



**DEPARTMENT OF BALKAN, SLAVIC AND ORIENTAL
STUDIES**

UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM

DISSERTATION

***THE NEW FAR RIGHT IN CENTRAL EUROPE:
AUSTRIA, POLAND, HUNGARY, SLOVAKIA, CZECH REPUBLIC***



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Thessaloniki, September 2021

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1. Abstract

The 1990s were a period of resurgence of far-right ideas in Central Europe. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of Communism confirmed the transition of the Central European states to the principles of free market and the adoption of Western liberal ideology. The political and economic problems that arose from the transition process and the re-emergence of deep-rooted prejudices and intolerance against anyone unfamiliar to the nation, the “Others” as they called, gave the far-right parties the impetus to penetrate society and to achieve significant electoral success within a few years. This dissertation will attempt to examine the far-right parties that have entered the parliaments of Austria, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic since 1990. Specifically, the history of the parties, their electoral performance, the reasons that contributed to their success, their ideology and finally their leadership will be analyzed in a comparative way.

2. Introduction

The gradual fall of the Iron Curtain ended a long period of communist leadership in the states of Poland, Hungary and then-Czechoslovakia. The restoration of the democratic institutions and the rise of liberalism gave the far-right parties- which until then had been excluded from politics- the opportunity to emerge and to, consequently, enter state parliaments. The case of Austria is different, because communism did not prevail after the war and the Allies created a democratic party system. Thus, the far-right appeared much earlier in Austria than in other countries. Until the end of 1980, however, its electoral performance remained insignificant.

Apart from the chronological differences, the far right made progress in all five countries around the same period, during the 1990s. The decades that followed brought even greater electoral success to the far-right party family. Indicatively, we can mention the FPÖ (Freedom Party of Austria), which is the most successful far-right party after receiving 26.91% of the vote in the 1999 parliamentary elections, making it the second largest party in Austria. Jobbik (Movement for a Better Hungary) follows in similar success rates, when in the 2014 parliamentary elections in Hungary it received 20.22%

of the votes. In the rest of the countries, the percentages of the far-right parties are remarkable too, but they will be mentioned in more detail in the following sections.

The primary aim of this paper is to address the reasons why far-right parties have succeeded in Central European politics, to analyze their electoral strategies and their ideological profile and to give a view about their leading figures. More specifically, this research will focus on the following parties: *Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ)* of Austria, *League of Polish Families (LPR)* of Poland, *Kotleba-People's Party Our Slovakia (KLSNS)* of Slovakia, *Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik)* of Hungary as well as the *Freedom and Direct Democracy Party (SPD)* of the Czech Republic.

2.1. *Defining the new far right*

Starting the study, the main concern is to provide an overall definition of the far right. The far right is therefore defined as any ideology, political action plan, political current and party organization located in the right-wing part of the horizontal axis of the Left-Right. (Hainsworth & Georgiadou, 2004:13-14). In the literature, several terms are used to characterize the far right, with the main ones being *extreme right* and *radical right*. However, there is no commonly accepted definition in the scientific community, creating a confusion between the two terms.

The predominant definition comes from the German tradition, where the terms radicalism and extremism are used to describe a certain view vis-à-vis democracy. Radicalism is *verfassungswidrig* (opposed to the constitution), whereas extremism is *verfassungsfeindlich* (hostile towards the constitution). The extremist parties are extensively watched by the state and can even be banned, whereas radical parties are free from this control (Cas Mudde, 2000:12). Thus, it is understood that the radical right accepts democratic institutions while the extreme right is hostile to them (Hainsworth & Georgiadou, 2004:14). In practice, this categorization involves some difficulties. For example, once a party enters parliament it does not necessarily mean that it is becoming moderate, eliminating its extremist character, nor that it accepts democratic rules, but in fact acts within the limits of those rules. In addition, a moderate party may show extremist tendencies even years after presence in parliament. Therefore, in this research

the general term *far right* will be used, because it describes both categories of parties (extreme, radical) at the same time and it can cover any conceptual skepticism.

Before proceeding to the description of the ideology of the extreme right, one more element needs to be clarified. Why is it characterized as the "new" extreme right?

According to Georgiadou (2004), the appearance of the far right is divided into 3 "waves":

- The "first wave" concerns the far right, which was associated with fascist movements in the 1920s and 1930s,
- The "second wave" concerns the far right of the post-industrial era that emerged in the 1970s influenced by "the new politics",
- The "third wave" concerns a newer version of the far right that emerged in the 1990s, the so-called "new" far right and the most successful one in electoral terms. (Hainsworth & Georgiadou, 2004:111).

Therefore, the present analysis studies the far right developed during the "third wave" and beyond.

2.2. *Far right ideology*

Party Ideology defined as “a body of normative or normative-related ideas about the nature of man and society as well as the organization and purposes of society” (Mudde, 2000:19). The ideology of the parties is usually made known through their electoral programs because the programs are the effort of the party administration. Thus, in the far-right parties, the ideology and the electoral program are identical (Mudde, 2000:167).

According to Cas Mudde's typology (2000:169-177. 2007:22-23), the ideology of far-right parties consists of the following elements:

Nationalism: The state (the political unit) and nation (the cultural unit) should be in relevance,

Xenophobia: Everything foreign is considered as “alien” and hostile to the nation, such as refugees, immigrants, minorities and homosexuals within the state. This feature includes *racism* and *anti-Semitism*,

Welfare Chauvinism: Socioeconomic policy and social (welfare) benefits should be provided only to the people of the nation, the “own group”,

Nativism: The states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group (“the nation”) and that nonnative elements (persons and ideas) are threatening to the homogenous nation-state,

Authoritarianism: The belief in a strictly society in which encroach of authority are to be punished severely. Authoritarianism includes beliefs to *law and order*,

Populism: The society is divided into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, “the pure people” versus “the corrupt elite” and politics should be an expression of the general will of the people.

3. Rise of Far Right

After the end of World War II, Austria remained under Allied occupation until 1955, when the withdrawal of Allied troops was agreed creating the Second Austrian Republic (Hainsworth & Georgiadou, 2004:111). Before their departure, the Allies created a dipole of forces in Austrian politics. On the one hand the SPÖ (Social Democratic Party of Austria) where all the social democratic movements gathered, and on the other the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) where all the right, conservative and clerical movements gathered (Wodak & Rheindorf, 2019:173). But in Austrian society there was still a group that was not assimilated by any of the abovementioned political forces, the national camp (Lager) which consisted of liberals, nationalists and

supporters of Pan-Germanism. The connection between Pan-Germanism and admiration for the Nazi past was inevitable.

The Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) was founded in 1956 as the mouthpiece of National Camp, by former SS officer and member of the Austrian Nazi Party (DNSAP) Anton Reinthaller. The FPÖ had been set up from the beginning as a German nationalist party and was soon accused of being attracted to National Socialism. The next leaders attempted many times to turn FPÖ into a liberal party and the decisive turn towards liberal ideas took place in 1980 when Norbert Steger took the lead (Ignazi, 2003:111-112). In 1983 a coalition government was formed between the SPÖ and the FPÖ but collapsed due to divisions in the latter. This gave Jörg Haider the opportunity to take over the leadership of the party in 1986. Haider was a populist and had formed his career in the far right wing of the FPÖ. Since he took over the leadership of the party, a shift in nationalist, nativist views took place. With his arrival the party began to be characterized again as far-right, something that became apparent from the expulsion of the FPÖ from Liberal International in 1993 (Mudde, 2000:9). The period when the FPÖ took a more moderate ideological direction began with the departure of Haider from the party and even more with the arrival of Heinz-Christian Strache in its presidency in 2005.

In contrast with Austria, in the Visegrad countries (Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia) the post-war political scene dominated by communist parties. The presence of the Red Army and the rapid Sovietization that imposed, did not give far-right any chance to thrive before the regime change.

In Poland, emerged far-right groups imbued with anti-Semitic and anti-German sentiments, yet they had very little involvement and remained on the fringe outside the political scene. One party that put itself on the far right and managed to enter parliament was the KPN (Confederation for an Independent Poland) in the 1991 elections, but after 1992 it became more moderate and moved away from extreme actions. The forerunner of the Polish far-right in 2000's was the founding of Radio Maryja in 1992, a nationalist-catholic radio station created by Father Tadeusz Rydzyk. With more than 1.5 million listeners, Radio Maryja participated in political discourse with anti-Semitic or patriarchal broadcasts, promoting itself as the "Catholic Voice", a refuge for all those who have been rejected or disillusioned by liberal social reality. In fact, it interpreted

the world with a Manichaeistic view of good and evil, where "evil" is represented by liberals and social democrats, while "good" is represented by Christian values. The Catholic Church moved away from Radio Maryja and its activities from early on (Ramet, 1999:100-101, Pytlas, 2009:8, Mudde, 2005:156).

The most successful far-right party in Poland was the League of Polish Families (LPR). The LPR was founded in 2001, a few months before the September parliamentary elections, and was a combination of far-right groups led by Father Tadeusz Rydzyk. The leader of the LPR was Roman Giertych. The LPR was joined by most members of the historic National Party (SN), which was reactivated in 1990 but had no electoral success and disbanded in 2001 (Pankowski, 2010:111-112). The All-Polish Youth (MW) was at the core of the LPR extremist action. MW was a nationalist-catholic youth organization, active in the interwar period under the same name, and it was incarnated by Roman Giertych in 1989. MW continued the tradition of violence and anti-Semitism while being supported by Radio Maryja and through the latter the skinhead members of MW promoted their far-right music (Mudde, 2005:154). As Pankowski (2010:113) points out:

“At the time, the LPR seemed a well-oiled political machine, with a double strategy vaguely reminiscent of historical fascist movements: on the one hand, it used the parliament as a platform to denounce the system; on the other hand, the MW strong-arm squads intimidated opponents and sought to physically dominate public spaces”.

LPR, with its dual nature, remained active until 2007.

In the 1990s, the Hungarian far right was represented by Istvan Csurka (Fabry, 2015:12). Csurka was one of the founding members of the Magyar Democratic Forum (MDF) reformers and its vice-president, but due to his extremist views he was ousted from the party in 1993 and founded his own, the far-right Hungarian Justice and Life Party (MIÉP). Although MIÉP promoted ultranationalist, anti-Semitic and strongly anti-communist rhetoric (Fabry, 2015:13), it did not carry out extremist actions. It ran in all electoral processes, from 1994 to 2018, but the only time it won representation in parliament was in the 1998 elections where it won 5.47% and 14 seats.

The far right remained on the fringe until 2014 when Jobbik scored one of the biggest electoral successes among Central European countries.

Jobbik was founded in 1999 by a group of nationalist-conservative students at Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), called the Right-Wing Youth Association, Jobbik (Filotheou, 2016:18). The Socialists' dominance and MIÉP's failure to cross the threshold of 5% in the 2002 elections pushed Jobbik to become a party. And so it was, since it officially registered as a political party in October 2003 and was renamed Jobbik- Movement for A Better Hungary (Fabry, 2015:14). Due to organizational problems, Jobbik was unable to run in any elections until 2006. However, since September of the same year, everything has changed, due to the revelation of Ószöd speech made by the then Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany (Filotheou, 2016:18). Mass demonstrations followed in Budapest, led by Jobbik supporters, and widespread public frustration led to the support of the far right. Jobbik's success in the next election was unprecedented.

Jobbik also owned a paramilitary unit, the Hungarian Guard (Magyar Garda). This organization was founded in the aftermath of the demonstrations that followed after Ószöd speech in 2006, as "safeguard Hungarian culture and traditions".¹ Members of the Hungarian Guard wore military uniforms similar to those of members of the Arrow Cross Party, inspired by the German Nazi Party (NSDAP) while attacking Hungary's ethnic minorities, mainly in Roma settlements. In 2009 the organization was accused of neo-fascist tendencies and in it was dissolved by a court decision. However, its formal dissolution was upheld by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in 2013 due to the inability of Hungarian governments to enforce the decision (Filotheou, 2016:25).

In Slovakia, the best-known far-right party was the Slovak National Party (SNS), founded in 1989 and claiming to be affiliated with the historical SNS, which was politically active from 1871 to 1938. At first the SNS was a strongly anti-Czech party, rejecting the Federal State and seeking the full independence of Slovakia. Following the Velvet Split in 1993 and the break-up of Czechoslovakia, anti-Czech sentiment in the SNS was replaced by hostility towards the Hungarian and Roma minorities. Although the SNS discourse combines xenophobia, populism and nationalism, it was not seen as an extremist-fascist party and extreme positions were moderate. The party's presence in the Slovak parliament also contributed to it (Ramet,

¹ ["Gabor Vona"](#), *Counter Extremism Project*

1999:116-118). That is why today the SNS belongs to the right-wing conservative-nationalist parties and not to the far right.

The far right remained inactive for many years, until 2016 when Marian Kotleba's neo-fascist KL'SNS entered parliament.

The history of the Kotlebists - People's Party Our Slovakia (KL'SNS) dates back to 1995 with the founding of the SP movement (Slovak Togetherness). The SP registered with the Ministry of the Interior as a civic association and was the source of the far right in Slovakia, leading the protests against the 1999 bombing of Yugoslavia by NATO. Also in 2003 some of the SP members marched wearing black uniforms, the same style as those worn by the Hlinka Guard, the paramilitary wing of the clerical-fascist Slovak Peoples Party during World War II (Mudde, 2005:201). Marian Kotleba joined the SP in 2003 and in 2005 the SP merged with the National Party (NS), with the sole purpose of running in elections as an official party (Paulovicova, 2020:183). However, in 2006 the SP-NS led by Kotleba was expelled from the Supreme Court because of its anti-democratic and neo-Nazi background (Nociar, 2012:4). Due to the failure of the SP-NS to return, Kotleba decided to form the Our Slovakia Party, that in order to become an official political party merged with the existing Party of Friends of Wine and in 2010 was renamed the People's Party Our Slovakia-L'SNS (Nociar, 2012:4). Following a name change in 2019, the party was renamed Kotlebists - People's Party Our Slovakia (KL'SNS). The party at the beginning of its course did not receive much support, remaining marginal and began to relax the identification and hide its admiration for Nazism. The first thing was to stop dressing in Hlinka Guard uniforms. Paulovicova (2020:186) argues:

"The dark blue uniforms with a double-cross on armbands that the members of the earlier Slovak Togetherness movement, the forerunner of today's L'SNS were proudly wearing were very similar."

The second thing the party did was to change the logo of the double cross which was the same as that of the Slovak People's Party (SL'S) as well as the signature of the puppet-state that collaborated with the Nazis during the war (Paulovicova, 2020:187). These actions combined with other factors that will be explained below allowed KL'SNS to achieve significant electoral success in 2016.

As in Slovakia, so in the Czech Republic (which until 1993 was in a single state, Czechoslovakia) the first far-right groups emerged from 1990 onwards. Specifically, in 1989 the Rally for the Republic - Republican Party of Czechoslovakia (SPR – RSČ) was founded and in 1990 it managed to register as an official party. SPR-RSČ ideologically promoted strong anti-communism, antiestablishment declarations, nationalism combined with anti-German sentiments, as well as racism after expressing hostility towards the Roma (Hanley, 2012:1-7). The party entered parliament twice, in the 1992 and 1996 elections, but failed in the 1998 snap elections and has since been left on the sidelines. The treatment of SPR-RSČ as an extremist party by the other ruling parties seems to have contributed to this failure, offering it no coalition opportunity at national and local level (Hanley, 2012:18).

For a long time, the far right remained on the fringes of the Czech political scene. However, in 2013 this situation ended and far-right ideas were revived thanks to one person, Tomio Okamura. Okamura founded the Dawn of Direct Democracy and led the party to parliament in that year's election with 6.88% and 14 seats. However, due to internal party disputes, he left Dawn and in May 2015 founded the Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD). The ideological difference between the SPD and Dawn lies in the fact that the former rushed to take advantage of the refugee crisis that began right after its founding (Heath, 2017:22-24). The SPD has enjoyed great support since its inception, due to the charisma of its leader.

4. Ideology

4.1. Xenophobia – Racism

The first ideological element displayed by all the parties that concern us is xenophobia and racism, which is expressed in hatred towards immigrants, refugees (mainly Muslims) and the Roma and Jewish minorities within the countries.

In Austria, after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, a mass exodus began that directly affected the Austrian state. The number of asylum seekers in 1986 was 8 thousand while in 1991 it increased to 27 thousand. The FPÖ taking advantage of the growing crime and suspicion of the population towards foreigners, made immigration

a priority of its policy (Ignazi, 2003:118). Haider launched xenophobic campaigns in 1992, with the "Austria First" Petition calling on the government to enact stricter laws against foreigners flocking to the country and taking over residents' jobs. For the submission of an official request 1 million signatures had to be collected but Haider collected only 416 thousand and the efforts failed miserably (Hainsworth & Georgiadou, 2004:129). The FPÖ promoted anti-Semitism too. Austrian society was generally steeped in anti-Semitic views. In the 1980s only 20% of the population was free of anti-Semitism (Ignazi, 2003:118). Usually in the FPÖ, anti-Semitism was expressed either by the Holocaust denial by some nostalgic members of the Nazi regime or by the use of code terms in political discourse, such as the "east code" used during Strache's presidency to describe the so-called Jewish conspiracy (Wodak & Rheindorf, 2019:189). After the refugee flows of 2015, the ever-increasing xenophobia displayed by the FPÖ took on a face, the face of Islam. The party claimed that it would protect the heritage of the Catholic Church and the Christian values from the "Others", the Muslims, the barbarians who are a threat to the smooth running of the nation.

In contrast, Poland compared to the rest of Central European countries, is a relatively homogeneous country, there was no large minority that the far right could blame for the economic and political problems of the state. However, within the country's society there is a historically strong anti-Semitism that the LPR capitalized on in order to attract voters. As mentioned above, LPR had a dual nature. On the one hand, the official party was active in the parliament, while the MW was active outside the political scene. The members of the party did not hesitate in any case to make anti-Semitic statements. For example, one of the LPR's founders, Ryszard Bender, had denied the events of Jedwadne Pogrom, while in the past he had also denied the events of the Holocaust. Also, when the Jedwadne Pogrom case was opened in 2002, LPR members accused the president of the National Memory Institute of collaborating with "Jewish interests". In fact, before the 2006 election, an article was published by Roman Giertych that used the term "parchy", a derogatory term for Jews. At the same time, the MW used anti-Semitic books by authors such as Jędrzej Giertych, known for his extreme anti-Semitic views, to educate its members (Pankowski, 2010:117-121).

Furthermore, FPÖ and LPR share the same views with regard to gender policies. The FPÖ promoted homophobic and patriarchal views. Norbert Hofer, the candidate for the 2016 presidential election, stated that he rejects the rights of marriage and adoption of

homosexuals because they destroy the traditional notion of family while at the same time he rejected the right of women to abortion, arguing that family is created only by having children (Wodak & Rheindorf, 2019:184-190). The LPR placed particular emphasis on the "homosexual issue" as it was called. The "Others" in Poland acquired the form of the LGBT community. From the earliest years of LPR, homosexual rights have been in the spotlight. It was not uncommon for LPR members to make homophobic statements. Wojciech Wierzejski, a MEP of the party, had a sign banning homosexuals out of his office, and in a speech in 2005 he vowed to ban all LGBT organizations when the LPR came to power (Pankowski, 2010:124). MW activists, on the other hand, have expressed their homophobia to the extreme level since they staged demonstrations in 2001 shouting "Euthanasia to Queers" and physically assaulting LGBT rights activists (Pankowski, 2010:114).

In Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, due to the existence of large Roma groups, the far right targeted them and in some cases as in Slovakia, the KL'SNS carried out extremist practices. Jobbik initially referred to the Roma in derogatory terms, more so as "Gypsy". Jobbik's program contains hostile reports about the Roma community: "We must end financing development funds by hundreds of billions, most of which disappears in the pockets of various foundations, Gypsy organizations and civil rights activists", "Gypsy crime must be eliminated therefore we need to strengthen our law enforcement agencies, even by a state-controlled involvement of voluntary organizations, if need be". In an earlier election manifesto, Jobbik argued that the coexistence between Hungarians and Roma is one of society's biggest problems, calling for harsher sentences for Roma "criminals" and talking about reinstating the death penalty (Fabry. 2015:23). In KL'SNS program, the Roma were referred to as "anti-social parasites" and with derogatory terms such as "Cigan", "Gypsy". KL'SNS formed patrol teams in eastern Slovakia - where most of the Roma population was concentrated. These groups wore the green T-shirt with the party logo printed on it and raided train stations, trains and parks to protect "decent citizens" from "Gypsy extremism" (Cirner & Dudinska, 2020:187, Paulovicova, 2020:190). Finally, Okamura has been aggressive since 2012 towards the Roma population living in the Czech Republic, but in 2015 the SPD's xenophobia was transferred to Muslim refugees.

In Slovakia and Czech Republic as well, after 2015 there was a huge panic and prejudice against refugees. KL'SNS and SPD capitalized that fear while Jobbik in Hungary did not protest against the refugees, mainly because the ruling party (Fidesz) had the monopoly of opposition to them. Although Slovakia was one of the countries with almost no refugees, after the outbreak of the refugee crisis, Islamophobia pervaded society as a whole, even the mainstream parties. KL'SNS rushed to take advantage of the possible consequences of the crisis and took a hard line on refugees, which provoked its support from society, igniting its electoral breakthrough in 2016. The first goal set by the party was to protect women from the "Muslim hordes" by pointing out the duty of men to take action against the "Others" (Paulovicova, 2020:192). In one of the demonstrations organized by KL'SNS against the Islamization of Europe, Kotleba said the crowd "have a nice white day" (Cirner & Dudinska, 2020:186). During a similar demonstration a Muslim family was attacked with stones while Milan Mazurek attacked them verbally, by insulting the family's origins (Nociar, 2017:5). In 2016, SPD's Okamura stated that "it is clear that Islamic values and western democracy are fundamentally incompatible" (Heath, 2017:51-53). There are several anti-Islamic extremist statements in the party's program: "The ongoing illegal immigration is the initial phase of the conflict, which will ultimately threaten freedom, democracy and the very existence of the Czech Republic and our nation", "Our society has a national tradition based on the roots of the Jewish, ancient and Christian cultures and civilizations. We will protect these values... The ongoing Islamization of European countries is incompatible with these values", "We consistently reject the multicultural ideology that is the instrument of Islamization", "Law enforcement agencies must consistently prosecute manifestations of radical Islam. A new concept of the Czech Army is necessary".

KL'SNS and Jobbik also resorted to anti-Semitic rhetoric. Milan Mazurek, an MP of the first, stated on social media: "I do not advocate any regime, but regarding the Third Reich we only know lies and fairy tales about 6 million Jews and soap. "Nothing but lies are taught about Hitler" (Nociar, 2017:3), while Krizstina Morvai a Jobbik's MEP from 2009 to 2019, in a 2008 speech "advised" the "Liberal-Bolshevik Zionists" to "start thinking of where to flee and where to hide". Also in 2012, a party spokesman called for a special registry for Jews living in Hungary, claiming that they are a threat (Fabry, 2015:23-24).

4.2. *Euroscepticism*

Another dominant feature in the ideology of Central European far-right parties is the opposition towards the European Union.

The Austrian accession to the European Union was decided in a referendum held in 1994. The FPÖ strongly opposed the European perspective because, as Haider argued, with accession the nation was economically and socially at risk of the consequences of globalization (Ignazi, 2003:119). Despite the disagreement of the FPÖ, the accession of Austria to the Union was successfully completed. The party continues to oppose the EU even today but in a softer tone.

In contrast to Austria, the Visegrad states entered the European Union in the 2004 enlargement. The LPR has been the main opposition force to Poland's accession to the European Union after launching a campaign to persuade citizens to vote against it in the upcoming 2003 referendum. Of course, the LPR's criticism of the Union did not necessarily have to do with the economic consequences that accession could have. Most emphasis was placed on terms of identity because, as the party argued, accession threatened Poland's national and religious identity. In fact, historical anti-German sentiments and the dangers of being integrated into an organization led by Germany returned to the forefront (Pankowski, 2010:122-124). The LPR opposition did not stand in the way of Poland's accession to the EU after it was ratified by 77% in the referendum. However, the Euroscepticism shown by the LPR made it part of the political discourse and thus won 10 seats in the European Parliament in the 2004 European elections. At the extra-parliamentary level, the MW staged several anti-EU demonstrations. In fact, there were incidents where members of the MW burned European flags while interrupting meetings of the then President Kwasniewski with supporters of the membership (Pankowski, 2010:114). Jobbik was not opposed to EU during the Referendum in Hungary, but the outbreak of economic crisis and the problems it caused, forced the party to adopt strong anti-EU stance. In the opposite direction the Slovakian KL'SNS from its inception adopted an anti-Western and anti-liberal rhetoric, criticizing the EU and NATO, claiming that these organizations are ruled by Jews. This is confirmed by the party's pro-Russian stance. On several occasions, extremists from Slovakia and Russia collaborated, while Kotleba hoisted the Russian flag outside his office in Banska Bystrica in 2016 (Paulovicova, 2020:193-

194). Okamura, has warned against the Czech Republic being a 'protectorate' of the USA or Germany and he first called for the Czech Republic to leave the EU in 2015 (Heath, 2017:56). Once again the SPD's contains Eurosceptic statements: "The current form of European integration is a flawed project of creating a European superstate. The project is associated with the actual weakening and liquidation of nation states and the nations of Europe... The project of current European integration will also directly threaten freedom and democracy in Europe", "We will demand a referendum on every transfer of state sovereignty to the EU institutions and a referendum on leaving the EU".

4.3. Populism – Anti-establishment sentiments

The third and quite important ideological element, that can explain why the far-right parties became so popular is the anti-systemic feeling they projected against the traditional parties.

Austria in the 1980s was dominated by corruption, political scandals and economic problems, creating a climate of aversion towards the traditional coalition that had ruled the country for 40 years. Taking advantage of this discontent, the FPÖ emerged as the party that would pull Austria out of the quagmire. Haider, armed with populism, criticized the "establishment" for the growing poverty and its hypocrisy towards the Austrian people, promising to protect the nation and return to traditional values. In fact, the FPÖ rejected liberal democracy, accusing it of authoritarianism, and campaigned for the "Third Republic" of Austria (Hainsworth & Georgiadou, 2004:132). These anti-party and anti-establishment statements had a huge impact on the electorate and the FPÖ emerged as the party that held the monopoly of discontent in Austrian society, which brought huge electoral success.

Jobbik was presented to Hungarian society as an alternative to the ruling parties, while owing a paramilitary unit, the Hungarian Guard, for its extremist actions (Fabry, 2015:21). Jobbik opposed the whole spectrum of political elite with populist declarations, accusing the ruling parties of corruption and betrayal of the citizens'

"national interests" (Fabry, 2015:22). Jobbik's manifesto and political agenda^{2 3} contain a number of anti-authoritarian statements: "We must step up against corruption immediately and mercilessly", "Getting into government, we would apply this practice to the entire political leadership. We would abolish politicians' immunity and we would also introduce stricter regulations regarding political players by setting more severe punishment for economic crimes committed by such individuals", "We believe that the deep crisis of politics lies in the enormous gap between words and actions of political parties. Consequently, today's Hungarian political life is characterized by unfulfilled promises, turncoats, lies and corruption".

KL'SNS as well, has on several occasions used populism to attract voters. It included in its program the concept of decency, saying that it would create a Slovakia that would consist only of "decent citizens". In the demonstrations that broke out in 2018 against the government, "Decent Slovakia" emerged as the main slogan (Paulovicova, 2020:188). KL'SNS presented itself as a defender of the nation against the system and the corrupt elite, accusing the mainstream political parties of ignoring the problems of the citizens and trying to reduce their credibility in society (Cirner & Dudinska, 2020:185). Some examples of anti-establishment sentiment can be found on the party's website (which is no longer available): "Politicians are thieves, liars and crooks who destroyed Slovakia", "We will force politicians to take full responsibility for their decisions" so that high politics is no more the most organized criminal profession", "will we will reduce the parliament deputies from 150 to 100... we will stop financing political parties of the state budget" (Filotheou, 2016:30).

In the case of SPD, as it is known from the party's name, the main element of its ideology is the belief in direct democracy, along with criticism of the ruling political elite. The party's program⁴ provides information on the direct democracy it wants to establish: We consider the introduction of direct democracy and the broad involvement of citizens in the governance of the country to be the basic principle of the defense of democracy. We consider it necessary to end the demo-democracy ruled by the godfather's party mafias", "The false games of the political parties on the left and the

²[Manifesto | jobbik.com](https://www.jobbik.com/manifesto)

³[Policies | jobbik.com](https://www.jobbik.com/policies)

⁴<https://www.spd.cz/program-vypis/>

right have led our republic into a vicious circle of deep debts, high taxes and crises”, “Citizens must have the right to decide in a referendum on fundamental issues concerning the country future. We promote direct elections of deputies, mayors and governors, “The government will be appointed and run by a directly elected and revocable president”.

Unlike all other parties, the LPR was not based on a populist agenda but much more on a nationalist one.

4.4. *Nationalism*

Austrian nationalism went through many phases. From the 19th century it was associated with the achievements of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the leading role of Austria in it. From 1918, when the Empire disintegrated, Austrian nationalism was directly linked to Germany (and to the Nazi regime during World War II). Hence German unification in 1990 marked the separation of Austria from German culture. The FPÖ has now abandoned the ideas of Pan-Germanism and promoted an Austrian national identity to attract voters. With Heinz-Christian Strache, in the election campaigns FPÖ began to use nationalist, patriotic and religious symbols, such as the Austrian flag, the national anthem, as well as images depicting traditional culture, such as pristine snow-capped mountains and rural areas in an effort to highlight the purity of the Austrian national identity. Terms and slogans such as "Homeland" (Heimat), "We for You", "We versus Them", "Us Austrians" etc. were introduced in the party repertoire. (Wodak & Rheindorf, 2019:184-185)

Since its inception, LPR has become a follower of the tradition of National Democracy (ND or *Endecja*). National Democracy was an active political movement from the mid-19th century, seeking a strong Polish state and characterized by strong nationalism. The founder of this movement was Roman Dmowski, a figure who greatly influenced the policies of the Right (right-wing) in Poland. ND was hostile to ethnic minorities within Poland and supported Polonization while turning against the Jews. Anti-Semitism became the mainstay of ND ideology as it advocated the exclusion of Jews from Polish society and organized demonstrations and attacks against the Jewish minority. After World War II, the Endecja tradition was adopted by the National Party

(SN), in which Roman Giertych's father, Maciej Giertych, and grandfather, Jędrzej Giertych, were leading figures, the first in the 1990s and the second in the 1930s. Following the dissolution of the SN, the LPR inherited the ND's anti-Semitic and nationalist rhetoric.

Jobbik promotes strong nationalism even though it calls itself a "Christian, value-centered and conservative movement." Hungarian nationalism is directly linked to revisionism, in particular to the revision of the Trianon Treaty. In its agenda, the party makes clear reference to the autonomy of the Hungarian communities living in Serbia and Ukraine (Filotheou, 2016:22), confirming the irrational ideas for the restoration of the Hungarian border before the First World War.

Finally, KL'SNS and SPD are both presented as national parties, aiming at the creation of a Slovakia and the Czech Republic respectively, which will be independent of anything foreign whether it is considered a European Union or foreigners, refugees, minorities.

4.5. *Ties to Neo-Fascism – Neo-Nazism*

Although most far-right parties today are free of any identification with Nazism, some statements and symbolism by party officials or members testify to the opposite.

Haider of the FPÖ was known for his admiration for the Nazi past. During his presidency in the party he made disgusting statements in favor of the SS, without this affecting, of course, the supporters of the FPÖ. In December 1995 in a television interview Haider said "*The Waffen SS was a part of the Wehrmacht (German military) and hence it deserves all the honor and respect of the army in public life*".⁵ In a gathering of Wehrmacht-SS veterans in Ulrichsberg in 2000, Haider said "*Those who come to Ulrichsberg are not the old Nazis. They are not neo-Nazis; they are not criminals*".⁶ Haider even used Nazi terms such as "The Final Solution" to describe plans in Austrian politics, for example "The final solution to the problem of agriculture" (Ignazi, 2003:121).

⁵ [Joerg Haider: Key quotes](#) BBC News, 2 February 2000

⁶ ["Haider embraces SS veterans"](#) The Guardian, 2 October 2000

During the collaboration with LPR, Neo-Nazi symbolism began to spread in MW's ranks and was used extensively by its members. On the MW website, words like skinheads, hooligans, seig heil, swastyka, the number 88, meaning Heil Hitler, the eighth letter of the alphabet, H, and more were found. The LPR, as a moderate party in parliament, has never publicly supported nor formally condemned neo-Nazi tendencies. In fact, Roman Giertych repeatedly promoted MW members to the leadership positions of the LPR, to replace the more moderate left in the party (Pankowski, 2010:118-119).

The blockade of neo-fascist SP-NS shortly before the 2006 Slovakian elections sent a strong message to Kotleba and the other extremists. Since the founding of KL'SNS the aim has been to normalize and much more to hide Nazi connections. In its early stages, the party has been identified as neo-fascist because of Kotleba, but changed its rhetoric towards national and religious values, talking about the creation of a strong nation and the continuation of the Christian tradition inherited from the Slovak People's Party (Paulovicova, 2020:185). With this change, KL'SNS eventually managed to succeed into the parliament.

Jobbik and SPD showed no sign of admiration for the Nazi regime nor were there any statements from their members.

5. Electoral Performance and the reasons of success

This chapter will analyze the electoral development of far-right parties at national and European level, trying not only to highlight the milestones in the success of the parties but also to highlight the reasons that led to this success.

The following three tables summarize the electoral fate of the parties:

Table 1. Performance of FPÖ in National Elections

Austrian Elections	FPÖ
1990	16,6% 33 seats
1994	22,5% 42 seats
1995	21,9% 41 seats
1999	26,9% 52 seats
2002	10% 18 seats
2006	11% 21 seats
2008	17,5% 34 seats
2013	20,5% 40 seats
2017	26% 51 seats
2019	16,2% 31 seats

Table 2. Performance of LPR, Jobbik, KL'SNS, SPD in National Elections

Polish Elections	2001	2005	2007	
LPR	7,9% 38 seats	8% 34 seats	1,3% -	
Hungarian Elections	2006	2010	2014	2018
Jobbik	2,20% -	16,6% 47 seats	20,2% 23 seats	19% 26 seats
Slovak Elections	2010	2012	2016	2020
KL'SNS	1,33% -	1,58% -	8% 14 seats	7,9% 17 seats
Czech Elections	2015	2017		
SPD	*Split from Dawn 8 seats	10,6% 22 seats		

Table 3. Performance of far-right parties in European Elections

European Elections	1996	1999	2004	2009	2014	2019
FPÖ	27,5% 6 seats	23,4% 5 seats	6,3% 1 seat	12,7% 2 seats	19,7% 4 seats	17,2% 3 seats
LPR	-	-	15,9% 10 seats	1,1% -	-	-
Jobbik	-	-	-	14,7% 3 seats	14,6% 3 seats	6,3% 1 seat
KL'SNS	-	-	-	-	1,7% -	12% 2 seats
SPD	-	-	-	-	-	9,1% 2 seats

The FPÖ as mentioned above, is the most successful far-right party in Central Europe and has never been out of parliament (not even before 1986, when it was not considered far-right). Haider's inauguration marked an unprecedented electoral breakthrough. Whereas in the previous 30 years the FPÖ had stabilized at around 5%, in the early 1986 parliamentary elections the percentage rose to 9.7% of the votes. From the mid-1980s, after 40 years of economic prosperity and governance by the traditional ÖVP and SPÖ coalition, a questioning political system began in Austria. Political scandals and corruption, declining economic growth and the arrival of large numbers of immigrants reduced the credibility of the ruling parties and created a climate of distrust among the citizens. The FPÖ exploited this multi-layered crisis and the next decade gained even greater support. The 1990 parliamentary elections were the first sign of party's successful course, where it won 16.6%, receiving 33 seats in parliament. Two consecutive elections followed in 1994 and 1995, where the FPÖ received 22.5% and 21.9% of the votes, respectively, winning 42 seats. This increase of the percentage is clearly due to the influence of the xenophobic discourse expressed by the party. Fears that foreigners would take over the natives' jobs and that unemployment would rise sharply had already penetrated Austrian society, raising the FPÖ as the only "solution" to these issues.

The most important electoral success in the history of the party took place in the 1999 parliamentary elections. The FPÖ received 26.7% of the votes and 52 seats while at the same time becoming the second largest political force in Austria. The FPÖ entered into a coalition government with the ÖVP. It was the first time that an extreme

right-wing party with an ideological appeal to National Socialism took power in a European Union state (Wodak & Rheindorf, 2019:75). There are several factors that led to this success, most notably Haider's personality. Haider was an influential public speaker and a charismatic leader, quite famous throughout the country. Not only was he the driving force behind the party's ideology which still holds today, but he managed to capitalize on the dissatisfaction of the entire population, attracting voters from all social layers. Moreover, the party's anti-systemic tendencies as well as its strong criticism of the government over immigration were among the factors that made it attractive to voters. However, when the FPÖ which has been harshly opposed of the establishment, came to power, it found no way to deliver on its promises and even backed some neoliberal economic reforms disappointing its voters, especially the blue-collar workers (Constantini:23-25). Splits within the party and Haider's departure followed, leading to early elections in 2002. The FPÖ saw its share fall sharply after receiving 10% of the votes and 18 seats in parliament. It remained in the coalition government, but with a much smaller percentage than in the previous elections.

Now led by Heinz-Christian Strache, three elections took place in 2006, 2008 and 2013, but the FPÖ was in opposition. The percentages it received were 11%, 17.5%, and 20.5% respectively. The legislative elections of 2017 brought the FPÖ back to government formation after winning 26% of the votes and 51 parliamentary seats. The ÖVP agreed again to a coalition government with Strache, but due to a scandal Strache was forced to resign and the government collapsed in 2019. In the elections that followed in the same year, the FPÖ received only 16.2%, returning to its opposition position. In the Strache era, the party's shift to nationalism and the adoption of a much tougher line against the European Union and Muslim refugees brought the FPÖ to the same levels as before. (Constantini:31-32) Strache was certainly not as charismatic as Haider, but he loosened any dangerous party ties with National Socialism and strongly promoted national identity. He gave a huge importance to the election campaigns and through propaganda he managed to increase the electorate. Nevertheless, the success of the 2017 elections can be explained in a broader context, along with the success of the far right in Hungary, Slovakia and Czech Republic, as a result of the panic caused into the societies by the 2015 refugee crisis.

The FPÖ has achieved electoral success not only in Austrian politics but also in the European Parliament. In the first European elections in 1996 it received 27.5% of

the votes and 6 seats in the EP, while in the 1999 elections it received 23.4% and 5 seats. In the 2004 European elections, the FPÖ saw a huge drop in popularity and narrowly entered the EP, receiving 6.3%, electing only one MEP. In the subsequent electoral process, the FPÖ restored its high turnout, but not reminiscent of those of the early years. In the 2009 European elections the party received 12.7% and 2 seats, in 2014 19.7% and 4 seats and in 2019 17.2% and 3 seats.

Unlike the FPÖ, the presence of the LPR in the Polish political scene was quite short. The party competed in only three electoral contests. In the September 2001 parliamentary elections, the newly formed and heterogeneous LPR managed to win 7.9% of the votes and secured 38 seats in parliament while at the same time in the Senate it received 2 seats. In the 2005 parliamentary elections, the party won 8% of the votes, securing 34 seats in parliament and 7 in the Senate, and entered a coalition government with Law and Justice (PiS) and Self-Defense (SRP). Giertych was appointed Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education. At the time the LPR entered parliament, there were no economic upheavals to justify its rise. Instead, the LPR, based on the (nationalist) tradition of the National Democracy, created a crisis in terms of the Polish identity by investing in national and religious values. The intense opposition to European membership as well as the LPR's claims about the danger of Germanization hit people's sensitive strings, which rapidly increased the party's popularity. Furthermore, the gap between Church and State in Poland has greatly favored the LPR. Once the EU and the liberal values it promotes were identified as a threat to Poland's Catholic beliefs, the LPR was strongly supported by the religious community. Of course, the support offered by Radio Marya also contributed to this turn. However, early elections were held in 2007 which marked the end of the LPR as support for the party was negligible. It received only 1.3% and failed to pass the threshold of 5% needed to enter parliament. The removal of LPR from Radio Maryja also contributed to this defeat. From the moment the LPR entered parliament, Giertych acted independently of the advice of Father Tadeusz Rydzyk, but the final rupture took place after the 2005 elections. The defeat caused Roman Giertych to step down from the party leadership and cut ties with MW. Since then, LPR has remained on the fringe.

The LPR also participated in two European elections. In the 2004 European elections he received a fairly large percentage, of about 16% of the votes and 10 seats

in the European Parliament. Nevertheless, in the 2009 European elections, the percentage dropped rapidly to 1.1% and did not win any seats.

Although the rise of Jobbik, the KL'SNS and the SPD took place for very different reasons (due to the different political and socio-economic base in each state) their subsequent success has much in common.

Jobbik founded in 2003, but failed to run in the 2004 European elections. The first election contest in which the party competed was in 2006, where it formed an alliance with MIÉP, but without achieving anything remarkable after receiving 2.2% and remaining at the extra-parliamentary level. After the leak of Ószöd speech in September 2006, everything changed for Jobbik. The ruling Socialist Party (MSZP) lost its credibility with the people and started a political crisis in the country, accompanied by sweeping demonstrations and protests against the government. Jobbik, which spearheaded the protests, took advantage of the public outcry and in a short time became very popular throughout the country. Of course, the establishment of the Hungarian Guard was also crucial, because its violent extremist acts attracted the attention of the media towards the party. Jobbik also played the Trianon Treaty card, which all the other far-right movements in the past relied on. The party expressed an aggressive discourse against the injustice shown in Hungary by the Treaty, awakening wounds of the past and gaining even more support. In the 2010 parliamentary elections, Jobbik overturned all odds by winning 16.67% and secured 47 of the 386 seats in parliament.

Subsequently, in the 2014 elections Jobbik received an even higher percentage, i.e. 20.22% and one of the largest percentages of the far right in Central Europe, but due to the reduction of parliamentary seats (from 386 to 199) the party took only 23 seats. Finally, in the 2018 elections, the party remained at about the same level after winning 19.06% and 26 seats. Society's fears about the Roma and the refugee crisis played a decisive role in Jobbik's further rise since 2014. Jobbik's further rise since 2014 is mainly due to societal fears about the Roma but also to the impact of the refugee crisis. According to a survey of Pew Research Center on minority groups⁷, the largest percentage of Central Europeans is negative about the presence of Roma and Muslims in their countries. In Hungary for example, only 25% are in favor of the Roma presence,

⁷ <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2019/10/14/minority-groups/>

while 61% are against. About the presence of Muslims only 11% are in favor and 58%. Survey shows that anti-Roma and anti-Muslim sentiments are widespread among most Hungarians and fully justify the rise of Jobbik, who opposed the presence of the two minorities in the state.

Jobbik also ran in 3 European elections. In the 2009 and 2014 European elections, the party won 14.77% and 14.67%, respectively, winning 3 seats in the European Parliament both times. In the 2019 European elections, Jobbik marginally entered the European Parliament, winning 6.34% and 1 seat.

In the case of KL'SNS, the first elections that party contested in 2010 and 2012, the support it received was negligible. This failure expressed the already obvious distrust of the voters towards the neo-Nazi tendencies of the party. However, the 2016 parliamentary elections were marked by a surprising success of KL'SNS, which received 8% and 14 seats in parliament. In the parliamentary elections of 2020, it received almost the same percentage, i.e. 7.97%, while it increased the parliamentary seats to 17. The success of KLSNS can be attributed to several factors. According to Mareš and Havlík (2016:16), in Slovakia there is a socio-economic gap where continuous economic upheavals have created two camps. The owners and the workers. This gap reopened during the Slovak economic crisis and the KL'SNS capitalized on the discontent of the lower social class, especially those without education and received great support. As in the case of Jobbik, anti-Roma and anti-Muslim sentiments played an important role in the rise of KL'SNS. According to the previous Pew Research Center survey, in Slovakia only 21% are in favor of the Roma presence and 71% are against, while for Muslims 16% are in favor and 77% against. The party's resistance against the Roma, often through violent practices, as well as against refugee flows attracted voters who did not care about its neo-fascist tendencies.

Abroad, KL'SNS competed in only 2 European elections. In the European elections of 2014 it received a negligible percentage and failed to enter the European Parliament. In the 2019 European elections, however, the party saw a rapid increase in its percentage, receiving 12% and 2 seats.

The SPD as a newly formed party has competed in fewer electoral processes than the parties in other countries. Okamura had led Dawn to parliament in the 2013 elections and won 14 seats, but when the SPD split in 2015, the new party automatically

won 8 seats in parliament. The first elections in which the SPD ran were in 2017, receiving 10.64% and 22 parliamentary seats, a fairly high percentage compared to the Czech far-right parties in the past. Finally, the party competed in the European elections of 2019, winning 9.14% of the vote and 2 seats. In recent years, a large part of the population in the Czech Republic has been dissatisfied with the mainstream parties due to their corruption (Mareš & Havlík, 2016:17). A party like the SPD with its populist declarations of direct democracy, an element that is the core of its ideology, was a lure for the Czechs against the system. Still, as in the previous two countries so in the Czech Republic, the presence of the Roma minority and the refugee crisis contributed to the push of the far right. The same survey of Pew Research Survey found that 27% of Czechs are in favor of the Roma presence and 66% are against while 23% are in favor of Muslim presence and 64% are against. Okamura's declarations about the Roma Question and the threat of Western values from Islamization caused panic among the citizens, resulting this electoral breakthrough in 2017.

6. Leadership

This chapter will provide information on the leading leaders of the far-right parties studied but also on their role in the rise of the parties.

The leader of FPÖ, Jörg Haider born in 1950 at a small city in the Upper Austria. In 1969, he began studying Law and Political Science at the University of Vienna. His parents was members of the Austrian Nazi Party (DNSAP). Throughout his career, Haider had concentrated his politics on Carinthia. In 1970 Haider became the leader of the FPÖ youth movement until 1974. Haider rose rapidly through the party ranks. In 1972, at the age of 22, he was appointed party affairs manager of the Carinthian FPÖ. In 1983 he took the party head of the Carinthian FPÖ and started to use more aggressive rhetoric.

In 1986 he became the leader of the FPÖ and he gave the party his profile. Haider ranks among the most charismatic leaders because in just a few years he turned the FPÖ into his personal party, exerting enormous influence not only in the party itself but also on potential Austrian voters. Haider's reshuffle from 1992 to 1995 transformed the FPÖ into a party reminiscent of nothing of previous decades. Purely neo-Nazi and

liberal elements were ousted - this does not mean that the party was completely free of Nazi nostalgia - while party staff were replaced by newcomers instead of the traditional bureaucracy, giving Haider full control (Ignazi, 2003:115). Haider's first electoral victory with the FPÖ was in the Carinthia regional elections in 1989, where the party won 29% and he became governor. The most successful year for Haider and the FPÖ was 1999 when he was elected once again governor of Carinthia while in the Parliamentary elections FPÖ took almost 27% and the party entered the Austrian government along with the Catholic ÖVP. Hence, due to scandals and internal divisions within the party, Haider left the FPÖ in 2000 and formed a new party, the Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ), in which he remained until his death in 2008.

The LPR's leader, Roman Giertych born in 1971 at a city in Central Poland. He was a lawyer and a politician. His father, Maciej Giertych and his grandfather, Jędrzej Giertych were leading members of the National Party (SN) at different times. Roman was one of the members who reactivated the MW in 1989. In 2001, he became the chairman of the League of Polish Families (LPR). In the summer of 2004, Roman became a member of the Polish parliament's committee investigating irregularities in the oil industry and trade. This position, in addition to the publicity that gave him - because he appeared every now and then on television - also offered him the opportunity to oppose with official figures the corruption of the political elite (Pankowski, 2010:113).

In May 2006, Giertych was appointed Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education in the government formation in which the LPR had joined the PiS, but the appointment provoked reactions and protests against him. Following the defeat in the 2007 parliamentary elections, Giertych resigned from the LPR presidency and returned to legal duties.

The leading figure of Jobbik, Gabor Vona was born in 1978 in a town which is located east of Budapest. He studied history and psychology at ELTE University, the "birthplace" of Jobbik. Gabor replaced the surname Zázrivecz, owned by his grandmother's second husband and claimed the family name Vona, which was the surname of his grandmother's first husband who died in World War II.⁸ Vona was a

⁸ ["About Gabor Vona"](#) *People Pill*

founding member of Jobbik, its leader from 2006 to 2018 and the founder of Hungarian Guard, the paramilitary-wing of Jobbik.

Vona led Jobbik into parliament in three consecutive elections, in 2010, 2014 and 2018. He has directed the party's ideology of militant ethno-nationalism mixed with anti-Semitism and anti-Roma feelings. Under his leadership the party advocated for Roma to be put into labor camps and assumed Jews as national threat.⁹ However, after the 2018 elections, Vona left the leadership and one year later left Jobbik permanently.

The leader of KL'SNS, Marian Kotleba was born in Banska Bystrica in 1977. He studied at Matej Bel University receiving a master's degree in Pedagogics and a master's degree in Economics, at the same university. He entered the civic association SP in 1995 and he became the leader of the SP-NS which was banned from Slovakia politics due to extremist and neo-Nazi beliefs. After the dissolution of SP-NS, Kotleba managed to run in the 2006 elections with another party but did not win more than 0.16% and he left immediately. In 2010, he founded the Kotlebists – People's Party Our Slovakia (KL'SNS) and in 2013 he elected governor of Banska Bystrica, receiving 55% of the votes.

Kotleba led the party to parliament in two consecutive elections, in 2016 and 2020. He has been described many times as a neo-Nazi and an extremist by the international media.¹⁰ With his two brothers, Kotleba ran an online street-wear shop called KKK inspired by the white supremacist Ku Klux Klan, selling neo-Nazi materials but he closed it in 2017 (Nociar, 2017:3). In fact, in October 2020, Kotleba was sentenced to 4 years in prison for offering 1488 euros in cash to poor families as part of his charity activities, during an event honoring the Slovak regime of Jozef Tiso who collaborated with the Nazis. The number 1488 referring to a 14-word racist slogan and the salute 'Heil Hitler', from the eighth letter of the alphabet - H. Kotleba found guilty of using Nazi symbols and themes but he rejected all the verdicts.¹¹

⁹ ["Gabor Vona" Counter Extremism Project](#)

¹⁰ ["Marian Kotleba and the rise of Slovakia's extreme right" BBC News, 6 March 2016](#)

¹¹ ["Slovak far-right leader sentenced to four years jail for spreading hate" Reuters, 12 October 2020](#)

SPD's leader, Tomio Okamura was born in 1972 in Tokyo. His father is a half Japanese and a half Korean and his mother is Czech. He came to Czechoslovakia when he was young and he assimilated the culture of the country. In 1994 he started his business career on the industries of gastronomy and tourism and he was very successful. Also, he has been a judge of a Czech television program (Heath, 2017:15).

From 2012 he entered politics and in October he managed to win a seat in the Senate election as an independent candidate. In 2013 he founded the Dawn of Direct Democracy and led it into the parliament. Due to internal problems he left from Dawn and established a new party, the Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD). He exerted enormous influence on SPD and gave it a pro-direct democracy character. He led the party in parliament twice, in 2015 and in 2017 elections. Okamura was a supporter of direct democracy and this was evident from the books he wrote. His rhetoric dominated from xenophobic anti-immigrant statements and he often criticized the political elite (Heath, 2017:24-25).

7. Conclusions

The ultimate goal of this research is to outline the rise of far-right parties in Central Europe, to reveal their ideology and to identify the reasons that led the parties to enter parliament. Arguably, the protest vote was a central factor in the return of the far right. The discontent over economic deterioration as well as the reduced trust over the political system due to corruption motivated people to vote for far-right parties, as a sign of punishment towards the mainstream parties. FPÖ, KL'SNS and SPD for example capitalized on that frustration and received shocking results. The less stable is the established parties the stronger far-right becomes.

Moreover, the mainstream parties of the states are also responsible for the success of far-right. On the one hand because they accept the existence of the far right in parliament and in some cases support it with co-operative governments (e.g. FPÖ-ÖVP and LPR-PiS-SRP) and on the other because they adopt elements of its ideology. A typical case is that of Fidesz where it adopted several aspects of Jobbik's program regarding the refugee quota.

Apart from these factors, all the parties developed their own rhetoric and continued their successful course for different reasons. Haider was solely responsible for the success of the FPÖ until 2000. The party made a turning point but the nationalism that promoted under Strache's administration as well as the refugee flows that followed restored the party's position in Austrian politics. Despite the drop in the party's share in 2019, there is no sign of cessation of support for the far right in the next years. The strong nationalism (tradition of National Democracy) and the harsh Euroscepticism promoted by the LPR gave it the ticket to the Polish parliament, although its stay was short. After the disappearance of LPR from the political scene there were several far-right movements, but they have not yet been represented in parliament. Anti-Roma and anti-Muslim sentiments into the society were crucial to the success of Jobbik, KL'SNS and SPD. Jobbik has penetrated deep into the electorate, but the conservative Fidesz in government is its biggest competitor as they target a similar audience. How Jobbik's percentage will be formed in the future is clearly a matter of electoral strategies. The percentage of the neo-fascist KLSNS, on the other hand, although small is not negligible. As for the neo-fascist KL'SNS, no increase in its percentage is prescribed because the electorate is wary of its past but also because the nationalist SNS is more attractive for the extreme "voices". Finally, the Czech SPD is going to follow the successful path it started in 2017 because its ideological elements are in line with Mudde's typology for the radical right-wing parties, a combination that so far seems to be thriving.

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