

# THE SECRET OF JOBBIK

## Reasons behind the rise of the Hungarian radical right

### *Introduction*

Elections that realign party systems, fundamentally changing the political landscape and cleavage structures of a country, are generally referred to as *critical elections* by political scientists (Evans-Norris 1999). If the 2009 European Parliamentary Election had been a national election we would have called it a critical election. Its most surprising result was not the landslide victory of Fidesz (conservative party), not even the failure of the Socialist Party (MSZP) and the Free Democrats but the breakthrough of Jobbik (Movement for a Better Hungary), a party of the radical right. In the new era of Hungarian democracy it has been unparalleled for a party to achieve a popularity of 15% in such a short period<sup>1</sup>. Before 2009, all analysts agreed that the electoral system, the media, and other institutional factors made it almost impossible to launch new parties for the elections due in 2010. Conversely, according to conventional wisdom, the Hungarian party system was frozen, consolidated and institutionalized (Enyedi 2006). From this perspective the result is especially remarkable, as Jobbik managed to approximate the popularity of the governing Socialist party.

In case we examine other European far-right parties, it is impossible to find an example of such a quick ascendance, no other extreme party has managed to achieve 15% having less than 1% a year before. Apart from its abruptness, the extent of the success is also outstanding. Out of the radical parties that ran for the 2009 European Parliament elections none, but the Dutch Freedom Party (led by Geert Wilders) managed to exceed the vote share of Jobbik.

The main question we are attempting to answer is why almost half a million voters cast their ballots for the Hungarian radical party. The purpose of our study is to find the reasons behind the rise of the far-right and contribute to the understanding of this phenomenon. Our hypothesis based on domestic public discourse, and most of all on international literature is complex and therefore needs to be tested by a wide range of empirical tools. In the first part of the analysis we investigate the social background and attitudes of Jobbik supporters using survey data, whereas the second part deals with the political agenda. In this latter section we will try to find out what happened in the first half of 2009 that could have contributed profoundly to such an unprecedented success. We employ content- and agenda-analysis to present the issue-ownership of Jobbik regarding the Roma-problem, focusing on how its salience strengthened the radicals. We consider the combination of survey- and agenda-analysis a promising methodological concept.

## *Theoretical framework*

For a solid starting point we need to define the concept of extreme right. The notion boasts of enormous literature (Mudde 2005, 2007: 11-12; Norris 2005: 47-48; Carter 2005; Kitschelt 2007: 1178-1181, Eatwell 2000: 411-414). We avoid taking sides in this theoretical debate, and for the sake of simplicity we regard the terms “extreme right”, “far-right”, “extreme right-wing”, “radical right” as synonymous. According to our concepts radical right parties are characterized by nationalism, xenophobia, anti-establishment and authoritarian attitudes. Although not to the same extent and not with the same emphasis, all radical parties share these ideological features. Using these criteria, we consider Jobbik a radical right party.

The literature of radical right is dominated by two theoretical approaches (Norris 2005, Mudde 2007). The first one examines the underlying factors that can cause a demand for extreme parties (*demand side*). The second investigates the momentums influencing political actors and entrepreneurs (*supply side*). The main hypotheses of the demand-side are: (for a more detailed description see Norris 2005, Mudde 2007)

- *Crisis of the welfare state*

It was unemployment and impoverishment that led to the rise of extreme parties. Disappointed and humiliated people tend to choose the radicals who promise a new, more just society (Bell 1955, Lipset 1960).

- *Growing immigration*

Migration subverted European societies: immigrants could not fit in because of cultural and social differences. On the one-hand, the poorer, uneducated strata regard immigrants as rivals in the labour market (Betz 1994, 1998), on the other hand, people whose economic well-being is dependent on social benefits, depict immigrants as free riders, who do not contribute to the welfare system (*welfare chauvinism*, Kitschelt-McGann 1995). A higher rate of criminalism is the third main reason of negative emotions towards immigrants and voting for radical parties.

- *Modernization*

The breakdown of traditional class structures and a growing individualization (isolation) of the electorate eliminated old partisan identities. According to the theory of Arendt Hannah (1975), voters who are not integrated in civil communities are more exposed to the rhetoric of radical parties (Van der Brug et al 2005, Ignazi 2000). Civil organizations protect their members from external influences and information creating a common identity which makes them very hard to manipulate. Voters without social capital (Putnam 1993), however, can seldom resist extremists who intend to change the political and social status quo. For the losers of modernization encapsulation is a rational solution because it abates economic competition which is detrimental to them (Kriesi et al 2006).

- *Partisan dealignment, anti-establishment attitude*

There is a growing disaffection with the established parties in Western-Europe (Dalton et al 1984). The electorate wants new parties that are not responsible for government

failures and are not connected with corruption. A more radical reason for protest votes is citizens' disappointment not only with the governing parties, but with the entire political system.

The abovementioned hypotheses suffer from numerous deficiencies. According to Van der Brug (2005) these are necessary but not sufficient conditions of extreme right sympathies. The hypotheses show who the *potential* voters of the radicals are, but do not explain why these voters actually cast their ballot to the far-right parties. The arguments of the demand side can be applied to a green or a new-left party as well: neither phenomenon indicates that voters can *only* choose the radical right. The hypothesis implicitly assumes that the real reason for supporting the far-right is some kind of *social frustration* or *personal disappointment*. Without proper justification we do not accept that disaffection in itself is capable of causing sympathy for radicalism, and unsuccessful people ("losers") are more likely to support far-right parties.

Our skepticism towards these explanations is general and does not only concern the research of the extreme right. The problem is that scholars who support the demand approach (e.g. Knutsen and Scarbrough 1995) "eventually resort to the examination of correlations between party preferences and various socio-demographic or attitudinal variables" (Enyedi 2005: 698). They ignore the role of political events and actors, who influence the preferences of the electorate. Even if an excellent breeding ground for radicals is present, without the appearance of a party that is capable of exploiting the advantages of a favorable social-economic situation, extremists cannot gain significant public support. Consequently, we do not consider the demand-side hypothesis as a fruitful approach: it is only one side of the coin.

The current approach to the supply-side theory is the *spatial model*, which places parties in a one-dimensional space. According to Kitschelt (1995) and Van der Brug (2005), the smaller distance there is between mainstream parties, the easier it is for radicals to blur the difference between them. Ignazi (2003) claims, however, that far-right parties can be legitimized by the radicalization of the main conservative party. Contrary to Kitschelt's hypothesis, Ignazi assumes that a rightward shift in the main right party's stance is beneficial to extremists.

Scholars in support of the "political opportunity structures theory" claim that aside from rival parties, institutional features, such as electoral systems have a vital role to play in the electoral success of right-wing extremists (Eatwell 2000: 422-424). Considerable attention should be paid to another supply side theory, which urges the investigation of the radical party itself (Kitschelt 2007: 1193-1197, Mudde 2007). The relationship between the spread of the internet and extreme politics is also a relevant field of research connected to the theory. Many researchers have written about the effect of the internet (Dányi 2002, Enyedi 2008), but only a few (Atton 2004) concentrated on radical parties.

The examination of the media's role assumes an approach that involves both the demand and the supply side. In spite of the enormous attention paid to that field, only moderate efforts have been made to investigate the impact of media on radical parties and voters (Ullram-Plasser 2003, Birenbaum-Villa 2003). These studies blame the tabloid media and the culture of infotainment for the rise of extreme parties. They claim that editors have a

preference for negative news and provide more coverage to extreme statements. Thus the 'reality' presented offers opportunities for radical, extremist explanations. According to this hypothesis 'media-reality' and 'media-messages' are automatically accepted by the media consumers (second level of agenda setting). This is, however, doubtlessly a simplistic model of communication. As Cohen (1963:13) stated, "the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about" (first level of agenda-setting).

The previous statement sums up well the basics of the issue-ownership concept (Budge and Farlie 1983, Petrocik 1996). According to Petrocik, there is a public anticipation regarding the ability of parties to handle the current issues. The perception is based on the conventional profile and the particular image of the party (or candidate) or its government record. Hence, parties try to frame the election as a decision solely about one specific issue<sup>2</sup>. This might be beneficial to extremist if their issues (immigration, corruption of the elite) dominate the political agenda – this way the media gives inadvertent support to them (Williams 2006, Walgrave et al 2004).

John Zaller's theory (1993) is more complex than the issue-ownership concept. According to Zaller, citizens do not develop stable, crystallized attitudes (true attitudes), they only formulate opinion statements, which can be influenced by the structure of questionnaires (Angelusz-Tardos 2006), the conversations with neighbours or the news. The more recently or saliently a conviction has been formed, the easier it is to retrieve it from memory and "bring to the top of the head for use" (*Accessibility Axiom*, Zaller 1993, 48.). Conversely, people's voting decisions – and survey-answers – are shaped mainly by immediately accessible and salient convictions (*Response Axiom*). Zaller, contrary to Petrocik's theory, states that predispositions also determine political choice. "People tend to resist arguments that are inconsistent with their political predispositions, but they do so only to the extent that they possess the contextual information necessary to perceive a relationship between the message and their predispositions." (*Resistance Axiom*, Zaller 1993, 44.) Politically uninvolved voters are less likely to receive and comprehend political messages; therefore they only perceive new and easily understandable pieces of information (*Reception Axiom*).

These theories do not pertain to Western Europe and Central-Eastern Europe in the same way. In East-Europe tensions between the majority population and minorities are more relevant, therefore this topic is more salient in radical rhetoric as well. In Western countries the extreme right has a more hostile attitude towards immigrants than towards native minorities<sup>3</sup> (Kitschelt 2009:462). Moreover, Western radical parties usually support a pro-market policy, whereas their eastern "brothers" are more prone to paternalist views (etatist, anti-market). Militarism is also much more characteristic of Eastern parties. Naturally, the differences are much more complex, but – due to our striving for brevity – we will build upon the theoretical framework presented so far<sup>4</sup>.

## *Hypotheses*

Our hypotheses follow the lines set by the main approaches of the literature introduced in connection with this field. In the first section we will work with the assumption that – according to the spatial model – the ideological space has changed considerably in Hungary, thus people voted for Jobbik because of a general rightward shift of the Hungarian electorate. To be more specific, citizens moved closer to a radical stance regarding nationalism, xenophobia, anti-establishment and authoritarian attitudes (1.1 hypothesis).

Hypothesis 1.2 is based on Petrocik’s concept of issue-ownership. It states that Jobbik managed to gain support from the electorate because it accepted Jobbik as the most credible party regarding the Roma-problem. To test this assumption, we examine how many among those, who considered the Roma-problem as one of the most important problems of the country, claimed that only Jobbik was capable of handling it. If more respondents consider the party as a credible expert on that issue, than they actually vote for it, the hypothesis might be accepted. It is important to note that this approach does not take into account the public sentiments regarding the Roma-problem.

The next section focuses on the role of the media. Hypothesis 2.1 claims that Jobbik established a subculture that was strongly supported by a self-sufficient, mostly internet based media-presence. We presume that Jobbik supporters acquire information mainly from their own websites, newspapers and television channels rather than from the mainstream media. Probably this is similar to the media-usage of the Austrian extreme right party (FPÖ), whose voters received political information from the *Kronen Zeitung*, the “unofficial” party newspaper (Ullram-Plasser 2003).

Our next hypothesis (2.2) takes the opposite standpoint: it assumes that radicals consume mainstream media as much as everyone else does. Our main argument here is that tabloid media presented a negative picture of politics and economy, especially of the political elite, thus the opinion-climate was favourable to the far-right. From the viewpoint of Jobbik this meant that the press framed the Roma-assassinations similarly to their radical positions: it highlighted, for instance, the high proportion of Romas among criminals.

Hypothesis 2.3 – which is based on Zaller’s theory – endorses the statements of the previous one regarding the media-usage of Jobbik supporters, but it claims that mainstream media interpreted news differently from the radicals’ rhetoric. Still, for various reasons the media-climate was favourable for Jobbik. Firstly, according the *resistance axiom*, radicals are capable of resisting the political messages received from mainstream press due to their strong anti-Roma predispositions. Although the leading television channels framed Roma issues from a liberal viewpoint (poverty and racism forces them to be criminal), radicals ignored these arguments because of their stereotypical predispositions. Secondly, the distinctness, the novelty and the intensity of the topic also prevented the press from influencing mass opinion: people resisted it because they were personally involved in the racial tensions and their everyday lives were affected by it. Thirdly, anti-establishment parties regard the mainstream media as an

accomplice, and radicals have strong antagonistic feelings towards these particular channels. In consequence, the fact that the media offers conflicting views to their convictions does not lead to a cognitive dissonance. Just on the contrary, it proves that they are different from established parties.

The third section of hypotheses corresponds with demand-side theories. Hypothesis 3.1 assumes that the far-right is primarily chosen by disappointed people who are impoverished due to various reasons. For them the main appeal of Jobbik was probably its paternalist rhetoric. This assumption is popular on both political sides, which is almost unheard of in Hungarian politics. According to hypothesis 3.2, these voters lack any social capital and they do not belong to any social or political organisation –they are therefore exposed to radical, anti-establishment rhetoric (theory of Hannah Arendt, 1975).

### *Analysis of the survey data*

In the first part of our empirical investigation we use the 2008-2009 panel-database<sup>5</sup> and the 2006 database of the Hungarian Election Study. We start the analysis by scrutinizing the attitude shift of the Hungarian public in recent years (first hypothesis).

1. table. *Attitude change between 2006 and 2009*

		2006	2009
conventional authoritarianism (pro-order attitudes)	The most important virtues a child has to acquire are obedience and respect for authority.	62	71,25
	Young people sometimes have rebellious thoughts, but as they grow up, they should condemn them and adapt.	62,25	65,5
leader cult (radical authoritarianism)	What our country needs is not so much laws and political programs, but rather some brave, tireless and devoted leaders whom people can trust.	58	65,5
nationalism	A politician should rather be a good patriot or not, than, that he/she competent in a policy or not.	45,5	39
anti-establishment	On the whole, to what extent are you pleased with the functioning of democracy in the country? (100=dissatisfied)	54,45	63,36
xenophobia	Emotions towards the Romas (100=sympathy)	29	24

*Source:* Hungarian Election Study 2009 and 2006 databases and Median poll (xenophobia).

*Note:* Mean points transformed to a 100-scale. Completely agree=100.

2. table. Change of ideological self-placement between 2006 and 2009

The closest to your opinion are...	2006	2009
... people with strong national sentiments	16	17
... people with strong religious faith	9	7
... people with socialist approaches	18	11
... greens	7	8
... liberal, free-thinker people	14	12
... people with socialdemocratic approaches	5	5
... supporters of order and stability	17	25
... conservative people with respect for tradition	13	14

Source: Hungarian Election Study 2009 and 2006 databases

Note: Rounded percentages.

As it can be seen in table 1, anti-establishment, pro-order and xenophobic attitudes slightly increased in recent years, whereas only nationalism decreased. We dispute, however, that this could have caused a shift towards the far-right. Anti-Roma sentiments have continuously been strong in the recent decades and they already reached their peak during the early 90s (Enyedi 2005 et al) when they were slightly more intense than today. Moreover, the only remarkable change in ideology manifested itself in the shift towards a more articulated demand for order (table 2.), which is not the main motivation of the Jobbik-camp. Using the famous F-scale propagated by Adorno and his team (1950) we found that conventional authoritarianism is more characteristic of conservative Fidesz-voters than of the very young and “rebellious” Jobbik-electorate (appendix, table 2.). Both Jobbik and Fidesz supporters had a strong desire for a charismatic leader and both of them were distrustful towards political institutions as a significant approval of conspiracy theories indicated. Based on empirical evidence we cannot explain the rise of the extreme right-wing party, therefore our first assumption is rejected. Interestingly, using data sets from the 2002 election, Bojan Todosijević and Zsolt Enyedi (2008) had reached exactly the same conclusion regarding the authoritarian profile of extreme and conservative rightist movements.

In order to test the remaining hypotheses we explored the social background and attitudes of Jobbik-supporters. The results of bivariate analyses (presented in appendix table 1 and 2) are instructive but might as well be spurious. Due to the extent of the essay we can only introduce a multivariate analysis (Table 3.), which allows, in short, the assessment of the net impact of a given independent variable on a given dependent variable, controlling for the influence of all other variables.

In this study we are primarily interested in the motivation of Jobbik-voters, Fidesz- and MSZP-data are solely used for the purpose of comparison. Apart from the conventional social-demographical and attitudinal variables we introduced some others that deal with the effects of crises and criminalism. Two variables represent a contextual-milieu effect: they show the ethnic structure and the unemployment rate of a respondent’s town. We hold the methodological combination of aggregate ecological data and individual survey in high esteem but again, the extent of the essay did not permit such a research<sup>6</sup>.

Table 3. The determinants of party choice

Variables		Jobbik	Fidesz	MSZP
Social-demographic variables	gender (+ = woman)	-,077**		
	age	-,173***	-,179***	,254***
	qualification (dummy, +=primary school)			
	qualification (dummy, +=graduated)	-,055*		,064**
	town (+ =village)	,086**	,080*	-,119***
	wealth (dummy, +=low quarter)			
	wealth (dummy, +=upper quarter)	-,096***	-,072*	,118***
	religiosity		,162***	-,139***
Contextual variables	unemployment rate	-,113**		,135***
	proportion of Roma			
Affection by crises and crime	civic activity (membership)			
	affection by crises		,061*	-,056*
	affection by crime	,062*	-,074*	
Media-consumption	Internet-usage			
	TV2			
	RTL			
Attitudes	satisfaction with democracy (+=unsatisfied)	,129***		-,108***
	paternalism	,073**		-,054*
	conventional authoritarianism			
	nationalism	,199***	,192***	-,279***
	anti-Roma attitude	,221***		-,094***
	anti-Semitism(+=sympathy)	-,107***		,094***
Adj R square		,218	,096	,249

Source: Hungarian Election Study 2009 database

Note: only significant values are shown (\*\*\*p < 0,01, \*\* p<0,05, \*p< 0,10). OLS Linear Regression, standardized coefficients. Dependent variables are party preferences based on a 7 point scale in the case of all parties (1=antipathy, 7=sympathy). We coded it as follows: the average point of the two other parties were subtracted from each party's point on the scale. We coded the wealth variable on the basis of household commodities (DVD-player, hifi, microwave, washing machine, etc.). In the case of the crises variable we took into account the decreasing income, the increasing living costs, the loss of employment, increasing foreign currency interest rate, etc. For the criminalism variable we considered robbery, stealing, dead set, pocket-picking as crime.

Similarly to most of the Western radical parties, Jobbik is also more popular among men and young people. Age, however, seldom plays such an important role (Mudde 2007, Lubbers et al. 2002: 364). Apart from the youth, the extreme right party has higher popularity in the rural areas as well. Religiosity and the proportion of Romas in the neighbourhood does not have a significant impact on party choice, whereas unemployment rate, contrary to our expectations, actually decreases sympathies for Jobbik.



*Low qualifications, poverty, a lack of social capital did not have a significant impact on Jobbik-votes. Moreover the crime variable's effect was also comparably modest. Although high qualification and wealth seems to discourage radical preferences, we learned from the bivariate analysis (appendix table 1.) that Jobbik is actually over-represented among graduate people. Similarly, after controlling for other variables, crises did not prove to be a significant predictor. To sum up, we demonstrated that social frustration and a lack of integration in society are not the main reasons for supporting the extreme right. Although being affected by crimes had a significant effect, it was still very weak, and probably it is only the last element in the causality chain – true answers are to be found somewhere else. These results unambiguously challenge the most frequent assumption found in the literature (3.1 hypothesis): *unsuccessful and disaffected people are not necessarily more likely to vote for the extreme right than educated, privileged citizens.**

As it happens so often in political sociology, attitudes have a much greater explanatory power than social circumstances. According to our bivariate analysis (appendix, table 2.) nationalism, anti-establishment attitudes, and anti-Semitism had a medium effect on radical party choice. Anti-Roma attitude had, however, the most robust impact – even though the two other camps are also highly stereotypical (appendix table 3 and table 4).

There is another perspective regarding the salient role of anti-Roma attitudes. **Both in our bivariate and multivariate analyses we found remarkable similarities between Fidesz- and Jobbik camps.** In the third table, nationalism, young age, rural rather than urban characteristic, while in the bivariate analysis (appendix, table 2) paternalism and anti-establishment-sentiments were the common elements between the two parties. In the authoritarian–pro-order dimension, Jobbik and Fidesz supporters had a very similar profile, although only Fidesz-voters, but not radicals, agreed with conventional authoritarianism. Naturally, some differences are beyond doubt – the religiosity of the Fidesz-camp and the anti-Semitism among Jobbik-electorate –, but these differences are not pronounced in Hungarian politics, and do not shape the public discourse and political agenda in such a way as anti-Roma attitudes do. It was the Roma-problem which made it possible for radicals to distinguish themselves from Fidesz. In recent years the conservative party rhetoric has aimed to cover the entire right-side of the political landscape. As Enyedi (2005:715) puts it: “Fidesz managed to find an umbrella ideology that made possible a sustainable coalition among social and attitudinal segments on the right. The raw material of the camp building was provided by the mosaic of agrarian, religious and national-conservative interests.” It seemed that Fidesz had not left any space for a far-right party (Ignazi's hypothesis), but in 2009 Jobbik came up with a new and salient issue which had not been politicized before. Hence, in line with Kitschelt's hypothesis, Jobbik has attempted to push Fidesz as close to the socialist party as possible in order to demonstrate its own uniqueness.

Consequently, *it was the Roma-problem which contributed most of all to the formation of the radical community.* The subsequent chapter deals with the role of this issue in the political agenda. The fact that the breakthrough of Jobbik happened exactly in the beginning of 2009, while anti-Roma attitude has existed for many decades in Hungarian society, is worth some contemplation.

## *Agenda-analysis*

Our starting point is the media-usage of Jobbik supporters. First we need to prove what their news-sources were; then we can investigate the agenda-setting effect of these channels. After that, we touch upon the determinants of agenda-perception, exploring whether the social and media-attentive features have a significant impact on the reception of political events. Finally, we examine the way political agenda can influence party-choice.

*Table 4. The popularity of the main parties according to type and frequency of media-usage*

		Jobbik	Fidesz	MSZP
MTV	never watches it	8	<b>46</b>	<b>10</b>
	more than once a week	7	42	13
	every day	6	<b>37</b>	<b>22</b>
RTL Klub	never watches it	8	41	12
	more than once a week	8	42	14
	every day	<b>6</b>	44	15
TV2	never watches it	<b>9</b>	41	14
	more than once a week	7	42	<b>13</b>
	every day	<b>6</b>	44	<b>15</b>
Internet	never uses it	<b>6</b>	42	15
	more than once a week	6	<b>47</b>	<b>12</b>
	every day	<b>12</b>	41	14
	Full population	7	42	14

*Source:* DKMKA Hungarian Election Study 2009 database

*Note:* Figures are given in percentages of the full electorate in the specific group. Significant values are shown in bold.

Jobbik is more overrepresented among Internet-users than among any groups in the bivariate analysis. A separate research is needed to chart the websites frequently visited by radicals, but we still assume that radicals obtain political information mainly through the websites run by the party or people linked to it. There are only slight differences in the consumption of the mainstream media. Although Jobbik voters tend to watch the main television channels less than the supporters of Fidesz and MSZP, the majority of radicals are still consumers of TV2, RTL Club and M1. Therefore, we accept the parallel media hypothesis (2.1.), but as the multivariate analysis showed, the autonomous impact of media-usage on party-choice is insignificant. **Radicals are more likely to use the Internet due to their young age.**

The next question is how much coverage did the Roma-issue get on main channels, and more importantly, how the agenda-perception of the public was affected by that. Did the

issue salience of the media agenda really transfer to the public agenda? Before answering the question, it may be useful for non-Hungarian readers to get acquainted with the political agenda of the first half of 2009, with special attention to the so-called “Roma-issues”.

The Roma population – which is the most numerous minority of Hungary – is not integrated in the majority society. Romas have low qualifications, their employment rate is dramatically low, and they have much more children than non-Romas. Their poverty often leads to criminalism. This is not a new phenomenon; social scientists have highlighted it for many years (Enyedi 2005 et al, Fábrián 1999 et al). What is a novelty, however, is that the issue has become politicised. By the end of 2008 and especially in January and February 2009 many conflicts, atrocities and even homicides occurred between the Romas and the rest of the society. In 2006 October in Olaszliszka (a small village in Borsod county) a Hungarian teacher had hit a child of Roma origin by car, after which the angry Roma-crowd brutally killed him out of revenge. One year later Jobbik – which was a marginal, less-known party at that time – established a quasi-military organisation, the Hungarian Guard. The main purpose of the Guard was to ensure order and security by eliminating or deterring potential criminals – the Romas, as they say<sup>7</sup>. In 2009 January the police chief of Miskolc claimed with great publicity that the majority of criminals are Roma. The minister of domestic affairs first removed him from office but sensing the growing public dissatisfaction changed his mind and rehabilitated the police chief. The most salient political event occurred one month later, when Marian Cozma (a famous and popular handball-player) was killed brutally<sup>8</sup> by a few Romas in a disco in Veszprém. In the same month, a Roma family was attacked at Tatárszentgyörgy (a small village in Borsod County): the father and his four-year-old daughter were killed by Hungarian perpetrators. Many other assassinations occurred (where mainly Romas were the victims). These assassinations, as we shall see, received enormous public attention, putting the Roma-issue in the spotlight for the first time in Hungarian history.

Since the Olaszliszka tragedy, we have collected all issues related to the Roma population or the Hungarian Guard because it was through these issues that Jobbik first received considerable attention. Median Public Opinion Research Company regularly canvasses the electorate for issues they consider salient from their perspective (open question), then in a closed question respondents are asked to pick 5 issues from 15 selected by the researchers. We compared these data with the results of our content analysis showing the extent of mainstream media coverage Jobbik-issues gained.

Table 5. The agenda-setting effect of leading media-organs

Date	Issue	Proportion and salience of statements	Organ					Total	Spontaneously mentioned (open question)	Close question
			M1	TV2	RTL Klub	Népszabadság	Magyar Nemzet			
2006 October	Olaszliszka	Statements	5%	7%	9%	6%	6%	6%	14.4%	70.3%
		Head	59%	86%	65%	27%	38%	57%	-	-
2007 August	Hungarian Guard founded	Statements	28%	30%	13%	49%	41%	34%	25.76%	61.6%
		Head	49%	69%	72%	32%	58%	51%	-	-
2009 January	Miskolc police chief	Statements	5%	7%	9%	7%	6%	7%	11.1%	46.8%
		Head	80%	49%	15%	70%	41%	50%	-	-
	Mid-term election in Ferencváros	Statements	3%	3%	1%	3%	6%	3%	1.3%	9.2%
		Head	69%	60%	80%	65%	45%	58%	-	-
2009 February	Veszprém assassination	Statements	21%	27%	27%	19%	21%	23%	25.5%	73%
		Head	50%	94%	47%	45%	73%	65%	-	-
	Tatárszentgyörgy	Statements	11%	14%	12%	13%	10%	12%	19.3%	57.9%
		Head	66%	95%	48%	63%	70%	70%	-	-
2009 April	Tiszalök assassination	Statements	4%	5%	7%	6%	3%	5%	5.4%	23.1%
		Head	68%	85%	33%	38%	38%	50%	-	-
2009 June	EP-election	Statements	33%	14%	14%	30%	25%	25%	38%	68.7%
		Head	11%	89%	19%	32%	45%	33%	-	-

Source: Median databases

Note: The first row shows the proportion of the given issues within the total number of statements (the average is 6-7%), the second row shows the proportion of salient statements (head).

The correlation between the issue's media-coverage (total column) and the agenda-perception of the electorate (open questions) is 0.72, which is quite strong<sup>9</sup>. The citizenry considered those issues which they could read about and watch a lot in the media important – this is the transfer of issue salience.

These issues happened to be the Roma-assassinations. It is revealing that more people mentioned the homicide of the sportsman Marian Cozma as an important issue (based on a closed question) than the EP-election. This is not surprising, however, if we take a look at the content-analysis data: TV2 dealt with the death of the handball-player much more

extensively than with the election. In the same vein, there is no doubt that the mid-term election in Ferencváros was a springboard for Jobbik but its significance is diminished by the fact that far fewer people had heard about it compared to the assassinations - probably because it did not get considerable media-attention. Although the table does not contain the other assassinations, court sentences and investigations related to the murders, the Hungarian Guard's actions and its disbandment continuously kept that issue on the political agenda in the first half of 2009. It is remarkable that the Olaszliszka and Veszprém homicides received enormous public- and media-attention, whereas the assassinations of Roma-victims did not receive such a coverage, therefore only few people learned about them.

Thus, we found sufficient empirical proof that the first level of agenda setting was effective, the second level, however, is a different matter. The next step is to examine to what extent mainstream media framed the Roma-issues in a negative, tabloid way and how much coverage was provided for radical politicians.

On the one hand, the homicides perpetrated by the Romas, especially the Cozma-murder, turned public opinion against the Roma population (appendix, table 3) which was favourable for Jobbik. It was exactly at this time that "Gypsy-crime" became a widely-used expression (appendix, figure 2). The assassinations of the Romas, on the other hand, turned the public mood against radicals. It was also harmful for Jobbik that its politicians were mostly quoted and interpreted: they could not appear in person, not even in case the news was about the party itself (*Jobbik is ready to govern*, appendix, table 4). The negative framing of these issues clearly demonstrates the hostile attitude of the media towards the extreme party. Although, homicides can be interpreted in one way only, it seems that mainstream media framed the events blaming Jobbik. We therefore reject hypothesis 2.2. So far we have dealt with public opinion in general, now we shall turn to specific groups of society and their knowledge of and interest in Roma-issues.

Table 6. The determinants of agenda-perception regarding Roma-issues. Logistic regression models, exponential Betas

	Olaszliszka	Miskolc	Veszprém	Tatárszentgyörgy	Tiszalök
Constant	,155	,078	,195	,109	,054
Budapest	<b>2,940</b>	1,482	1,783	1,397	<b>,414</b>
Rural population	,691	,610	,668	,907	,536
Graduated people	1,419	1,202	,883	1,057	,672
Primary school	,865	<b>,468</b>	1,074	1,719	1,244
Religious	,641	1,435	1,036	1,022	1,454
Members of the MSZMP	,504	,724	1,015	1,331	1,601
Political interest (strong+)	,864	1,650	1,101	1,253	1,183
Jobbik-supporters	-	<b>2,118</b>	<b>3,379</b>	<b>5,101</b>	<b>2,952</b>
MSZP-supporters	1,285	1,098	-	1,231	,610
Fidesz-supporters	,914	1,196	1,208	1,198	1,226
Frequently watch M1	1,789	,762	1,709	-	,811
Frequently watch TV2	,704	,677	1,169	1,345	,658
Frequently watch RTL	1,046	1,689	1,029	1,076	1,231
Magyar Nemzet	1,257	<b>2,716</b>	<b>2,226</b>	1,578	1,026
Népszabadság	,849	1,110	-	1.897	<b>4,694</b>
Nagelkerke adj. R square	0,118	0,123	0.070	0.043	,0071

Source: Median database

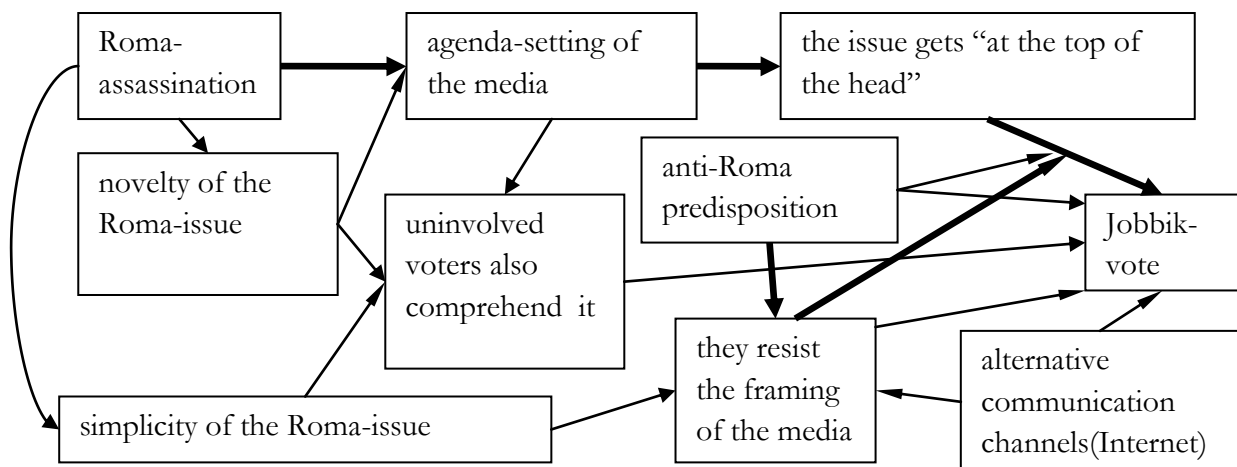
Note: Dependent variable is the perception of issues, e.g. spontaneously mentioned in open questions. Only 99% significant results are shown ( $p < 0.01$ ). All independent variables are dummies. Most robust results are shown in bold.  $\text{Exp}(B) > 2$ , or  $\text{Exp}(B) < 0.5$ .

As it is reflected in table 6, **radicals are much more likely to pay attention to Roma-issues.** This conclusion may seem to be tautological, since radicals are already more susceptible to the topic, nevertheless it is revealing that the odds of being aware of the homicides are about 3 (Veszprém) or 5 (Tatárszentgyörgy) times larger for Jobbik supporters than for other people. In the given cases, viewers of TV2, RTL Klub and the readers of the two main political newspapers (Magyar Nemzet and Népszabadság) have heard about the assassinations with a slightly higher probability than the non-viewers and non-readers, thus the agenda-setting effect prevailed. The other variables, however, are characterized by ambiguous tendencies and the lack of significant differences. This implies that – regarding these extraordinary events – even the uninvolved and usually poorly informed citizens were able to comprehend as much as the interested voters did. Similarly, inhabitants of Budapest and better educated people were not always more attentive. Also the weak explanatory power of the models shows that social and media-consumption

variables are poor predictors of the reception of Roma-news. This leads us to the conclusion that even politically uninvolved and uninformed citizens were able to internalize the news – which is a very rare phenomenon.

Having clarified the determinants of agenda-perception the puzzle now seems to be easier to solve. Every element seems to be supporting the applicability of Zaller’s theory. Political agenda was dominated by the Roma-assassinations, which had strong newsworthiness and were also very easily understandable, therefore even the less involved citizens engaged this information (*reception axiom*). Although slight differences between the media channels did exist, the agenda-setting effect prevailed: the more media-attention an issue got, the more likely it was that the public comprehended and internalized it (for instance Cozma-assassination). According to the *accessibility axiom*, the most recent and salient convictions are “at the top of one’s head”. Due to the influence of the media, these considerations were – for most people – related to the Roma-issue. Coverage in itself would not have triggered sympathy for Jobbik, especially that the mainstream media framed the events against the party. Radicals, however, were able to resist the messages, because they had a very strong anti-Roma predisposition and it was very easy to perceive the relationship between the message and their predispositions (*resistance axiom*). Jobbik supporters’ hostile attitude towards mainstream media and the radicals’ alternative communication channels (Internet, public rallies) also prevented them from accepting mainstream interpretations. Under these circumstances the media could not shape the radicals’ opinion, but it was able to amplify their predisposition and make the Roma-issue their salient consideration, which motivated their party choice in the first place (*response axiom*).

Figure 1. The application of Zaller’s theory



Of course, mainstream media cannot be blamed for the resurgence of the extreme right. Mainstream channels covered the events that were interesting to people. We claim that each of the abovementioned factors contributed to the phenomenon, but the keys were the Roma-assassinations and anti-Roma attitudes – everything else are just consequences of these. The arrows in the figure raise fundamental questions: what was the direct cause of Jobbik-votes, why did the media-and public attention of the Roma-issues lead to the preference of the far-right? Our main empirical proof which corroborates Zaller’s

hypothesis is the multivariate analysis of the previous chapter. It showed that the most important motivation of Jobbik voters is their hostile attitude towards the Roma minority. We would like to present another piece of empirical evidence to underpin our argument: the concept of issue-ownership (1.2 hypothesis).

Based on the European Election Survey 2009 data, we examined how many among those who considered the Roma-problem as one of the three most important problems of the country<sup>10</sup>, claimed that Jobbik could handle the problem the best. A remarkable proportion, 19% of respondents, thought that Jobbik was the most credible expert on the issue (Fidesz: 41%, MSZP: 6%), whereas only 8% were Jobbik voters (Fidesz: 56%, MSZP: 8%). Thus, we can see that the radical party is strongly overrepresented regarding the question. It is also plausible that radicals were already more sensitive to the issue and that is why they mentioned it more frequently as a major problem. Nevertheless, it is notable that 11% of the respondents are not Jobbik-supporters, yet they think that Jobbik has the highest competence in this matter. Since the radical party achieved two and a half times higher results in the Roma-issue than its popularity, we can confidently accept the hypothesis of issue-ownership. This entails that whenever the Roma issue dominated the agenda, Jobbik benefited from it, and indeed, it prevailed in the first half of 2009. According to the polls, at the beginning of the year the radical party's popularity had been 1%, whereas six months later at the EP-election it increased to as much as 15%.

### *Conclusion*

This essay promised to reveal the secret of Jobbik. Apart from discovering the reasons behind the rise of the right-wing extreme party, we also intended to debunk some misbeliefs. It proved to be a simplifying and misleading claim that the supporters of the extreme right are primarily disaffected, humiliated people who have become impoverished in the economic crisis. In the case of Hungary our analysis unambiguously challenges this argument, which has gained such popularity in international literature. The impact of the existing social frustrations is very limited and is not deterministic at all: disappointment *per se* does not lead to radical party choice; other parties could have taken advantage of the dissatisfaction as well.

Our conclusion regarding methodology is that in the process of understanding the motivation of voters, correlations between party preferences and various socio-demographic or attitudinal variables are meaningless without investigating the supply-side of party politics and the political agenda. Anti-establishment and anti-Roma attitudes can only partly explain the rise of Jobbik. It was crucial, however, that the radical right party appeared in just the right time on the supply side of the electoral market, and even more importantly, the assassinations drew media and public-attention to the Roma-issue. Probably it was this that party president Gábor Vona referred to when he said that two-thirds of society are Jobbik-supporters but only 15% are aware of this fact.

The reason underlying the rise of extreme right was a racial tension that became acute in 2009. The situation could only be described as one that could have potentially led to a "civil war" between the Roma population and the rest of society. We think that the



leaders of the Socialist Party and Fidesz – and intellectuals linked to them – are motivated by an interest in understating their responsibility (e.g. their inability to solve Roma problems). This may be the main reason why they interpret the breakthrough of the radical right as a direct consequence of the economic crisis and social frustration.

We could not deal with the impact of the EP-election as a special kind of election on the results of Jobbik. According to conventional wisdom there is much less at stake here (“second-order national election”, Reif-Schmitt 1980), consequently citizens tend to vote more emotionally and less rationally. The national election of 2010, however, replicated the result of the EP-election: Fidesz won by landslide (53% of popular vote) and there was a neck and neck race between the socialist (19%) and the radical party (17%). Moreover, due to a much higher turnout, the far-right party doubled its absolute number of votes. Having experienced that we do not take a risk claiming that Jobbik’s success is not just a temporary phenomenon. Although this study focuses on the EP-elections only, we would like to point out that the radical side succeeded in establishing a supporting community. Once the electorate and its elite have a common identity they do not need a rational consideration for casting their ballot for their favourite party. For those who have already voted twice for the radical party it has become even more self-evident whom to support in the next election. **The electoral fortune of the extreme right-wing party therefore no longer depends solely on the Roma issue. We predict the radical right a safe future in Hungary.**

## Appendix

1. table. The social and demographic characteristics of the main parties

Variables		Jobbik	Fidesz	MSZP
Gender	Men	<b>9</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>14</b>
	Women	<b>4</b>	42	15
Age	-29	<b>11</b>	45	<b>7</b>
	30-44	6	<b>47</b>	<b>11</b>
	45-59	8	44	<b>13</b>
	60-	<b>4</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>23</b>
Size of the population	Budapest	7	<b>37</b>	<b>21</b>
	major cities	6	<b>39</b>	14
	small cities	<b>8</b>	43	12
	village	7	<b>47</b>	<b>11</b>
Qualification	primary school	<b>5</b>	<b>50</b>	13
	skilled labour	8	45	<b>11</b>
	secondary school	7	<b>40</b>	14
	graduated	<b>10</b>	<b>39</b>	15
Wealth	lower group	<b>6</b>	40	<b>12</b>
	low-middle	<b>6</b>	<b>44</b>	15
	upper-middle	8	43	14
	upper	8	41	15
Church attendance	never	7	<b>37</b>	<b>16</b>
	occasionally	7	<b>44</b>	13
	at least once in a month	7	<b>48</b>	<b>11</b>
Economic crises <sup>11</sup>	not affected by the crises	<b>5</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>17</b>
	affected	8	<b>43</b>	13
	seriously damaged by the crises	<b>11</b>	43	13
Criminalism	not affected by criminalism	<b>6</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>14</b>
	victim of a crime	<b>9</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>17</b>
Social capital	do not have membership in social organization	<b>6</b>	42	<b>14</b>
	member	<b>11</b>	43	<b>16</b>
	Full population	7	42	14

Source: Hungarian Election Study 2009 database

Note: Percentages. Significant values are bold. We coded the wealth variable on the basis of household commodities (DVD-player, hifi, microwave, washing machine, etc.). In the case of the crises variable we took into account the decreasing income, the increasing living costs, the loss of employment, increasing

foreign currency interest rate, etc. At the criminalism variable we considered robbery, stealing, dead set, pocket-picking as crime.

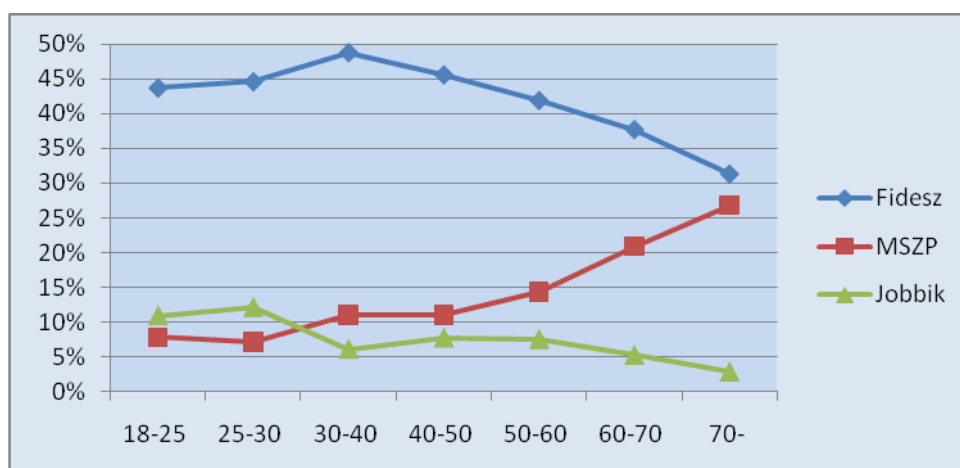
2. table. *The attitudes of the voters of main parties*

Variables		Jobbik	Fidesz	MSZP
paternalism		54	55	54
anti-Roma attitude		<b>68</b>	55	54
nationalism		<b>62</b>	50	<b>35</b>
anti-establishment	Satisfaction with democracy	<b>70</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>55</b>
pro-order	We need more strict laws and harder punishment to restore order.	<b>88</b>	85	85
conventional authoritarianism	The most important virtues a child has to learn are obedience and respect for authority.	71	74	73
	Young people sometimes have rebellious thoughts, but as they grow up, they should condemn these and adapt.	<b>60</b>	67	<b>69</b>
leader cult	What our country needs is not so much laws and political programs, but rather some brave, tireless and devoted leaders whom people can trust.	<b>70</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>62</b>
authoritarianism	Young people need strict regulations and determination to fight for their families and their country.	73	69	70
conspiracy theory	Most people are not aware that secret conspiracies influence a great part of their lives.	50	49	<b>47</b>
anti-Semitism	How much do you sympathize with the Jews? (100=they are very likeable)	<b>42</b>	50	<b>58</b>

Source: Hungarian Election Study 2009 database

Notes: average points converted to a 100-scale (100=absolutely agrees, 0=do not agree at all) Significant differences are shown in bold. *Paternalism*: average of four answers: 1. State should control wages through regulations; 2. State should control prices through regulations; 3. State expenditures should be diminished (opposite coding); 4. The industries affected by the crises should be subsidized in order to avoid unemployment. *Anti-Roma attitudes*: average of six answers: 1. More help should be given to Roma than to non-Roma (opposite); 2. The growth in the Roma population threatens the security of society; 3. Among the Roma, many do not work because they do not get a job (opposite); 4. It would only be right if there were still places of entertainment where Roma are not allowed to enter; 5. The tendency to commit crime is in the blood of the Roma; 6. Every Roma child has the right to study in a class together with the non-Roma children (opposite).

1. figure. The popularity of the main parties according to different age-groups



Source: Hungarian Election Study 2009 database

3. table. "The growth in the Roma population threatens the security of the society"

	1 (does not agree at all)	2	3	4	5 (absolutely agrees)
Fidesz	10	7	19	27	37
MSZP	11	11	21	20	36
Jobbik	1	3	11	23	62
Full population	9	8	21	25	38

Source: Hungarian Election Study 2009 database

Note: Proportions given in percentages.

4. table. "The tendency to commit crime is in the blood of the Roma"

	1 (does not agree at all)	2	3	4	5 (absolutely agrees)
Fidesz	12	11	29	21	27
MSZP	17	11	25	21	27
Jobbik	4	6	24	29	37
Full population	13	11	29	21	26

Source: Hungarian Election Study 2009 database

Note: Proportions given in percentages.

5. table. The framing of the Roma-issues in the mainstream organs

Date	Issue	Framing	Organ					Total
			M1	TV2	RTL Klub	Népszabadság	Magyar Nemzet	
2006 October	Olaszliszka	overwhelmingly negative	59	55	48	51	56	53
		negative	21	25	33	24	24	26
		neutral	3	11	4	11	6	7
		positive	17	9	15	8	15	13
		overwhelmingly positive	-	-	-	5	-	1
2007 August	Hungarian Guard founded	overwhelmingly negative	37	39	56	41	44	42
		negative	30	20	16	30	28	27
		neutral	12	18	8	14	15	14
		positive	20	19	8	14	11	15
		overwhelmingly positive	-	3	12	1	1	2
2009 January	Miskolc police chief	overwhelmingly negative	44	54	45	83	65	60
		negative	40	20	33	8	32	25
		neutral	8	17	9	3	-	7
		positive	8	9	12	8	3	8
		overwhelmingly positive	-	-	-	-	-	-
2009 february	Veszprém assassination	overwhelmingly negative	64	67	52	69	63	63
		negative	29	12	36	25	24	24
		neutral	4	14	5	5	7	8
		positive	3	4	7	2	4	4
		overwhelmingly positive	-	2	-	-	2	1
	Tatárszentgyörgy assassination	overwhelmingly negative	71	83	78	69	80	76
		negative	22	11	17	29	18	19
		neutral	3	6	-	-	-	2
		positive	3	-	5	2	3	2
		overwhelmingly positive	-	-	-	-	-	-
2009 April	Tiszalök assassination	overwhelmingly negative	80	74	77	67	73	73
		negative	16	19	20	27	23	22
		neutral	4	-	3	2	-	2
		positive	-	7	-	4	4	3
		overwhelmingly positive	-	-	-	-	-	-
2009 June	EP-election	overwhelmingly negative	16	29	23	40	28	28
		negative	31	11	31	31	40	31
		neutral	26	52	37	24	25	28
		positive	26	5	10	5	4	12
		overwhelmingly positive	2	4	-	1	3	2
2009 July	Jobbik is ready to govern	overwhelmingly negative	44	-	75	30	60	44
		negative	17	50	13	40	24	29
		neutral	11	17	13	23	12	16
		positive	22	33	-	7	4	10
		overwhelmingly positive	6	-	-	-	-	1

Source: Median content analysis database

Note: Proportions in percentages. Framing is positive when result, success or consensus dominates, negative when failure, conflict, problem characterizes the statement.

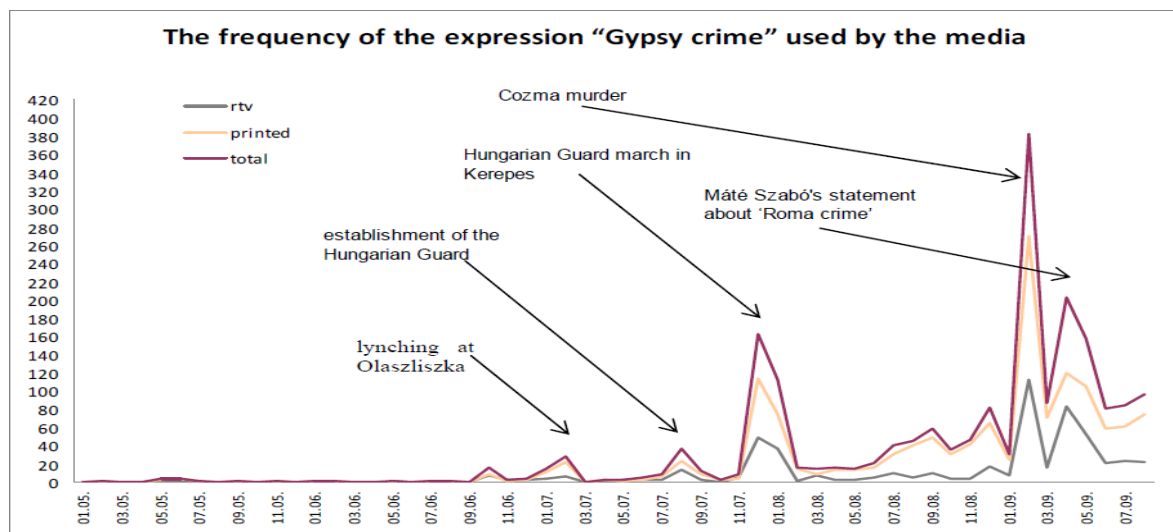
6. table. The appearance of Jobbik in the mainstream organs regarding the Roma-issues

Date	Issue	Statements	Organ					Total
			M1	TV2	RTL Klub	Népszabadság	Magyar Nemzet	
2006 October	Olaszliszka	Jobbik-politicians	-	-	-	3	3	1
		own voice	-	-	-	-	-	-
2007 August	Hungarian Guard founded	Jobbik-politicians	5	5	-	4	5	4
		smaller part own voice	50	25	-	-	-	-
		half	0	25	-	-	-	-
		overwhelmingly own voice	25	0	-	-	-	-
		own voice only	0	50	-	-	-	-
2009 January	Miskolc police chief	Jobbik-politicians	-	-	-	-	-	-
		own voice	-	-	-	-	-	-
2009 February	Veszprém assassination	Jobbik-politicians	-	-	-	1	1	0
		own voice	-	-	-	-	-	-
2009 February	Tatárszentgyörgy assassination	Jobbik-politicians	-	-	-	-	-	-
		own voice	-	-	-	-	-	-
2009 April	Tiszalök assassination	Jobbik-politicians	-	-	-	-	-	-
		own voice	-	-	-	-	-	-
2009 June	EP-election	Jobbik-politicians	8	5	2	6	4	6
		overwhelmingly own voice	44	0	-	-	-	-
		own voice only	0	67	-	-	-	-
2009 July	Jobbik is ready to govern	Jobbik-politicians	11	17	13	13	12	13
		smaller part own voice	50	0	-	-	-	-
		own voice only	0	100	-	-	-	-

Source: Median content analysis database

Note: Percentages. In the first (grey) row the proportion of the Jobbik politicians' statements are shown. In the second row, the structure of their statements: how much could they appear with their own voice, how much were they interpreted.

## 2. Figure.



Source: Political Capital's calculation, based on observer database.

[http://www.politicalcapital.hu/download/20091028\\_pc\\_mara\\_summary\\_091028.pdf](http://www.politicalcapital.hu/download/20091028_pc_mara_summary_091028.pdf)

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1 To be precise: 14.77% with 427 773 vote. Fidesz had 56.36%, MSZP 17.37% in 2009.

2 For instance Republicans claim that the most important stake of the presidential race is the decision about foreign policy – which is their department –, whereas Democrats frame the election as a referendum about the social and welfare issues – where they are better off.

3 Clearly, there are some exceptions: the Flemish-Vallon and the Spanish-Basque conflicts or the hostile attitude of Lega Nord toward South-Italy.

4 For more details see: Kitschelt 2009, Tóka 2004.

5 The first wave was carried out between 2008 April and June, the second exactly one year later. In each wave we had approximately 3000 respondents; 1523 people were managed to be interviewed twice.

6 We recommend Gary King’s book on this topic (King 1997).

7 Although the Guard was disbanded by court since it was said to endanger democracy, it is still operational.

8 He was stabbed to death with a knife.

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9 We multiplied each issue's proportion of statements by the proportion of its salient communication (head) and that variable was contrasted with the ratio of spontaneous mentions.

10 "What is the most important problem facing this country today" (open question)? 7% of the respondents mentioned something related to the Roma-issue which is not low at all. No public policy item reached such a proportion, most of the respondents gave such banal answers as "unemployment" or "not enough money".

11 We also asked about the threat of the crises, but basically got the same result.