

# EXTRAORDINARY SITUATIONS, EXTRAORDINARY MEANS: THE REGENERATIVE PROJECTS OF THE HUNGARIAN RADICAL RIGHT

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## **Abstract:**

*This article provides an example in which the historical method is used as a tool to define and study the ideology of the radical right. It does this by using Hungary as a case-study and explores the questions of continuity, core ideas, and inner logic of radical right wing discourses. The vehicle is a diachronic comparison of regenerative planning in the interwar and contemporary period, concentrating on the main themes of ideological content. The article shows an interesting amount of commonalities between the thought patterns of the interwar and the contemporary radical right wing in Hungary.*

**Keywords:** ideology, radical right, fascism, Jobbik, Arrowcross Party, Hungary

## **1. Introduction**

The resurgence of the radical right in contemporary Hungary seems to echo a European trend of “renationalization” and Euro-skepticism. The question arises: what connection, if any, to similar past phenomena do these extreme manifestations of nationalism have? Does this continuity provide basis for a general definition of radical right wing parties? Hungary has been, in many ways, a fertile home for the development of radical right wing political phenomena. It may therefore be considered to be the perfect test-subject for political theorizing on the subject. The matured development of radical right wing politics may allow for a detailed study. The article shall attempt to draw the reader’s attention toward two issues: the continuity and consistency of certain core elements within the discourse of the Hungarian radical right, and an analysis of its contents, in order to reveal the successful parts. The vehicle for this analysis shall be a comparison of the two evolutionary poles of the radical right wing political planning: the regenerative plans concocted by ideologues in the interwar period, and today’s Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary. I attempt to succinctly unpack the message contained within these most basic of materials, directed at the voting masses. The article argues that the two periods touch upon the same basic issues, specifically the need of a certain part of the Hungarian voter for an alternate projection of the future.

The existing scholarship has approached the topic varying degrees of success. A considerable amount of research exists on the political history of both interwar, and

the post-1989 Hungarian radical right. Historians such as Karsai László,<sup>1</sup> and Romsics Ignác<sup>2</sup> have treated the subject of the interwar manifestations of the extreme right, while political scientists such as Andras Bozoki<sup>3</sup>, and anthropologists such as Laszlo Kurti have explored the topic for the 1990-2000 period. Their efforts are laudable, both for giving good accounts of the activities of these parties and movements, and also their style of politics. The phenomena of populist politics and political discourse has been well-explored and presented. Populism, however, may be adequately defined as a *style* of political argumentation, not an ideology *per se*. Very little has been written about the ideological content of the radical right wing movements, which would highlight their specificities or the reason for their success. Moreover, there are no academic attempts which would draw a diachronic comparison, or tackle the question of historic continuity.

This article is organized in three sections. The first section discusses the theoretical framework and presents the key concepts. The second section is the largest and includes the comparative analysis between the radical right in the past and in contemporary Hungary. The conclusions synthesize the findings of the article and discuss directions for further research.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

The studies concerning extreme right parties and movements of the last two decades have produced a plethora of theories on the nature of the extreme right. The number of scholars and the varied scientific and national contexts from which they hail has resulted in a multiplicity of means of studying the phenomena. The very terms of "extreme right" (Cas Mudde and Piero Ignazi<sup>4</sup>), "radical right" (Herbert Kitschelt<sup>5</sup>), "fascism" (Griffin, Eatwell), "neo-Fascism" have become at times rivals, and at times interchangeable, according to theoretical and methodological approaches, and political contexts.

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1 László Karsai, *Ferenc Szálasi, chef du mouvement des Croix fléchées hongrois (1897-1946)*, in Traian Sandu (ed.), *Vers en profil convergent des fascismes? : "nouveau consensus" et religion politique en Europe centrale*, (Paris : L'Harmattan, 2010); Karsai László, *The radical right in Hungary*, in Sabrina Ramet, *The radical right in Central and Eastern Europe since 1989* (University Park, Pa. : Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1999).

2 Ignác Romsics (ed.), *A magyar jobboldali hagyomány (The Hungarian right-wing tradition)* (Budapest: Osiris, 2009).

3 Andras Bozoki, *Modernisation and Nationalism*, in Leslie C. Eliason and Bogh Sorensen, *Fascism, liberalism, and social democracy in Central Europe : past and present* (Oxford: Aarhus University Press, 2002); Andras Bozoki, *An outline of three populisms: The United States, Argentina and Hungary*, (Budapest: CEU Press, 1994).

4 Piero Ignazi, *Extreme right parties in Western Europe* (Oxford ; New York : Oxford University Press, 2003).

5 Herbert Kitschelt, *The radical right in Western Europe : a comparative analysis* (Michigan: Ann Arbor, 1995).

The traditional way of studying or defining radical right parties or movements was to define them through a single feature, identified as central to the parties' identities. Usually, this feature was an extreme apprehension of the national community, or some sort of variant of this: racism, ultra-nationalism, xenophobia, anti-immigration policies, and so forth. It was understood that this was the central element to the parties' policies and encapsulated the message which they wanted to transmit toward the voting public; or in another way, the feature with which they attempted to market themselves and set themselves apart from the rest on the political scene. Since this approach did not yield a good understanding of the dynamics of radical right parties and did not explain much, it was soon replaced by what can be termed the "checklist" method. This school, more refined than the first, operated on the correct assumption that the core of a party's beliefs or existence cannot be summarized by a single element, even if it be it central to their discourse.

Working within this checklist method scholars such as Hartmann<sup>6</sup> proceeded to put together lists of elements, linked together in particular logic, which would best express the nature of the radical right. Elements such as nationalism, populism in socio-economic affairs and anti-democracy were identified by Macridis<sup>7</sup> and Falter and Schumann<sup>8</sup>. The problem with this approach is that it is fairly vulnerable to criticism from the comparative school. These theories are highly dependent on the set of data and on the objects they study; for example, studies of Eastern and East-Central European radical right wing parties oftentimes cannot fit well into these checklists. There is also the question of what the exact minimum is for features necessary to define (even for heuristic use) a party as belonging to the radical right. If, for example, a party is pro law and order, nationalist, and socially conservative, but not opposed to democracy and immigration, can it be called radical right?

Mudde suggested a new approach, adapting the term "party families" for the radical right and creating the concept of the "extreme right party family". This placement of radical right wing parties within the larger space of "political families" allows for more attention to be given to specific national and spatial contexts within which the respective parties or movements actually exist. Moreover, the parties themselves do not have to strictly correspond to a number of requirements, or contain the rigorous list of ingredients which would suggest "extremism". Mudde's "extreme right party family" is centered around one ideological core, made up of a set of "consensual" elements: nationalism, racism, xenophobia, anti-democracy and

6 Ulrich Hartmann, *Rechtsextremismus bei Jugendlichen. Anregungen, der wachsender Gefahr entgegenzuwirken*, (Munich, 1985).

7 Ray C. Macridis, *Contemporary Political Ideologies: Movements and Regimes* (Glennview: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1989).

8 Jürgen W. Falter and Siegfried Schumann, "Affinity towards right-wing extremism in Western Europe", *West European Politics*, no. 11:2, 1988, 96–110.

the strong state<sup>9</sup>. Mudde also added welfare chauvinism and a belief in law and order as further possible sub-elements<sup>10</sup>. The author distinguishes between two sub-groups within the “family” of radical right wing parties: the ethnic and the state nationalist Right. They are divided according to their ideological specificities, owing to historical proximity to the pre-1945 period. Mudde’s scheme represents a departure from the previous theoretical approaches to the topic of radical right wing parties, as he attempts to analyze them through their ideologies, and contends that while variable and corresponding to national contexts, they share a common ideological core.

However, his blueprint of the core of right-wing extremism does not accurately address the question of continuity, his studies concentrating, as they do, on what he has deemed “the third wave” of the phenomena. His blend of the ideological elements stated above, or at least some combination of a part of them, is rather loose. It does not explain the inner logic with which these elements are combined or what (perceived) socio-political needs the radical right wing seems to address. Both the continuity question and the matter of the inner logic can be dealt with by adapting Mudde’s conclusions (the existence of an ideological core, consisting of the combination of the above-mentioned parts) and supplementing them with a concept of fascism borrowed from the intellectual history of interwar political thought. Roger Eatwell’s thesis, built on the combination of rising political legitimacy of the extreme right and a growing personal efficacy and declining trust in the system,<sup>11</sup> put forward a meta-historical theorem which could be applied to past and present cases. It is especially this last part, declining trust in the power of the political-economic system to provide for the needs of the people, which is in common with the theory of another British historian, Roger Griffin. Griffin’s definition of fascism, as a form of palingenetic populist ultra-nationalism<sup>12</sup>, contains the key to develop a scheme in which to address the issue of continuity and inner logic. The British historian explains the term of palingenesis as a total revolution of state, economics, and society, from the legislative through to the cultural level. He develops this idea further by adding to it the concept of liminoid society<sup>13</sup>. In this state, a part of society which supports the extreme right, perceives itself as being on the brink of great change.

This change may be positive or negative depending on political action; feelings of being besieged and threatened abound. It is my contention that these two concepts

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9        Mudde, *The ideology of the extreme right* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 16.

10        *Ibid.*, 179.

11        Roger Eatwell, *Ten theories of the extreme right*, in Peter Merkl, Leonard Weinberg, *Right-wing extremism in the 21st century* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 64.

12        Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1991).

13        Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

may provide a better heuristic guide for the study of the ideological core of radical right wing parties. They also address the meta-historical nature of the extreme right, providing a general theorem of what they are and were. I believe that both past and present manifestations of the extreme right contain these basic elements. The case-study of such past and present manifestations of the Hungarian radical right, scrutinized through the Griffinian lens, may provide interesting evidence in favor of the existence of a historical core of ideology. Within the scheme provided by Griffin, I have identified two implicit suggestions: the existence of a common understanding of history (the forces of change, evolution, and decay) and a shared bestiary (forces opposed to the interests of the national community). They are more or less common for the interwar and contemporary periods and exhibit a common logic. A diachronic comparative study, therefore, is the best means to showcase them.

### *The Key Concepts*

The methodology of the proposed presentation shall be formed by a dual comparative nexus, both historical and contextual. I shall utilize the already mentioned theorem of generic fascism of Roger Griffin as a heuristic tool, and define the subject as populist ultra-nationalism bent on regenerating the national community<sup>14</sup>, thereby limiting the subject-matter. The supporters of radical right wing projects shall be defined as imagining society as *liminoid*, in Griffin's terms<sup>15</sup> (on the verge of change or disaster). I argue that the Hungarian radical right (and the radical right, in general) feeds on a certain set of apprehensions, which it tries to seed and maximize. These perceptions, more specifically, have to do with how one perceives himself, his society and the large community he is part of. I argue that radical right wing thought fosters an understanding of the world in which the individual, in his/her present state, is threatened.

The threat can come at many levels, economic, social, identity, but typically all at once. Therefore, the reaction of the individual is pushed to respond to this growing danger by swift and radical means. Only this radical response shall elicit the awaited solution of the situation and the return to the desired state of ideal existence, or in the worst case, the resumption of normalcy. Societies in which the radical right is successful have a proclivity for perceiving the world in such a manner, and the radical right, once it has gained enough clout, may add to this feeling. The radical right achieves this result via its political strategies and its discursive products such as electoral programs.

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14 Roger Griffin, *The nature of Fascism*.

15 Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism. The sense of a beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*, (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

### 3. The Radical Right over Time

Perusing Michael Freeden's methodology<sup>16</sup>, I attempt to broadly outline the discursive-conceptual world of the Hungarian extreme right. Freeden's scheme is as follows: political language is made up of a number of voluntarily-shared key concepts, which help to make sense of an individual's perception of reality, and help him to maintain a communicative relationship with his peers. Among these, in the modern period, we can identify broad concepts (those related to politics, understood as social life) such as the state, society, and more recently, the nation. The meaning of each of these concepts is not fixed and they are in a continuous flux. This happens due to the fact that they are exposed to continuous processes of mental processing and eventual re-definition by individuals and groups. Inside any polity, communication and relationships of power are mediated by linguistic competition. Groups and individuals acquire and lose influence over the rest of society and impose their apprehension of certain terms. A grouping of such concepts in a specific manner may be defined as an ideology, according to Freeden.

Within the inter-conceptual competition, radical right wing projections of the future emerge as victorious when they succeed in convincing the public (the practitioners of the same political *langue*) of their interpretation of certain key concepts (the state, the nation, society and their organization). The specific manner in which they achieve this domination over certain parts of the public is through the mechanism of description, which is a commonality within their present and past manifestations. This mechanism is a rhetorical device, which orders the regenerative schemes according to the following scheme: past, present and future. Each of these ordering concepts is linked to a certain tonality in the positive or negative field. In the plans and programs of the extreme right this manner of thinking about their respective contexts is so widespread that it can be described as one of the main components of their ideological imagination. This distinct model of historicist philosophy is one of the main sources of identity for the adherents of the extreme right. Due to this particularism, the regenerative plans chosen for study read a little like a doctor's investigation sheet: they contain past references to health, present symptoms, and prescriptions for the patient's improvement.

The discourse of the extreme right, as related to society, attempts to convince the target audience that it is in a state of ill-being, which urgently requires correction. As we shall see, the concept of "health" versus that of "disease" are common terms within the political language of the radical right. For the moment, however, the chronological concepts shall be utilized to frame the study. The key concepts of ideology, such as the state, society and the nation (as per Freeden) shall be

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16 Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theories: a Conceptual Approach*. (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

described and analyzed according to the extreme right planners' apprehensions towards their past, present and future states.

The specific successful features of past and present regenerative national projects of the extreme right shall be presented, detailed and compared. The key concepts within these will also be analyzed utilizing the comparative method, and then contextualized, leading to a more exact definition of the extreme right today. A specific ideal-type (in Weberian terms) shall aid in the work of policy makers, providing tools for theoretical modeling and political strategy.

To this end, I briefly present three salient examples of regenerative planning from the interwar period, and compare their main features and understanding of base concepts to those of the most significant representative of the Hungarian radical right, the Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary. The sources for this comparative study are the works of Szalasi Ferenc<sup>17</sup> (and a short work of Malnasi Odon and Berzy Jozsef, based on Szalasi's writing)<sup>18</sup>, Matolcsy Matyas<sup>19</sup> and Rattkay Radich Kalman<sup>20</sup>, who may be considered the most forthright and detailed programmatic writers of their age. They were the main political ideologues between the most significant political manifestation of interwar Hungarian fascism, the Arrowcross Party. The authors from the interwar period gained significant success in the late 1930's at the head of their political formation, winning approximately a third of the votes in 1939<sup>21</sup>. Their party was the most significant opposition party in the second half of the decade, in a political system which was dominated by conservative right-wing political formations. The political climate of the past, is therefore, somewhat similar to the political climate in which Jobbik gained support, in the present.

Similarly, I use the political and electoral programs of Jobbik from their emergence in 2006 until 2010.<sup>22</sup> Jobbik is the most important representative of the Hungarian

17 Ferenc Szalasi, *A magyar állam felépítésének terve. (The plan for the construction of the Hungarian state)*, (Budapest: Királyi Magyar Egyetemi Nyomda, 1933); Ferenc Szalasi, *Út és cél. (Way and Goal)*, (Rioja (Argentina): Imprenta Mercur, 1954).

18 József Berzy, *A Hungarista Állam (The Hungarist state)*, foreword by Ödön Málnási. (Budapest: f.e., 1938)

19 Mátyás Matolcsy, *Az új földreform munkaterve (The plan for the new land reform)*, (Budapest: Révai, 1935); Mátyás Matolcsy, *Harcom a földért (My war for land)*, (Budapest: Magyarság útja, 1939); Mátyás Matolcsy, *Föld, Nép, Élet (Land, People, Life)* (Budapest: Centrum, 1941).

20 Kálmán R. Rattkay, *Modern országépítés (Modern State Building)*, (Budapest: Hajdú Dénes/Centrum, 1933)

21 István Deák, *Hungary*, in Hans Rogger and Eugen Weber, *The European right : a historical profile*, (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1974).

22 Jobbik Movement For a Better Hungary: 2010 electoral program, [database online]; available at [http://www.jobbik.hu/rovatok/egyeb/letoltheto\\_a\\_jobbik\\_ep\\_valasztasi\\_programja](http://www.jobbik.hu/rovatok/egyeb/letoltheto_a_jobbik_ep_valasztasi_programja), accessed on 2011.03.05.

radical right at the present, commanding roughly 15 to 20 percent of the Hungarian vote<sup>23</sup>. Jobbik is presently the third most significant political party in Hungary, and the second most important opposition party in the Hungarian Parliament (with 47 deputies). Their party program represent the best synthesis of the main points of Jobbik's ideology, articulates their political message, and expresses the logic behind their rhetoric. The article shall explore the possibility of a single model of reasoning behind past and present manifestations of Hungarian radical right wing ideology, as seen through these most basic forms of political communication.

The chosen texts constitute the sources for a short content analysis. The texts illustrate the possibility of conceptual and theoretical continuity between the political language of old and new, but shall also highlight discontinuities. The diachronic shifts in the political speech of the radical right might be attributed to new challenges, but also to the conceptual mutations and ruptures in the general political language and context. The continuities are due not only to the active use of the models from the past as a reference point, but also to the possible similarities between discourses across time. With historically-minded practitioners of political language, the key to the interpretation of reality, and of present-day challenges, is their association to past challenges. This model may provide a possible interpretative frame for the continuity question. Summing up, the following sections draw a comparison between the discourse of the contemporary Hungarian radical right and its historic predecessor. The findings are summarized in Table 1.

### *The Past*

The main characteristic of the past is its positive nature, with a few important exceptions. All of the expositions start off with a description of a glorious heritage, forgotten by most. This is closely linked to the term of "golden past", which is a mainstay of all linear modern apprehensions of time. The ideal quality of the past is often so axiomatic that it is only described briefly and understood as implicit. It is the constant counterpart of the description regarding the present state of affairs. The other important characteristic of these descriptions are the existence of two details: factors of decay and points of rupture within the historic heritage.

The most quirky picture of a golden past painted by the chosen authors is provided by Rattkay Radich Kalman. His apprehension starts off with an organicist, almost naturalist apprehension of society and individuals. He starts from a description of a forest provided by Austro-Hungarian botanist Raoul Heinrich France. The forest, in the words of the author "is a mixture between life and death, one providing for the other" and a world in "which each organism is forced to adapt"<sup>24</sup>. This quiet struggle

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23 Sonda-Ipsos opinion poll for December 2011, [database on-line]; available at <http://www.ipsos.hu/site/graph?type=2>, accessed on 2011.12.25.

24 Ráttkay, *Modern országepítés*, p. 13.



forms “a harmonic life” which “sacrifices freedom in exchange for harmony”. This example of the forest can be akin to that of all life, the author claims, and can provide a model for society. Indeed, he concludes, that as the forest, society is a “living organism”. The laws governing it are those of “evolution”. Rattkay uses this concept in the key of social Darwinism. The axiom of similarity to living organisms is basically flawed, as he claims the example provided by nature shows to any empiric observation. Therefore, men are not all created equal, but the concept of “difference” is crucial.

This system might seem chaotic, but Rattkay provides an alternative: a biological dialectic of struggle. This “organic” struggle provided harmony for life, and its avatars: political systems, societies and the like. Within themselves, they might be integrated, without any conflicts, generating positive evolution. The common struggle also provided progress, through continual improvement of the qualities of the competitors, inherited by generations. This mechanism, however quirky, belies the true nature of the past, as understood by the author: quiet, harmonic, ordered. When contrasted to the chaotic state of the present, it gives credence to the argument of Rattkay. This is a simple but efficient rhetoric device.

Szalasi Ferenc takes a similar view of the past, and the mechanism through which history moves forward. He speaks of three “totalities of the past”<sup>25</sup>, the military, the church and the capital. The “totalities” can be translated as regimes or modes of socio-political organization. He was also a supporter of the idea of harmony and unity, a harmony that was present in the past, but somehow lost through the generations. The fascist leader also spoke in his work about the force which developed national history, also interpreting it in a dialectical manner. Dubbing it “social nationalism”, he saw the force of community as responsible for the great moments of success in the past. The “military totality” (a sort of ideal communion between bellicose original Hungarians and their chieftains) was an overall positive occurrence, and can be a valuable lesson and parts of its value-system may still be rescued for the present, Szalasi argues. The perfect, ordered understanding, and unity of interests between the nation and its leader was the model to be followed in the future. Once central authority was weakened, certain elements and social institutions such as the church took a wrong turn. He distinguished between the political aspect of organized religion and its political undertakings, which he did not approve of. Society, he argued, should be ordered for a successful evolution, and each different individual, social category must strictly adhere to its position, not struggle with each other for power.

**Table 1: Main components of Hungarian radical discourse**

<b>Party</b>	<b>Extreme nationalism</b>	<b>Biological Racism</b>	<b>Opposition toward supranational entities</b>	<b>Desire to regenerate society/bring about radical future change</b>	<b>Past and present seen as decadent</b>	<b>Opposition toward capitalism, liberalism, leftism</b>	<b>Stance on democracy</b>	<b>Support for strong state</b>	<b>Support for law and order</b>
Interwar parties	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Negative	Yes	Yes
Jobbik	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Positive	Yes	Yes

In Matolcsy's works there is little direct reference to the golden age specifically. This, however, does not preclude the idea since it is present implicitly when he makes references to the eras following that age. In all of his works, a certain linear scheme of history is present. It starts with feudalism, identified with slavery to land, then continues with the fusion between feudalism and capitalism.<sup>26</sup> Matolcsy, building on the works of Hungarian historian Szekfu Gyula, identifies this supposed collusion of aristocratic elements and immigrant Jewry, which resulted in Hungary's backward capitalist development, in which the common Hungarian became a slave to credit and money<sup>27</sup>.

The sources and periods of decay are common in the work of all three authors: the onset of capitalism and the waves of Jewish migration to the country. The concept of capitalism frames this idea of decay, which is understood as a combination of many other terms. The loss of social and political liberties, monopolized economic interests, the onset of individualism and greed, in favor of spirituality and community spirit, the de-nationalization of the country, leading to great disasters are all common elements within their narratives. The point of no return is represented by the Trianon peace treaty, the greatest trial of the nation. It is the main and almost total point of rupture with the past.

The vision of the past of Jobbik can best be gleaned from its short 2006 electoral program, and the Bethlen Gabor Program they launched a year later, in 2007. They identify the pre-World War II era as the "period of Legal Hungarian Statality", and 1944 as the moment when it was interrupted. Their continuous references to pre-Trianon Hungary and historic Hungary when speaking of issues such as the status of the Hungarian minorities abroad seem to signify their identification of that period as the ideal state of the Hungarian society and politics. Most important are the repeated references to the interwar period. The interwar period is seen as a time of great trials and tribulations, on the one hand; on the other hand, however, the Horthy era is seen as a moral highpoint, an ordered period, and a time when the interests of the community perfectly coincided with those of the leading elites. Society marched in an orderly manner toward the goals of social peace, harmony and the reunification of the community, crucified at Trianon.

The Bethlen Gabor program quotes 1930's culture minister Klebelsberg Khuno, and it asks for symbolic acknowledgment of right-wing figures from the same period by giving them statues: Horthy Miklos, Teleki Pal, Wass Albert and Prohaszka Ottokar. Their view of history can also be gleaned by their demand that an institute for history of ancient Hungarian history on the thesis of Hun-Avar-Hungarian continuity be founded. The programs interpret key moments in history such as 1918, 1945 and

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26 Matolcsy, *Föld, Nép, Élet*, 5.

27 Matolcsy, *Harc a földért*, 57-60.

1990 (which “did not bring the changes the regime change promised<sup>28</sup>”) in the same negative manner, as episodes of the continuous decay of Hungarian society and authority. They also represent periodic points of rupture with tradition, signals of the radicalization of the status of society.

### *The Present*

A quote from Jobbik’s eponymous program from 2007 illustrates the interpretation given by the thinkers of the party for the present situation of their country and society:

Bethlen Gabor, faced by a country broken into three parts, Turkish dependency, and a blood-soaked international scene, still managed to create a Transylvanian Principality, important on the political scene, flowering on the economic, social and cultural fields, significant Europe-wide...This is why we chose Bethlen Gabor as our heavenly guardian.<sup>29</sup>

The present is identified as “the last twenty years”, forming a category in the party’s 2010 electoral program. This category is used as a rhetoric tool, as a frame of negative reference, the backdrop against the party made its recommendations. There are two corresponding concepts to present and to possible future: to the former, chaos, and the latter, order.

The state is seen as an impotent actor, not fulfilling many of its primary roles, which are primarily paternalistic: job creation, social security, social justice, combating corruption, responsibilities for the Hungarian minorities abroad. The concept of the state in the program is a body to be “active and strong<sup>30</sup>”. The meaning of these terms is apparent, when the program refers to the sphere of economics. The role of the state is fostering and protective, in front of an European and international community bent on globalization, profit, and crushing the strongholds of the national economy. The concept of a strong state is pinned and only makes sense in a nexus of concepts. The other three members of this nexus of concepts are danger, security and self-identity of the community. The concept of danger is embodied by the international community, here in its menacing economic facet, but also by internal weakness, which is a cause of outside influence. The concept of security is

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28 Jobbik Movement For a Better Hungary: 2006 electoral program, [database on-line]; available at [http://www.jobbik.hu/rovatok/egyeb/a\\_jobbik\\_2006-os\\_rovid\\_programja](http://www.jobbik.hu/rovatok/egyeb/a_jobbik_2006-os_rovid_programja), last accessed on April 21, 2012.

29 Jobbik, Bethlen Gabor Program, Foreword, [database on-line]; available at [http://www.jobbik.hu/sites/jobbik.hu/down/File/Bethlen\\_Gabor\\_program.pdf](http://www.jobbik.hu/sites/jobbik.hu/down/File/Bethlen_Gabor_program.pdf), last accessed on April 21, 2012.

30 Jobbik 2010 program, 8-9, [database on-line]; available at <http://www.jobbik.hu/sites/jobbik.hu/down/Jobbik-program2010OGY.pdf>, last accessed on September 5, 2011.

personified by the projection of a strong state, protective of its society, and countering the nocent influences of the outside world. The community and its identity represent the assets that are the subject of protection by the state, in danger from the outsiders<sup>31</sup>. They form the object of competition, a competition which if lost, in Jobbik's interpretation, will mean the extinguishing of the community itself. This joining of concepts, in this particular interpretation, come together to form an image of community akin to a besieged castle. The terms come together as an allegory, and repeat themselves throughout the texts, no matter the actual subject.

The role of the state as the main agent and vector of action is seen in the particular interpretation of society of Jobbik. One of the main roles of the state is to regulate society. The mechanisms of this regulation are social reforms, social protection, community protection and restoring order. This can be seen in the lofty title of the 2010 program, called "Radical Change. Jobbik's parliamentary election program for national self-determination and social justice"<sup>32</sup>. The concept of self-determination I shall leave for the discussion about the international community. The concept of social justice is understood primarily as a restoration of normalcy. This normal situation is understood in two ways: as the elimination of elements of present chaos but also addition of elements to build on the new order. The addition of new elements shall be left to the discussion about the future. The elements causing disorder and their elimination, however, regard the apprehension of the present as such. The main concept associated with this is corruption<sup>33</sup>. Corruption has, in Jobbik's vision, invaded all tiers of state and society, and their modes of interaction (i.e. politics). Therefore, in all its main points, the program mentions the problem of corruption, as the main obstacle in front of a "better future". This corruption causes society to be unequal, unjust and weak. The symptoms of this injustice are the disproportionate means of those in power vis-à-vis the have-nots. Unemployment, a lack of job security, and the exploitation of employed workers<sup>34</sup> are areas in which society must improve through a more active regulation of this sector via the state. The role of the state in creating jobs is important, but it must also to oblige all to work.

The concept of handouts and aids is associated with that of a weak society, and a welfare state, which Jobbik clearly opposes. This already refers to the other problem of society and the state, which causes corruption: a systemic unbalance. The problem is caused by the socio-economic organization of state and society. The modes of organization of these are identified by Jobbik through two concepts,

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31        *Ibid.*, 6.

32        *Ibid.*

33        *Ibid.*, 66.

34        *Ibid.*, 5.

capitalism<sup>35</sup> and (neo)liberalism<sup>36</sup>. The apprehension towards these two are that they are the manifestation of the same phenomena, the first of its economic aspect and the second its socio-political aspect. The two are identified as being based on the same basic principle: individualism and greed. Since they are such identified, they breed corruption into the system of state, laws, and the community as such. They are the disease<sup>37</sup> that must be eliminated. The lack of physical security they cause (corruption, crime<sup>38</sup> and “gypsy criminality”) are a clear indicator of this.

The interwar figures of the extreme right were thinking in very similar terms. In the works of all the three authors chosen for study we can find the same interpretation of the relationship between state, society, economics, culture and their problems. Most strikingly, the concepts employed for ascribing guilt and identifying the symptoms of the ailment besetting state and society are the same. They are the twin demons of capitalism and liberalism. To these, interwar political thinkers add another element, communism (sometimes referred to as Marxism). This last element is not present in the contemporary repository of menaces described by Jobbik, but it can be found in its attitude towards the legacy of the recent past, where numerous references are made to communism<sup>39</sup>, and also its understanding of the present day left-wing liberals.

The apprehension towards the liberal and capitalist present was overtly negative. The core of criticism directed against both had to do with what was perceived as the nucleus of the two: the definition of human nature in materialistic and not “spiritual” terms<sup>40</sup>. Marxism (or communism, the terms being interchangeable in the political language of the interwar extreme right) is blamed for the same reason. The extreme right of the 1930’s defined man through his role in the community he was born into, and defined this community on the basis of the concept of the nation. The state itself was understood as the expression of the political will of the nation, while the community was equated with the nation. Social categories, political institutions, economics were all supposed to be ordered to best serve the interests, the survival and the thriving of the national community. The liberal and capitalist present was therefore criticized not only for the lack of efficiency in doing so, but also because it was perceived as working consciously against these ends. One of the main reasons for not fulfilling the needs of the nation was the lack of care for the common man. Szalasi Ferenc, in his programmatic works, argues that “in the greatest period of overproduction, how could the greatest misery set in”, and follows up with: “the

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35        *Ibid.*, 8.

36        *Ibid.*, 5.

37        *Ibid.*, 48.

38        *Ibid.*, 64.

39        *Ibid.*, 46, 48, 78, 86.

40        *Nemzet Szava*, nr. 76, November 3, 1932, 2-3; paper owned by Mesko Zoltan, interwar fascist figure close to Rattkay and the others mentioned in the text.

level of maturity of the economic vision of the liberal and capitalist system... is not greater than that of an old peasant hoarding his hard-earned money<sup>41</sup>". Also, he says about the Hungarian state and administration that: "the system and composition of the present small Hungary cannot tackle oncoming problems,...because it is based on a number of tenets that have outgrown their leases of life...<sup>42</sup>".

Rattkay R. Kalman is even more manifest in his repudiation of liberal capitalism, saying:

The ethics of the man of the now-concluding system of liberal individualism was an individualist ethic, its motto being: I owe responsibility only to my own conscience. The ethics of the man of the new society should be social ethics, with the following motto: I am responsible toward the community at my every step [*in life n.a.*].<sup>43</sup>

The social exploitation of the disenfranchised classes and the lack of adequate protection is most present in Matolcsy Matyas' works. Practically all of his oeuvre is dedicated to detailing this problem, and proposing radical means to correct it. His 1935 book, entitled *The Plan for a New Land Reform*, includes:

in the past...there was very little obstacle in the economic activity of man. This was the system of economic capitalism<sup>44</sup>.."

...there has been very little done in order to improve the living conditions of the agrarian work force...if we have the opportunity to lift the millions of have-nots into the status of valuable members of the nation, it must be done, even if we must sacrifice much...<sup>45</sup>

today, we see that every man is not only an individual, but beyond the individual, he is the cell of the nation and the race. And we believe that outside his personal life, within the living organism of the nation, man has a set of greater responsibilities.<sup>46</sup>

That was the direction toward which Matolcsy sought to steer his state and society, still under the grip of the vices of the recent past. The exploitation of the peasantry was his case-study for proving that the present society was dysfunctional. In the works of all of the authors above, we may observe the same allegoric duality: the present state of society, economics et cetera equaled disorder. This was due to the very nature of the organization, which was thought of as having structural problems,

41 Ferenc Szalasi, *A magyar állam felepitesenek terve*, 12.

42 Ferenc Szalasi, *Cel es kovetelesek* (Budapest: Magyar Egyetemi Nyomda, 1935), 15.

43 Ráttkay, *Modern Orszagepites*, 14.

44 Matolcsy, *Az uj foldreform munkaterve*, 9.

45 Ibid., 12.

46 Ibid., 13.

being based on an incorrect definition of the nature and purposes of man, society and its avatars (the state, its institutions). The lack of order and logic are symptoms of this ailment, as is the bad treatment of those who form the backbone of society: the common individuals. These are all elements of political speech, organized in a particular logic, which are common to both present and past manifestations of the Hungarian extreme right ideology. Both share the same view of the present, expressed through a common rhetoric apparatus. The image projected is one comprised of lack of security for the common man (exposed to both physical dangers and exploitation), a chaotic and rapacious administration, and a lack of vision and direction from those in power.

*The Geopolitical Context and the International Community*

“In the case of a Jobbik success at the polls, the party will enact the withdrawal of the country from the European Union, through plebiscites” the 2006 party program reads. Since then, the Jobbik has become the third largest Hungarian party in the European Parliament, and has joined the Euro-skeptic group. As the national community represents the source of identity for the radical right in the past and in the present, similarly, the international community served and serves as one of the main points of negative reference. This is one of the important aspects of the contemporary *weltanschauung* of the Hungarian extreme right.

The localization of this community in the mental map of the radical right-wingers was and is primarily Europe. The negative apprehension of the European community was embodied in the interwar period by the Versailles system. Its association with the tragedy of the Hungarian national community was straightforward, and the duality of Hungary’s reluctant participation to this system was not lost on the public, whose negative apprehension of this system was actively cultivated. The main characteristics of the international (mostly European) community were its opposition with national interest, its support of big business and financial interest that were seen to be crippling the Hungarians. Its association with conspiratorial elements was prevalent, and its links to anti-Semitic sentiment commonplace. An alternative vision of this community emerged in the late 1930’s, as Hitler’s New World Order began to gain strength. It pushed forward a diametrically opposed vision of Europe, based on national empowerment (only of certain nations, chosen for their leadership qualities), and German geopolitical interests, which most thinkers accepted. Szalasi however, was more bold in his schemes and imagined a racial buildup of the European order in which a “connationalist” organization would rule, and Hungary would be one of the leaders.

The place that the Versailles system and the League of Nations occupied in the past, is presently taken up by the European Union and NATO. While the relationship toward the latter is ambiguous, the opposition toward the EU is outspoken. A new



concept has also entered the political speech of the Jobbik, a term transferred from the west: globalization. Globalization is an umbrella-term connoting foreign financial interest, the fight against multi-national corporations of the nation, political interests foreign to domestic ones. The exploitation suffered by the populous internally, by banks and financial interests, is the counterpart of the exploitation of the country by international interests, which do not coincide with its own. One of Jobbik's declared goals is to decouple Hungary from the EU, or to transform Hungarian EU membership into a solely economics focussed membership and remove all governing political institutions, which are considered as subjugating national governments. The alternative vision of Jobbik is "the Europe of Nations", which would be based on "flexible cooperation between nations" and respect towards national sovereignty, the breaking of international political and financial trusts, all based on the concept of self-determination of all nations.

### *The Future*

An important aspect of the vision of future projected by the extreme right is its duality. This is in close relation to the aforementioned concept of a liminoid status. The future is broken up into two, mutually exclusive, alternate avenues: glory and destruction. The two concepts exist in a symbiotic relationship within the respective works of the authors, and serve apolitical mobilization function. The glorious signifies and supports the positive aspect of a liminoid existence: future outcomes are already set in stone and must happen according to the "scientific" rules of progress outlined in the historical dialectic described when dealing with the past. According to these, the extreme right mode of existence shall prevail due to the needs of the people and their desires. This desire and will to act, however, is the deciding factor in the destruction concept, too. Contradicting the vision of the first, it is more implicit, and not outspoken. It circumvents the triumphal vision, and within the same historical mode of thinking, it does not support a linear path of progress but instead shows a possible loop backtowards the present. The present and the recent past serve as proof of where symptoms of degeneration may lead, and its unsavory details may furnish clues toward where it may be headed. The scheme is thus entirely contingent on immediate, radical and voluntary action. However irrational this model seems, its functionality is high, the proof being the popularity of the movements supporting it.

For this reason the changes have two basic tenets: they must be radical and swift. Rattkay Kalman writes in his book, *Modern State Building*:

in conclusion, all signs point toward the fact that the treatment of symptoms is not enough anymore and the cancer is eating away at the body and soul of the national organism. Therefore, the whole structure of the diseased body must be changed.

Szalasi's 1935 book, *The way and the goal*, reads:

The Party of National Will<sup>47</sup>...believes that the only the realization of it's the work plan and the constitution it elaborated, and the swift, structured application of them into the day-to-day life of the state can secure the well-being, harmonic life and the survival of the Peoples of the Ancient Lands.<sup>48</sup>

The alternate vision of the future can be found in his description of the present state of affairs in the capitalist economic field in his 1933 work, *The plan for rebuilding the Hungarian state*:

The end result of this sort of behavior can be only one: the loss of the battle. A humiliating defeat. Utter extermination.<sup>49</sup>

Similarly, the key-words in Jobbik's programs for a better Hungary can be gleaned from the title of their 2010 electoral program, entitled *Radical Change*. On page 6, Jobbik politician Morvai Krisztina announces:

We Hungarian People want change here and now. Radical, efficient change. A better life, a better future. This... will come if we Hungarians demand it for ourselves...And we have now a historic chance to do so...The moment has come! We have to prepare for radical, drastic change. This spring we can make a fate-changing decision.

The program goes on to describe various issues, being structured on the aforementioned structure of comparison between the categories of "the last 20 years" and "the better future". This duality has an inbuilt meaning: the "better future" shall come about only if the voter chooses to opt for it. Morvai's statements help us to further elaborate the logic of these texts. The change which may come about is radical, and drastic, as she has stated. However, the change will come about only if voluntary action is taken toward achieving it. It is based on a *decision*, and can *change a fate*, something which one usually assumes is inherently set in stone. On the other hand, the opportunity is *historic*, so the decision may in part be regarded as coming about naturally, according to some pre-determined set of rules governing history. In the interwar period, Szalasi and Rattkay both described the era of liberalism and capitalism as "not being apt for the present conditions<sup>50</sup>" and "belonging to an age that was coming to an end<sup>51</sup>". But at the same time, they agitated and laid out elaborate arguments for why their visions of the future were superior. The built-in duality, therefore, is another common trait.

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47 The name of Szalasi Ferenc's first political party.

48 Szalasi, *Út és cél*, 5.

49 Szalasi, *A magyar állam felépítésének terve*, 12.

50 Szalasi, *Cél es követelések*, 15.

51 Ráttkay, *Modern Országepítés*, 19.

In all three cases, the first chapter in the program is dedicated to the renovation of the state, which was seen as the primary agent of problem-solving. The nature of change to the superstructure of the state was to be swift and drastic and involving revolutionary changes. The state in the past, suggest all three works, was both an expression of the will of the people of which it is composed but also that of the nation. The concept of statality and that of the nation are inextricably bound together, in a classical 19<sup>th</sup> century construct, however the introduction of the state as an expression of popular will (though not in the democratic sense) was a new edition. The arguments for this ideal model were historical in nature and each of these works featured mostly the same historical dialectic. The high point of Hungarian power and its glorious achievements were associated with strong leaders, who all had a special affinity toward the people they were leading. The historic heroes such as the kings Arpad and Matyas were all shown directly leading their people, strictly controlling through though measures and reforms all aspects of life, and cutting out the middlemen such as bureaucrats or the aristocracy.

Against this backdrop, the radical planners projected an alternative vision. The main courses of action were inspired by Italy and Germany: the already-mentioned strengthening of central power, the bolstering of it through a corporatist parliament, and constitutional reform (in concord with the teachings of the Holy Crown). This strengthened state and its leader, the expressions of the will of the people and the nation, would enact swift and calculated reforms, which would renovate society through economics and politics. The idea of popular will is present, but also there is an underlying idea that the people are not wise enough to govern themselves (therefore, the leadership motif). Another idea buried between the lines is that of social justice enacted for the people, but not by them. The projections of harmony and concord, of national purity and sense of communal purpose are in stark contrast to the vision of the decomposing present shown beforehand.

With close analysis we can reveal the same directing ideas in the three Jobbik-programs of the last five years. Although the details of the programs are not congruent, we may observe a style of argumentation which is analogous. The argument also rests on a historicist basis; indeed, history being the main source for its legitimacy. Jobbik solutions for the perceived crisis also contain the same motifs as those of the interwar period: swiftness, preciseness, all under the agency of the state. The state is seen as the expression of the nation, and the idea of popular will, of grassroots activism is particularly strong in the case of the Movement for a Better Hungary, owing to its roots as a civil organization. For example, Jobbik also proposed a new constitutional order in its programs in 2006, 2010 and in its Bethlen-program. The details are hazy but they are not important for our analysis. The directing idea is that of re-establishment of order, by the state, mandated by the people. Jobbik proposed many of its measures to be adopted by plebiscite. The changes would affect all spheres of society from the economic (here the very strong

idea of social justice is present), to culture and the environment. The duality of choice between decay and rejuvenation is self-understood, and also the idea of a liminoid status ("The new power" slogan). The contrast between the glory of the past, the decay of the present and the possible semblance of glory of the future complete this triadic nexus.

The most significant feature and similarity of these texts, beyond their myriad differences, is the common mental logic which governs them. The structure of the exposition also shows continuity. Another common trait is their shared bestiary, the record of enemies which has changed very little over time. They identify the same problem-areas and prescribe similar treatments. Therefore, one may conclude they are the product of similar historic contexts, and analogous political-linguistic milieus. This familiarity may be one of the reasons of their success, in contexts where a segment of the public still responds well to embedded, familiar modes of political argumentation.

#### **4. Conclusions**

This article compared the discourse of the contemporary Hungarian radical right and its historic correspondents. It did so by identifying some of their main arguments. The parties have a common stance (as derived from their programs) on six of the eight larger themes that have been isolated in their discourse. This shows a clear pattern of continuity between them, and gives positive support to the thesis of an existing general theorem by which the radical right may be defined.

Moreover, the analysis illustrates that the themes are not only common, but have a similar logic in which they are combined. The discursive goals of the radical right in Hungary may be decanted to the following ideal-type construct: a radical understanding of the three concepts of past, present and future. The description of these concepts, as seen above, is fashioned to best serve the political interests of the radical right. The radical right discourse works by engendering a certain amount of fear (or capitalizing on already existing fear) within the individual members of society as towards their security and future. It attempts to push their identities and self-perceptions toward a liminoid status by enumerating the dangers of the existing situation, and offering a viable alternative. It achieves this not only by making reference to an ideal projection of the future but to a similarly-narrated past. It capitalizes (and attempts to further develop) on national-historical understandings of self and identity, which serve to buttress the linear logic of its argument. This ideal type construction, if identified in other countries and periods, may serve to explain some of the reasons of the success of radical right wing political discourses in certain European contexts.

The article proposes a different approach to the study of radical right wing ideologies. Namely, it draws on the diachronic method of historical studies. This comparative approach reveals important trends in radical right wing political thought, and moves toward establishing an ideal-type of it. The confines of this study have to do, of course, with its limitations to one case-study, that of Hungary in the interwar period and in the present. However, it may serve as an model for a larger comparative study, which could possibly compare cases not only in time, but in space as well. A collection of similar articles on a regional, or European level could perhaps check the validity of this study's findings.

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