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**Jobbik: Pushing Towards Autocracy**

*Bogdan Scurtu*

The Movement for a Better Hungary, *Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom*, is an ultra-nationalist, Christian, populist, anti-Semitic, anti-Roma (Gypsy), anti-capitalist, and Eurosceptic party. Jobbik holds 47 seats in Hungary’s National Assembly (16.7% at the April 2010 election), and three seats in the European Parliament (14.8% at the 2009 elections). With 13% in the latest January 2014 poll, Jobbik is the third most important party in Hungary, after center-right FIDESZ (48%) and the center left MSZP (20%).

Jobbik claims to be the most popular party among voters under the age of 35. Half of Jobbik’s electorate previously voted with the right wing conservative FIDESZ party, and a third with the Socialists. Its voters are mostly men (63%). Thirty-six percent of Jobbik’s voters are disillusioned with politics in general.

Gábor Vona is Jobbik’s chairman since 2006. Vona founded the party in 2002 along with other students during his studies at the Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest. In 2007, he founded the *Magyar Gárda Mozgalom* (Hungarian Guard), a vigilante group labeled as “neofascist” by Western media. The Metropolitan Court of Budapest outlawed the Gárda in 2009 for inciting fear, threatening public order, and conducting activities against the rights of minorities (Gárda has since reorganized as a cultural, rather than political organization).
Agenda


The main points on Jobbik’s agenda are:

- Reject globalized capitalism, foreign and Jewish investment in Hungary; increase royalties from coal, gas, and petroleum mining
- Promote autonomy for the Szekely Land in Romania, and an independent Hungarian district in the Trans Carpathian Ukraine
- Nationalize strategic assets such as land, water, gas, forests; support protectionist policies for Hungarian food industries and “national producers”
- Lower tax and regulation for Small and Medium Enterprises
- Establish public works schemes and a nationwide “social card” system (food stamps)
- Develop renewable and nuclear energy sources
- Protect the institution of “family” against “alternative living arrangements or deviant lifestyles”
- Increase political and economic ties with Russia, Arab countries, and Turanic nations
- Reject the Lisbon treaty

Controversies

Tensions between Hungary’s Roma community and Hungarian ethnics provide fertile ground for Jobbik to capitalize on. Small theft incidents in the village of Gyöngyösúspata in 2011 led the local Jobbik mayoral candidate, Oszkár Juhász, to seek the help of the Vederő vigilante group, a splinter faction from the Magyar Gárda. Months of patrolling on the
Roma side of the village culminated in a plan of a paramilitary exercise during Easter. Amid lots of press coverage, the state intervened and banned the exercises. The Red Cross bussed the Roma out of the village for a few days. However, Juhász did end up winning the mayoral race. Similarly, members of another Gárda faction, Szebb Jövőért (A Better Future), patrolled for weeks in the village of Hajdúhadháza.

Jobbik rejects all accusations of violence against Roma and claims it is not a racist party. The party blames the negative publicity on the government, since Jobbik is fighting to expose corruption. Still, in a 2012 speech at the Sportmax complex in Budapest, Vona claimed: “We are not communists, fascists, or National Socialists, but – and this is important for everyone to understand very clearly – we are also not democrats!”

According to the Right-Wing Extremism Index, Hungary has a high demand for discriminatory, anti-establishment, and authoritarian ideologies. The 2009 study ranks Hungary among Europe’s top four countries according to the level of prejudices (52%) and anti-establishment attitudes (46%). The most recent enemy in the collective memory of Eastern European countries are the communists, and Hungary makes no exception. In this context, nationalist parties borrow elements from both modern Western neo-populists as well as WWII era nationalists.

Jobbik is pushing the governing FIDESZ party more to the right. According to Der Spiegel, Jobbik politicians accuse FIDESZ and the government led by Viktor Orbán of “stealing” their ideas and implementing them as their own. Both parties together control over 60% of the vote. From the center to the far right, Hungary is in the grip of a dangerous combination of forces.

*EuroPoint:* Jobbik has only 13% in the polls; however, their agenda is influencing the Hungarian center conservatives. The country is flirting with autocracy.

_Bogdan Scurtu_