

The Hungarian Radical Right and Its Transformation: from MIEP to Mi Hazánk

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Abstract

This article examines the evolution of Hungary's radical right through three key parties: The Hungarian Justice and Life Party (MIEP), Jobbik and the Our Homeland Movement (Mi Hazánk). Founded in the early-1990s, MIEP's extreme nationalist and anti-establishment rhetoric declined as it failed to adapt to the new system, creating space for Jobbik's rise in the 2000s, with its aggressive nationalist appeal targeting young, disaffected voters. In the mid-2010s, Jobbik's strategic shift toward moderation alienated its core supporters, leading to the formation of Mi Hazánk in 2018 by former members seeking to reclaim hardline nationalism and social conservatism. Through a comparative analysis of these parties' ideological trajectories, the article highlights the adaptability and persistent appeal of radical right ideologies in Hungary. Findings suggest that internal party dynamics and shifting voter alignments are central to the resilience of radical right movements in post-communist Europe, shaping Hungary's political landscape.

Keywords: Radical Right, Hungary, Political Transformation, Ideological Shift, Party Evolution.

Macar Radikal Sağı ve Dönüşümü: MIEP'ten Mi Hazánk'a

Öz

Bu makale Macaristan'ın radikal sağının evrimini üç temel parti üzerinden incelemektedir: Macar Adalet ve Yaşam Partisi (MIEP), Jobbik ve Vatanımız Hareketi (Mi Hazánk). 1990'ların başında kurulan MIEP'in aşırı milliyetçi ve düzen karşıtı söylemi, yeni sisteme uyum sağlayamadığı için gerilemiş ve 2000'lerde genç, hoşnutsuz seçmenleri hedef alan agresif milliyetçi cazibesıyla Jobbik'in yükselişi için alan yaratmıştır. Jobbik'in 2010'ların ortasında ılımlılığa doğru stratejik kayması çekirdek destekçilerini yabancılaştırmış ve 2018'de sert milliyetçiliği ve sosyal muhafazakarlığı geri kazanmak isteyen eski üyeler tarafından Mi Hazánk'ın kurulmasına yol açmıştır. Bu partilerin ideolojik yörüngelerinin karşılaştırmalı bir analizi yoluyla makale, Macaristan'daki radikal sağ ideolojilerin uyarlanabilirliğini ve kalıcı çekiciliğini vurgulamaktadır. Bulgular, parti içi dinamiklerin ve değişen seçmen hizalanmalarının, komünizm sonrası Avrupa'da radikal sağ hareketlerin dayanıklılığının merkezinde yer aldığını ve Macaristan'ın siyasi manzarasını şekillendirdiğini göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Radikal Sağ, Macaristan, Siyasi Dönüşüm, İdeolojik Değişim, Parti Evrimi.

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Introduction

The Hungarian radical right has undergone significant transformations over the past three decades, mirroring broader trends in European political extremism. This evolution from the Hungarian Justice and Life Party (MIEP) to the Our Homeland Movement (Mi Hazánk) highlights critical aspects of Hungary's contemporary political landscape. Understanding this transformation provides valuable insights into the resilience and adaptability of radical right ideologies within a post-communist society, particularly as these movements continue to shape national politics.

Founded in 1993 by István Csurka, MIEP emerged as the first major radical-right party in post-communist Hungary. Rooted in extreme nationalism, anti-Semitism and anti-establishment rhetoric, the party appealed to segments of the population disillusioned by the perceived failures of Hungary's transition from communism. While MIEP initially garnered significant support in the 1990s, its influence waned as the political environment evolved (Jost and Kende, 2020: 97). The rise of Jobbik in the early 2000s, with its dynamic and aggressive nationalist platform, marked a turning point for Hungary's radical right. Jobbik's appeal to younger, disaffected voters, through its anti-Roma rhetoric, Euroscepticism and nationalist policies, enabled it to surpass MIEP as the dominant force in this political space. However, Jobbik's strategic shift '*frog-jump*' towards moderation in the 2010s alienated its core radical base, ultimately leading to the establishment of Mi Hazánk in 2018 by former Jobbik members dissatisfied with this transition (Kovalcsik and Bodi, 2023: 66; Kondor and Littler, 2020: 125). Mi Hazánk sought to reclaim the radical right's hardline nationalist values, strict anti-immigration policies and commitment to social conservatism, thereby marking a new chapter in the Hungarian radical right's ongoing evolution.

A crucial distinction between populism and the radical right is essential for understanding the classification of these parties. While populism revolves around an antagonistic relationship between "the pure people" and a "corrupt elite," often emphasizing political and economic grievances (Mudde, 2017; Müller, 2016), the radical right is characterized by cultural nationalism, ethnic homogeneity and exclusionary rhetoric (Carter, 2018: 169-172). During its radical phase, Jobbik blended populist anti-elitism with ethnic nationalism, attacking political elites while maintaining a strong Eurosceptic and anti-Roma stance. However, as Jobbik gradually repositioned itself towards the mainstream, its populist messaging broadened, shifting focus to anti-corruption and broader social justice themes. Mi Hazánk, by contrast, remains

ideologically rigid in its radical-right stance, emphasizing ethnic purity, anti-immigration policies and social conservatism, avoiding populist narratives of inclusivity within “the people.”

The 2015 refugee crisis significantly impacted Hungary’s radical-right landscape, driving anti-immigration sentiments due to fears of cultural displacement and economic insecurity. Jobbik leveraged this crisis to reinforce its nationalist platform, portraying non-European migrants as incompatible with Hungarian identity. Building on this legacy, Mi Hazánk framed immigration as an existential threat, embedding anti-globalist and anti-immigration rhetoric within its core ideology. This period amplified the radical right’s appeal among disaffected voters and reshaped its ideological trajectories (Mudde, 2007: 65-78).

This article employs a comparative analytical framework to explore the ideological, strategic and organizational shifts of MIEP, Jobbik and Mi Hazánk. Using historical analysis and case comparisons, it examines how internal dynamics, such as leadership changes and rebranding efforts and external pressures, including voter realignments and critical events like the 2015 refugee crisis, have influenced these parties’ trajectories. The methodology integrates qualitative analysis of party platforms, speeches and policy initiatives, supplemented by secondary literature and survey data.

The study is structured as follows: The first section provides a historical overview of MIEP’s emergence and its foundational role in shaping Hungary’s radical-right landscape. The second section examines Jobbik’s rise, its initial ideological positioning and its strategic pivot towards moderation. The third section focuses on Mi Hazánk’s formation and its ideological stance as a response to Jobbik’s moderation. The fourth section offers a comparative analysis of these three parties, highlighting their continuities and divergences in ideology, strategy and organizational structure. The concluding section synthesizes these findings, situating Hungary’s radical-right dynamics within broader European trends and offering insights into the implications of these transformations for Hungarian politics and society.

By addressing these components, this article answers the central research question: How has the Hungarian radical right evolved from the foundation of MIEP to the emergence of Mi Hazánk and what are the implications of these transformations for Hungary’s political landscape? By elucidating the interplay between party evolution and broader societal shifts in post-communist Europe, this study contributes to the literature on radical-right politics and their adaptability in an ever-changing sociopolitical context.

Historical Background of MIEP

The Hungarian Justice and Life Party (MIEP) was established in 1993 amid the significant political and social upheaval accompanying Hungary's transition from communism. As a reactionary force against the liberalizing and Westernizing trends of the post-communist era, MIEP positioned itself as a staunch defender of Hungarian national identity. The party's ideological platform rested on extreme nationalism, anti-Semitism, anti-communism and an overt rejection of multiculturalism and liberal values (Bobek, 2017: 203). MIEP's rhetoric emphasized preserving Hungary's cultural and historical heritage (Bernath et al., 2005: 82) while promoting xenophobia, anti-Roma sentiments and economic nationalism (Cwejman, 2013: 27-28).

Istvan Csurka, a former dissident writer and playwright, was MIEP's founder and driving force. His leadership was pivotal in shaping the party's ideological direction and public image. Known for his provocative nationalist rhetoric, Csurka framed MIEP as the voice of those disillusioned by the rapid political and social changes occurring in Hungary. Under his leadership, MIEP was a highly centralised organisation with significant influence in the hands of Csurka and his close associates. Despite its relatively small size, MIEP maintained a prominent position in Hungarian politics, bolstered by its alliances with other nationalist and radical-right groups both within Hungary and across Europe (Sitter, 1999; Bobek, 2017: 203-204).

MIEP's political influence peaked during the 1998 parliamentary elections, where it secured 5.5% of the vote and 14 seats in the National Assembly. This electoral success marked the zenith of MIEP's power, enabling the party to amplify its nationalist and anti-Western rhetoric significantly. During this period, MIEP strongly opposed Hungary's integration into NATO and the European Union, framing both as existential threats to Hungarian sovereignty and cultural integrity (Pop-Eleches, 2010: 228). However, MIEP's rigid ideological stance and inability to appeal to a broader electorate soon led to its decline. By the early 2000s, its influence was overshadowed by the rise of Jobbik, a younger and more dynamic nationalist party that resonated with a new generation of voters (Kreko and Mayer, 2015: 191) disenchanted with Hungary's political establishment.

While MIEP's early successes underscored the appeal of radical-right ideologies in post-communist Hungary, the party struggled to sustain its momentum. In the 2002 parliamentary elections, its vote share dropped to 4.4%, falling below the threshold required for representation in the National

Assembly. This marked the beginning of MIEP's political marginalization, as Jobbik's more confrontational and modernized agenda attracted the radical-right electorate that had previously supported MIEP. The public perception of MIEP during this period was polarized: while its supporters viewed it as a guardian of Hungarian sovereignty, critics condemned it as an extremist group promoting exclusionary and divisive policies. MIEP's eventual decline reflects broader patterns of radical-right politics in Hungary, where parties must balance ideological purity with electoral adaptability. As Jobbik capitalized on MIEP's inability to modernize, the latter became increasingly irrelevant in Hungary's political landscape (Dayıoğlu, 2023: 336-343). Nevertheless, MIEP's role in establishing the foundations of Hungary's radical-right movement cannot be overlooked. Its rhetoric and strategies laid the groundwork for subsequent parties like Jobbik and Mi Hazánk, which have built upon MIEP's ideological legacy while adapting to shifting political contexts.

Jobbik's Rise and the Shift in Radical Right Politics

The early 2000s marked a turning point in Hungary's radical-right political landscape with the emergence of Jobbik, a party that redefined the radical right in the country. Founded in 2003 as the *Movement for a Better Hungary*, Jobbik quickly positioned itself as a dynamic and modern alternative to MIEP. While MIEP maintained a traditional nationalist platform with a rigid ideological stance, Jobbik sought to broaden its appeal by adopting a more aggressive and populist approach to nationalism, targeting younger and more disillusioned voters (Kreko and Mayer, 2015: 191; Pytlas, 2015: 37).

Jobbik's early years emphasized Hungarian identity and sovereignty, echoing many of MIEP's themes but with a more modern and confrontational style. It distinguished itself by addressing issues resonant with younger voters, including opposition to European Union integration, criticism of globalization and vehement anti-Roma rhetoric (Neumayer, 2008: 147; Varga, 2014: 797). The party also leveraged contemporary communication tools (Bózoki, 2014: 185-187), such as social media and targeted campaigns, to engage a digitally connected and politically disillusioned demographic. A critical factor in Jobbik's rise was its ability to position itself as a viable alternative to both the political establishment and the traditional radical right represented by MIEP. Capitalizing on growing public discontent with Hungary's political and economic situation, Jobbik addressed national sovereignty, economic insecurity and the perceived threats posed by globalization and minority groups, particularly the Roma population (Toth and Grajczjar, 2015: 156). The party's

rhetoric reinforced fears of national decline and cultural erosion, effectively mobilizing support among voters disenchanted with the mainstream.

By the 2010 parliamentary elections, Jobbik had emerged as a formidable political force, securing 16.7% of the vote and 47 seats in the National Assembly (Toka, 2019a: 316; Pirro, 2014: 612). This electoral breakthrough underscored the party's ability to harness nationalist sentiments while presenting a polished, professional image. Jobbik's leaders, particularly Gábor Vona, played a central role in this transformation, repositioning the party as a serious contender capable of governing rather than merely protesting. However, as Jobbik's prominence grew, it faced mounting internal and external pressures that catalysed significant shifts in its ideological stance. Externally, the party faced scrutiny from the media, civil society and international observers for its extremist positions and associations with radical-right groups. Internally, debates emerged over how to sustain electoral success while appealing to a broader electorate. These pressures culminated in a strategic shift, often referred to as Jobbik's '*frog-jump*' towards the political centre.

In the mid-2010s, Jobbik embarked on a rebranding campaign, termed the *people's party strategy*. This initiative aimed to distance the party from its radical-right roots by softening its rhetoric and focusing on issues like anti-corruption, social justice and economic development (Biro-Nagy and Boros, 2016: 245; Pytlas, 2014: 224; Sikk, 2012; Böcskei and Molnar, 2019: 2-3). By doing so, Jobbik sought to attract moderate conservative voters disillusioned with Fidesz, presenting itself as a credible alternative to the ruling establishment. While this strategic pivot helped Jobbik maintain relevance, it also alienated many of its core supporters. Hardline members viewed the moderation as a betrayal of the party's foundational principles (Murer, 2015; Varga, 2014). This internal disillusionment culminated in the formation of Mi Hazánk in 2018, a splinter group established by former Jobbik members who sought to reclaim the radical nationalist mantle that Jobbik had abandoned (Szigeti, 2018).

Jobbik's rise and subsequent strategic shift reflect broader trends in European radical-right movements, where parties often moderate their positions to achieve electoral success. This evolution highlights the adaptability of radical-right politics but also reveals the inherent tensions in transitioning from the margins to the mainstream. As Jobbik moved closer to the political centre, it opened space for new radical-right actors like Mi Hazánk to emerge, continuing Hungary's radical-right tradition. The party's trajectory underscores the complex interplay between ideology, strategy and electoral dynamics in shaping radical-right politics. Initially propelled by nationalist sentiments

and public dissatisfaction with the political establishment, Jobbik's desire to sustain electoral success and appeal to a broader audience ultimately reshaped its identity. This shift not only altered Hungary's political landscape but also illuminated the evolving nature of radical-right politics in post-communist Europe.

Formation and Ideology of Mi Hazánk

Mi Hazánk Mozgalom or 'Our Homeland Movement', was founded in 2018 by former members of Jobbik who had become increasingly disillusioned with Jobbik's strategic shift toward a more moderate, mainstream position. The driving force behind Mi Hazánk is László Toroczkai, a prominent nationalist politician who served as the mayor of Ásotthalom, a town near Hungary's southern border. Known for his hardline stance on immigration and nationalism (Gyollai, 2021: 8), Toroczkai was a significant figure within Jobbik but became critical of the party's departure from its radical roots. Joining Toroczkai were other disaffected members, including Dóra Dúró, a former Jobbik MP, who shared a commitment to reviving Hungary's radical nationalist tradition (Ozorai, 2018: 8).

The formation of Mi Hazánk was a direct response to internal tensions within Jobbik, where many members felt that the party had abandoned its core principles in an effort to appeal to a broader electorate. These members saw Mi Hazánk as a return to the uncompromising nationalist and anti-establishment values that had originally defined Jobbik. Mi Hazánk's platform was rooted in a rejection of European integration and globalization (Kowalczyk, 2017), both of which were perceived as threats to Hungary's sovereignty and cultural identity. This ideological grounding positioned the party as a staunch defender of Hungarian traditions and autonomy.

Mi Hazánk's ideology centres on the preservation of Hungarian national identity, advocating for the protection of Hungary's cultural heritage, language, religion and traditions from perceived external threats. Central to its platform is its firm opposition to immigration, reflecting the belief that immigration poses a demographic and cultural risk to Hungary. This anti-immigration and Islamophobic (Kallis, 2019) stance aligns closely with the party's broader Euroscepticism (Özoflu and Arato, 2024: 50), which views the European Union as a force that undermines Hungary's sovereignty and imposes liberal, multicultural values that conflict with the country's national character. In addition to its nationalist positions, Mi Hazánk emphasizes socially conservative policies. The party has been vocal in its opposition to LGBTQ+

rights and its advocacy for traditional family structures (Redai, 2024; Kiss and Zahoran, 2007). It frames these traditional values as essential for maintaining Hungary's moral and cultural fabric and portrays their defence as a response to the perceived moral decline associated with Western liberalism. This social conservatism is a key component of Mi Hazánk's broader ideological stance, which seeks to counteract the influence of liberal ideologies in Hungary.

The formation and ideological positioning of Mi Hazánk have allowed it to attract former supporters of MIEP, the earlier radical-right party that similarly championed Hungarian nationalism and social conservatism (Vékony, 2019). These supporters view Mi Hazánk as the true successor of MIEP's legacy, particularly in its commitment to protecting traditional Hungarian values and resisting foreign influence. The party's focus on rural issues and its solid anti-Roma rhetoric also resonates with former MIEP voters (Goldstein, 2021), who have often felt overlooked by Hungary's mainstream political parties.

Since its formation, Mi Hazánk has grown steadily, establishing itself as a significant force in Hungary's radical-right politics. The party has successfully positioned itself as the uncompromising alternative to both the ruling Fidesz and the mainstream opposition. Its ability to address core issues such as immigration, national sovereignty, Islamophobia and social conservatism has been central to its growth (Bradford and Cullen, 2021). Furthermore, Mi Hazánk has benefited from the broader rise of populist and nationalist movements across Europe, which have provided fertile ground for its message (Pirro and Róna, 2019).

As Mi Hazánk continues to develop its platform and expand its support base, its role in Hungary's political landscape is expected to grow. The party's success so far reflects a persistent demand for radical-right ideologies, particularly among voters who feel their concerns are ignored by mainstream parties. While it remains uncertain whether Mi Hazánk can achieve the level of influence once held by Jobbik, its formation and growth underscore the enduring appeal of nationalist and socially conservative ideologies in Hungary.

Comparative Analysis of MIEP, Jobbik and Mi Hazánk: Ideology, Electoral Strategies, Media and Policies

The evolution of Hungary's radical right from MIEP to Jobbik and, more recently, to Mi Hazánk reflects both continuities and transformations in ideology, strategy and political influence. While each party has rooted itself in nationalist principles, its approaches to achieving political relevance, electoral

strategies and focus on different demographic groups have shifted over time. This comparative analysis explores vital elements that distinguish these parties while highlighting the ideological threads that connect them.

MIEP, Jobbik and Mi Hazánk share a common foundation in nationalist, Eurosceptic and socially conservative ideologies, yet each party has reinterpreted these core principles according to the changing political landscape. MIEP, founded in 1993 (Vachudova and Hooghe, 2005: 22; Murer, 2015) under the leadership of István Csurka, was the first major radical-right party to emerge in post-communist Hungary. The party positioned itself as a staunch defender of Hungarian sovereignty, cultural nationalism and traditionalist values, opposing foreign influences, Western liberalism and globalism (Kopecky and Mudde, 2002: 310). Anti-Semitism and cultural preservation were central to MIEP's platform, aligning with its broader rejection of liberal values. In contrast, Jobbik, established in 2003, built on these ideological foundations but adopted a more dynamic and populist approach. Jobbik emphasized Hungarian nationalism and anti-Roma rhetoric (Szabados, 2015: 51-52; Nagy, Boros and Vasali, 2013: 241; Csomor, 2015), while also criticizing European integration and globalization. Over time, Jobbik sought to expand its electoral appeal by moderating its stance on key issues, such as anti-Semitism, while maintaining its nationalist and Eurosceptic core (Kovacs, 2013). This ideological moderation became particularly evident after 2015 when Jobbik shifted its focus toward anti-corruption and centrist policies as part of its '*people's party strategy*'. In contrast, Mi Hazánk, founded in 2018 by former Jobbik members dissatisfied with this moderation, represents a return to uncompromising radical-right principles (Jakli, 2024: 74). The party emphasizes hardline nationalism, strong anti-immigration policies (Kyriazi, 2022: 13) and a robust opposition to the European Union (Havlik and Hlousek, 2024). Mi Hazánk's commitment to social conservatism, including its opposition to LGBTQ+ rights (Gera, 2023: 110) and defence of traditional family values, distinguishes it as the most ideologically consistent of the three parties in preserving Hungary's radical-right traditions.

Electoral strategies among these parties have varied significantly, shaped by shifting voter demographics and the broader political context. MIEP primarily targeted older, rural voters nostalgic for pre-communist Hungary and wary of Western liberalism. However, its inability to engage younger, urban voters limited its growth and contributed to its decline in the early 2000s. Jobbik, by contrast, successfully attracted younger, disaffected voters by leveraging modern political tools such as social media and grassroots organizing (Csomor, 2015; Szabados, 2015; Pirro and Róna, 2019). This focus on

engaging a digitally connected electorate allowed Jobbik to emerge as a major force in Hungarian politics, exemplified by its success in the 2010 parliamentary elections, where it secured 16.7% of the vote (Bozóki, 2016). However, Jobbik's strategic shift toward the political centre alienated many of its original supporters, leading to the loss of its radical base (Schulteis, 2018). Mi Hazánk has sought to capture this disillusioned segment of the electorate, particularly former Jobbik supporters (Toka, 2019b) who viewed the party's moderation as a betrayal of its founding principles by focusing on rural, socially conservative voters and emphasizing issues such as immigration and national sovereignty. Mi Hazánk has established itself as a strong alternative to both the ruling Fidesz party and the mainstream opposition. Mi Hazánk's platform is centred on maintaining Hungary's national identity (Our Homeland Movement (Mi Hazánk), 2018) and rejecting the liberal values promoted by the European Union, which resonates with voters who prioritise national sovereignty and cultural preservation.

Media representation has played a pivotal role in shaping public perceptions of MIEP, Jobbik and Mi Hazánk. During its peak, MIEP was often portrayed as a fringe, extremist party, with media coverage highlighting its anti-Semitic rhetoric and xenophobic positions. This portrayal further isolated the party from moderate voters (Szöcs, 1998), reinforcing its image as an outlier in Hungarian politics. Jobbik initially faced similar scrutiny, particularly for its anti-Roma rhetoric (Karacsony and Rona, 2011), anti-Semitic (Dohnanyi, Gelencser and Hegedüs, 2015) and nationalist policies. However, as the party began to moderate its image in the mid-2010s, media coverage became more nuanced. Jobbik's attempt to distance itself from its radical-right roots and present itself as a mainstream conservative alternative led to a shift in how it was portrayed in the media, though the party continued to face scepticism from both the right and the left. Mi Hazánk, on the other hand, has been portrayed in the media as the inheritor of Hungary's most radical right-wing traditions. Media coverage of Mi Hazánk often emphasises its uncompromising stance on issues such as immigration, national sovereignty and social conservatism (Štětka and Mihelj, 2024; Oross and Tap, 2021). Public perception of the party reflects these portrayals, with Mi Hazánk seen as the most ideologically pure of the three parties in terms of its commitment to Hungary's nationalist traditions and its rejection of liberal democracy.

Policy priorities have also evolved across these parties, reflecting their ideological trajectories. MIEP's platform centred on defending Hungarian sovereignty, opposing Western liberalism and preserving Hungary's cultural heritage. Jobbik initially mirrored these positions, adding a focus on an-

ti-Roma policies and populist economic reforms. However, as Jobbik moved toward the political centre, its policy focus shifted to issues such as anti-corruption and economic development, seeking to appeal to a broader electorate. Mi Hazánk, in contrast, has rejected such moderation, returning to the hard-line nationalist positions that defined MIEP and early Jobbik. The party's policies emphasize the protection of Hungary's national identity, opposition to immigration and strong Euroscepticism, alongside a commitment to socially conservative values such as traditional family structures and opposition to LGBTQ+ rights. These positions have helped Mi Hazánk distinguish itself within Hungary's political landscape, appealing to voters who feel that mainstream parties have failed to address their concerns.

The comparative evolution of MIEP, Jobbik and Mi Hazánk underscores the adaptability of Hungary's radical-right parties in navigating changing political contexts while maintaining a core focus on nationalism, Euroscepticism and social conservatism. Although their strategies and emphases have varied, these parties collectively illustrate the enduring appeal of radical-right ideologies in Hungary's post-communist political landscape.

Impact on Hungarian Politics and Society

The rise of MIEP, Jobbik and Mi Hazánk has profoundly influenced Hungarian politics, shaping national discourse, electoral dynamics and social attitudes. These radical-right parties have introduced and amplified themes such as extreme nationalism, Euroscepticism and social conservatism, leaving an indelible mark on Hungary's political and societal fabric.

MIEP, Jobbik and Mi Hazánk have collectively shifted Hungary's national political discourse towards a more exclusionary and conservative orientation. As the first major radical-right party in post-communist Hungary, MIEP introduced anti-Semitic and nationalist rhetoric into mainstream debates, paving the way for successors to adopt and expand these themes. Jobbik advanced this discourse by focusing on anti-Roma and anti-immigrant sentiments, rallying support from voters disillusioned with the liberal political establishment. Mi Hazánk, formed by former Jobbik members dissatisfied with the party's moderation, has intensified this shift by emphasizing social conservatism and strong anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric (Fazekas and Korkut, 2023: 11-17). The party's aggressive defence of traditional Hungarian values, coupled with its staunch opposition to immigration, has further polarized political discourse, compelling mainstream parties to address these issues to remain competitive.

Electorally, these parties have had varied success but have collectively reshaped Hungary's political landscape. MIEP's influence peaked in 1998 when it secured 5.5% of the vote in parliamentary elections. However, its failure to modernize and appeal to younger voters led to its decline as Jobbik emerged in the early 2000s. Jobbik capitalized on widespread dissatisfaction with Hungary's political establishment, achieving a significant breakthrough in the 2010 parliamentary elections with 16.7% of the vote and 47 seats in the National Assembly (Palaguta and Kurowicka, 2016: 201-213). This success marked the beginning of its rise as a dominant force in radical-right politics, particularly in rural areas and among younger voters.

Mi Hazánk, formed in 2018, has focused on rural constituencies where its nationalist and socially conservative platform resonates strongly (Walker, 2022). Although it has not yet achieved the electoral success of Jobbik at its peak, Mi Hazánk's growing support base suggests its potential to play an increasingly significant role in Hungary's political future. By positioning itself as a more radical alternative to both Jobbik and Fidesz, Mi Hazánk has attracted voters who feel mainstream parties have strayed too far from traditional values.

The rise of these radical-right parties has elicited varied responses from Hungary's political establishment. Fidesz, under Viktor Orbán's leadership, has co-opted many of the radical right's key themes (Aras and Sağıroğlu, 2018: 69; Thorleifsson, 2017: 328), including hardline nationalism and Euro-scepticism (Tremlett and Messing, 2015; Bozóki, 2016: 95-98). This strategic alignment has allowed Fidesz to dominate Hungarian politics while minimizing threats from both Jobbik and Mi Hazánk. By adopting anti-immigration rhetoric and framing itself as a defender of national sovereignty (Metelkina, 2018), Fidesz has captured a significant portion of the radical-right electorate (Böcskei and Molnar, 2019: 2-3). Conversely, left-wing opposition parties such as the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) have struggled to counter the radical right's appeal. Their emphasis on pro-European policies and liberal values has failed to resonate with rural voters, forcing these parties to shift their focus towards economic and social issues to regain support. This dynamic has further polarized Hungary's political landscape.

The societal impact of the radical right's rise has been profound, contributing to heightened political polarization and increased social tensions (Buda and Gabor, 2007; Uitz, 2008: 61; Körösenyi, 2018: 11). MIEP's early rhetoric introduced anti-Semitic themes, while Jobbik intensified xenophobic attitudes (Rudas, 2010) by focusing on anti-Roma (Kovacs, 2013: 227; Finchelstein

and Bosoer, 2013; Varga, 2014: 797) and anti-immigrant policies (Neumayer, 2008: 147). Mi Hazánk has built on these foundations, framing immigrants and LGBTQ+ individuals and other minority groups as threats to Hungary's cultural and moral fabric. This has exacerbated divisions, particularly in rural areas where such rhetoric (Pirro, 2014: 614-617) resonates more strongly.

Hungary's national identity has also been reshaped by these radical-right parties. Their emphasis on preserving Hungary's cultural heritage, combined with deep Euroscepticism (Korkut, 2012: 184), has fostered a more exclusionary nationalism that defines '*Hungarianness*' by ethnicity, religion and adherence to conservative values (Buzogany, 2017: 1308; Szelenyi and Csillag, 2015: 23). This has created a stark divide between those who envision Hungary as a cosmopolitan member of the European Union and those who seek to safeguard its nationalist and traditionalist identity.

The societal consequences of this polarization have been significant. Anti-immigration and anti-Roma sentiments have grown substantially since the 2015 refugee crisis, driven in part by the rhetoric of radical-right parties and government policies that exploit these fears (Juhasz, 2016; Kafkadesk, 2019; Kreko and Juhasz, 2015). This has created a more hostile environment for minority groups and deepened debates over Hungary's role within the European Union and the broader global order. The 2015 refugee crisis was a pivotal moment for Hungary's radical right, providing fertile ground for anti-immigration rhetoric and policies. Jobbik and Mi Hazánk capitalized on the public's growing fears of cultural displacement and economic insecurity, aligning their platforms with nationalist and exclusionary narratives. Jobbik utilized the refugee crisis to strengthen its nationalist platform, emphasizing the incompatibility of non-European migrants with Hungarian culture. Campaign materials and speeches often invoked imagery of invasion and chaos, resonating with voters anxious about Hungary's security and sovereignty. This strategy bolstered Jobbik's support among rural and working-class voters but also heightened scrutiny from international observers. Mi Hazánk's formation post-2015 allowed it to build directly on the crisis's legacy. The party's rhetoric positioned immigration as a direct threat to Hungary's demographic integrity, tying it to broader Eurosceptic and anti-globalist themes. For example, Mi Hazánk's leader, László Toroczkai, frequently invoked Hungary's historical struggles against external invaders to justify strict immigration policies and border enforcement. The party also criticized Jobbik for failing to maintain its radical stance during the crisis, further consolidating its position as the uncompromising defender of Hungary's nationalist identity. The refugee crisis amplified xenophobic attitudes in Hungary, creating a political

environment conducive to radical-right narratives. Surveys indicate a significant increase in public opposition to immigration post-2015, correlating with the rhetoric of Jobbik and Mi Hazánk. This shift not only reshaped Hungary's political discourse but also deepened societal divides, particularly in rural areas where anti-immigration sentiments were most pronounced.

In summary, MIEP, Jobbik and Mi Hazánk have not only reshaped Hungary's political discourse but have also left a lasting impact on its societal attitudes and political alignments. Their rise reflects broader trends in radical-right politics across Europe, underscoring the persistent appeal of nationalism, Euroscepticism and social conservatism in times of political and economic uncertainty. The legacy of these parties continues to influence Hungary's political trajectory, highlighting the enduring challenges of addressing polarization and fostering inclusive national identity.

Development of the Current Radical Right in Hungary through Mi Hazánk

The emergence of Mi Hazánk in 2018 marked a pivotal moment in the evolution of Hungary's radical right. Founded by László Toroczkai and other former Jobbik members, Mi Hazánk was born out of dissatisfaction with Jobbik's ideological moderation and strategic shift towards the political centre, known as its '*frog-jump*' strategy (Szigeti, 2018). Mi Hazánk has since developed into a distinctive force in Hungary's radical-right landscape, filling the ideological and political void left by Jobbik's rebranding efforts and asserting itself as a staunch defender of traditional Hungarian values and sovereignty.

Mi Hazánk's formation was a direct response to Jobbik's efforts to position itself as a mainstream conservative party, which many of its former members and supporters perceived as a betrayal of its radical roots. Seeking to reclaim the radical-right space, Mi Hazánk adopted an uncompromising nationalist and anti-establishment platform (Dayıoğlu, 2023: 214-215). The party's ideology is rooted in radical nationalism, strong opposition to immigration, deep Euroscepticism and a rejection of liberal values. Its rhetoric emphasizes the protection of Hungarian identity and culture, positioning Mi Hazánk as the true guardian of national sovereignty. A defining feature of Mi Hazánk's development has been its effort to establish a clear identity separate from both Fidesz and Jobbik. While Fidesz has adopted elements of nationalist and Eurosceptic rhetoric to consolidate its dominance, Mi Hazánk differentiates itself by embracing more extreme positions on social and cultural issues. The party's platform strongly opposes LGBTQ+ rights and advocates for traditional family

structures, framing these issues as essential to preserving Hungary's moral fabric. This social conservatism is coupled with an aggressive stance against immigration, which the party portrays as a threat to Hungary's demographic composition and cultural integrity. By capitalizing on fears of foreign influence and liberal ideologies, Mi Hazánk has solidified its appeal among voters who feel alienated by both the ruling Fidesz and the moderate opposition.

Mi Hazánk's development also reflects its strategic focus on rural constituencies, where its nationalist and socially conservative platform resonates most strongly. The party has worked to build a loyal support base among voters who perceive mainstream parties as disconnected from their concerns. By addressing issues such as immigration, national sovereignty and traditional values, Mi Hazánk has established itself as a credible alternative for those dissatisfied with Hungary's political establishment.

The party's growth has had a notable impact on Hungary's political landscape, contributing to further polarization and intensifying debates over national identity and cultural preservation. Mi Hazánk's emphasis on radical nationalism and social conservatism has pushed mainstream parties to address these themes, amplifying their presence in Hungary's political discourse. While Mi Hazánk's electoral performance has not yet reached the levels of Jobbik at its peak, its consistent growth suggests an enduring demand for radical-right ideologies in Hungary.

Looking ahead, Mi Hazánk's future role in Hungarian politics will depend on its ability to expand its support base while maintaining its ideological purity. The party faces the challenge of balancing its appeal to disillusioned Jobbik supporters with the need to attract new voters without compromising its radical platform. As the political and social dynamics in Hungary evolve, Mi Hazánk's trajectory will remain a critical indicator of the radical right's influence in shaping Hungary's political future.

Future Predictions for Newest Radical Right Party: Mi Hazánk in Hungarian Politics

Mi Hazánk's trajectory since its formation in 2018 suggests it is poised to play an increasingly prominent role in Hungarian politics. The party has successfully cultivated a loyal support base, particularly among voters disillusioned with both the mainstream opposition and Fidesz's dominance. Its emphasis on nationalist and socially conservative values resonates with segments of the electorate who feel alienated by the political establishment and perceive Hungary's national identity as under threat.

One potential future trajectory for Mi Hazánk is to expand its influence in rural areas, where its platform is particularly well-received. The party's strong stance on agricultural policy and the protection of Hungarian farmers has the potential to attract more voters in these regions, especially as rural communities continue to grapple with economic challenges and depopulation. By focusing on these areas, Mi Hazánk could solidify its position as the leading voice for rural Hungary, further distancing itself from Jobbik, which has struggled to maintain its relevance in these communities. Another critical factor that could shape Mi Hazánk's future is its relationship with Fidesz. If Fidesz continues to shift further right to absorb some of Mi Hazánk's nationalist rhetoric, it could undermine Mi Hazánk's appeal to voters who view it as the only true defender of Hungary's national interests. On the other hand, if Fidesz begins to move back towards the centre, Mi Hazánk could benefit by capturing disillusioned Fidesz supporters who feel that their party has abandoned its nationalist principles.

Mi Hazánk's future prospects are also influenced by broader European political trends. The rise of nationalist and Eurosceptic movements across the continent provides a supportive environment for Mi Hazánk's growth. As European integration continues to face challenges and scepticism towards the EU grows, Mi Hazánk's deep Euroscepticism and strong national sovereignty rhetoric could attract a larger share of the electorate. However, the party will need to balance its nationalist positions with pragmatic policies that address the economic and social needs of its supporters to avoid being marginalised as a single-issue party. Internally, Mi Hazánk faces the challenge of maintaining cohesion among its leadership and membership. The party was founded by former Jobbik members who left due to ideological differences and any future attempts to moderate or alter the party's platform could lead to similar fragmentation. To avoid this, Mi Hazánk will need to ensure that it remains true to its core principles while still being responsive to the changing political landscape.

Broader European political trends will also shape Mi Hazánk's prospects. The rise of nationalist and Eurosceptic movements across Europe provides a favorable context for Mi Hazánk's growth. As skepticism toward the European Union deepens, Mi Hazánk's emphasis on national sovereignty and opposition to EU integration could attract a larger share of the electorate. However, the party will need to balance its nationalist rhetoric with practical policies that address voters' economic and social needs to avoid being marginalized as a single-issue party. Expanding its policy agenda to include prag-

matic solutions for economic development and social welfare could enhance Mi Hazánk's appeal to a broader demographic.

Internally, Mi Hazánk must navigate challenges related to cohesion among its leadership and membership. Founded by former Jobbik members who broke away due to ideological differences, Mi Hazánk risks potential fragmentation if it attempts to moderate its positions or significantly alter its platform. To maintain unity, the party must remain steadfast in its core principles while remaining responsive to Hungary's evolving political landscape. Balancing ideological consistency with adaptability will be crucial to its long-term stability. In terms of electoral success, Mi Hazánk's ability to expand beyond its current base is vital. While its nationalist and socially conservative rhetoric strongly resonates with a specific segment of voters, broader political influence will require appealing to a wider audience. This may involve moderating its stance on certain issues or crafting a comprehensive policy platform addressing economic inequality, healthcare and education. By tackling issues beyond nationalism and identity politics, Mi Hazánk can broaden its voter base without compromising its ideological foundation.

Ultimately, Mi Hazánk's emergence and growth reflect broader trends in the development of the radical right in Hungary. Its appeal to disillusioned voters and commitment to a hardline nationalist platform have positioned it as a significant force in the country's politics. However, its future success will hinge on its ability to navigate internal and external challenges, expand its support base and adapt to Hungary's shifting political landscape. As Hungary continues to grapple with debates over national identity, European integration and social values, Mi Hazánk is likely to grow in prominence, making it a key player to watch in the coming years.

Conclusion

The rise and evolution of Hungary's radical-right politics, exemplified by the trajectories of MIEP, Jobbik and Mi Hazánk, reflect the complex dynamics that have shaped the country's political landscape over the past three decades. These parties have significantly influenced the ideological and strategic contours of Hungary's radical-right spectrum, revealing both continuities and shifts in nationalist, Eurosceptic and socially conservative discourses.

A key takeaway from this analysis is the importance of distinguishing between populism and the radical right in understanding Hungary's political landscape. Jobbik's transformation illustrates the fluidity between these cate-

gories, as its early years combined populist anti-elitism with ethnic nationalism, while its later rebranding broadened its appeal, diluting its radical-right identity. In contrast, Mi Hazánk's emergence represents a rejection of populist moderation in favour of ideological purity. Unlike Jobbik's attempt to appeal to centrist voters, Mi Hazánk has maintained a strict focus on nationalism, social conservatism and ethnic homogeneity, avoiding populist notions of a "broad people's alliance" against elites.

MIEP's emergence in the 1990s laid the groundwork for Hungary's radical-right movement by championing traditional nationalist values and rejecting Western liberalism. Jobbik expanded upon this foundation by adopting a dynamic and confrontational approach that resonated with younger, disaffected voters. However, Jobbik's strategic pivot towards the political centre created an opening for Mi Hazánk, which has positioned itself as the staunch defender of Hungary's radical nationalist tradition. By emphasizing radical nationalism, social conservatism and staunch opposition to European integration, Mi Hazánk has established itself as a significant political force, appealing to voters alienated by the perceived compromises of Jobbik and Fidesz. Its focus on national identity and sovereignty continues to resonate with segments of the electorate dissatisfied with mainstream political options.

The evolution of Hungary's radical right suggests that nationalist and Eurosceptic movements will remain influential in shaping the country's political landscape. Mi Hazánk's emergence as a prominent player signals the persistent demand for hardline nationalist positions, particularly as concerns about immigration, cultural preservation and sovereignty remain central to political debates. However, the party's long-term success will depend on its ability to expand beyond its current support base by addressing broader economic and social issues. At the same time, Fidesz's strategic positioning will play a critical role. If Fidesz continues to adopt nationalist rhetoric and policies, it may undermine Mi Hazánk's appeal. Conversely, a centrist shift by Fidesz could create new opportunities for Mi Hazánk to attract disillusioned Fidesz supporters. The broader European context will also shape the future of Hungary's radical right. As Euroscepticism and nationalism gain momentum across the continent, Mi Hazánk's positions on sovereignty and cultural preservation may resonate more strongly with voters sceptical of European integration. However, the party will need to balance its radical rhetoric with pragmatic policies to avoid being marginalized as a fringe movement.

Future research can further illuminate the dynamics of Hungary's radical right. Comparative studies examining Mi Hazánk alongside other radical-right

parties in Central and Eastern Europe could reveal common patterns and distinct national contexts influencing these movements. Additionally, exploring the socio-economic factors underpinning support for Mi Hazánk, including economic deprivation and rural-urban divides, would provide valuable insights. Investigating the psychological and social drivers of voter behaviour, such as the interplay between authoritarian tendencies, social conservatism and support for radical-right ideologies, could also deepen understanding. Furthermore, examining the role of media and social media in shaping the party's growth and mobilization strategies could highlight critical mechanisms behind its rise. Finally, analysing the long-term societal impacts of Mi Hazánk's policies, particularly on social cohesion and minority rights, would shed light on the broader implications of radical-right politics for Hungary's democratic governance and social stability.

In conclusion, the rise of Mi Hazánk underscores broader trends in Hungary's radical-right evolution. The party's ability to navigate internal and external challenges, expand its support base and adapt to a changing political environment will determine its long-term impact. As Hungary's political landscape continues to evolve, Mi Hazánk is likely to play a pivotal role, making it a key actor in the future of radical-right politics in the country.

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