

# **SPEAKING TO THE WORKING CLASS: RIGHT-WING STRATEGIES IN HUNGARY**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how Hungarian right-wing parties have engaged with workers between 2006 and 2024. International literature identifies a growing trend among populist right-wing parties in strengthening their working-class support. In contrast, the social-democratic or left-wing parties, traditionally seen as representatives of the working class, are increasingly focused on the middle class. Right-wing parties often rely on specific themes in communications to appeal to workers. The main theoretical stance of the thesis is that the concept of social class has to be reintegrated into the political discourse. This thesis studies the strategies of Hungary's main right-wing parties (Fidesz, Jobbik and Mi Hazánk) focusing on how they use these themes to reach workers and highlighting the differences between their approaches. The research methodology includes both qualitative and quantitative text analysis methods used to study the party leaders' speeches. It addresses the gap in the literature by analysing Hungary's right-wing parties individually and comparatively. The main finding of the research is that while Fidesz and Jobbik show a declining trend in how frequently they use the themes, Mi Hazánk increasingly includes them in their communications.

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## INTRODUCTION

We build our lives around work. Work dictates how we organise our everyday lives and how we can organise our time. A commonly cited Hungarian song highlights an ideal model of work-life balance: “eight hours of work, eight hours of rest and eight hours of fun” (Nagy Feró and the Beatrice 2004). However, this mantra does not account for the daily commute, not for jobs that exceed eight hours of work per day, either because the working time is longer or because of the overtime one commits to.

Even though work impacts all areas of our lives, some scholars have argued in the last couple of decades that one’s class does not affect one’s political preferences as strongly as in previous decades (Inglehart and Rabier 1986). Inglehart and Rabier (1986) argue that economic needs are less emphasised in a person’s voting process because of the long-lasting peaceful period after World War II. Instead, cultural issues get into the spotlight that determines one’s voting behaviour which, in theory, has put an end to class-based voting (Inglehart and Rabier 1986; Inglehart and Norris 2017). By examining the narratives of right-wing parties, this thesis contends that right-wing parties draw on deeper economic preferences by using certain themes to appeal to the need for better material conditions for the working class.

In the international literature on the impact of work on people’s political preferences, there is widespread agreement that social-democratic parties in recent decades have no longer owned their original base—the working class (Bale 2003; Arzheimer 2012). Instead, it looks as if right-wing parties with populist approaches are the ones who attract workers (Bale 2003) and who can channel the disappointment of this group in how social-democratic groups have dealt with the effects of globalisation (Rennwald 2020). According to Marx (1859), workers must sell their labour power; in other words, they must work to receive the money needed to survive. Marx and Engels (1955) define the working class as the group that does not own the means of production. This study will mainly use the word working class to talk about workers generally.

While the concept of the working class disappeared from academic and everyday discourse, this thesis will argue that it is still a relevant aspect of politics that has to be revived.

The working class includes the people who initially mainly felt represented by social-democratic parties and who have moved away from them towards right-wing parties. This tendency is visible in many parts of the world, especially in Europe and the United States, as well as in parts of Asia (Lee 2021). How right-wing parties have managed to address the working class will be detailed in this study to a larger extent; however, it is essential to mention the main narratives with which they achieve this. By narratives, this study refers to how parties describe the world and its specific aspects (Mischler 1995). As it will be discussed later in depth, how right-wing parties create narratives about immigration, globalisation, the elite, nationality and public safety, is the key to their recent successes.

This thesis will examine how these focus issues apply to Hungary in the context of the shift towards the right and how right-wing parties address the working class. Until 2006, social-democratic parties were successful, but after many mistakes from the left, the right became the dominant power. Existing scholarship has widely researched how Hungary has shifted towards the right, but the strategies that the specific parties employ to address workers have been underexplored and, to date, have not been examined comparatively. To fill these gaps, speeches of right-wing Hungarian party leaders (Fidesz, Jobbik, Mi Hazánk) between 2006 and 2024 will be analyzed with qualitative and quantitative text analysis methods. The aim is to see how the themes, for instance, anti-immigration and anti-globalisation narratives, that arise from the international literature, are relevant for the individual parties and whether a pattern can be outlined when looking at the tone of these speeches towards workers. As the results will show, the examined themes apply to all the studied parties. While they are similar in how they address the working-class, their main difference lies in how their attitude changed over time and how often they use these themes in the current moment.

At the time of conducting the research for this thesis in Hungary two main, right-wing parties are competing with each other to win in 2026 at the next national elections, while left-wing parties are continuing to decline. This research aims to understand how right-wing parties address workers so that the left can reemerge and regain its original base. Without understanding the approaches right-wing parties use, developing alternatives will not be possible.

The research will start by introducing the literature around the working class and their connection to parties, both in the international aspect and Hungarian context. The second chapter will detail the theoretical arguments and concepts of the research: the definition of the working class, the class structure of Hungary, the debate between postmaterialism and class-based voting, populism and issue-ownership. The chapter on methodology will present the hypotheses and text analysis methods. In Chapter 4, the results will be highlighted, first by describing the analysis of the three individual parties and then providing a comparative discussion of the three parties' similarities and differences. The last chapter will summarise the conclusions and interpret the results to understand how these findings relate to everyday political experiences.

## **CHAPTER 1 – THE SHIFT OF THE WORKING CLASS TOWARDS THE RIGHT: LITERATURE REVIEW**

The first chapter of the study will discuss how workers left social-democratic parties and how right-wing parties address them by reviewing the literature. The decline of social-democratic parties will be analyzed by focusing primarily on the effects of the Third Way approach, which resulted in social-democratic parties moving towards the middle class. It will be discussed how right-wing parties could take advantage of the changed playing field. A similarity between the international processes and the Hungarian manifestation will be visible in the main directions of class-based voting and the strategies right-wing parties use to address workers. While most of the themes apply to the tendencies of the right-wing in Hungary, some extra topics should be considered when discussing the country specifically.

### ***1.1 International perspective: The decline of social-democratic parties***

Before going into the explanations of this change, it is essential to define what social-democratic parties are. Social-democratic parties were established as the outcome of the strong trade union movements at the end of the 1800s – they grew out of the industrial protests, and one of their main characteristics was to support workers from the beginning (Rennwald 2020; Moschonas 2002). Research shows that since the late 1990s and the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, social-democratic parties have lost voters who supported social-democratic and left-wing parties or at least those who did not previously contribute to the success of right-wing groups (Bale 2003). The working class in the production or service sector were less likely to vote in elections after 2010, but if they did, they supported right-wing parties instead (Rennwald 2020).

One of the primary explanations of why social-democratic parties have lost their working-class base lies in the Third Way approach. The concept of the Third Way was established after the Second World War to create a third bloc between the two sides of the Cold War: capitalism and communism (Keman 2011). The economic stance of social-democratic parties shifted

towards the political centre after the collapse of the Soviet Union to find a new voter base for themselves (Keman 2011). Finding this middle ground included replacing the welfare state with a social investment state, which focuses more on growth and less on redistribution policies (Morel et al. 2009). This approach, therefore, gave space for the neoliberal trajectory that dominated from the 1960s (Keman 2011).

This shift, however, did not resonate well with their working-class base, as Rennwald (2020) observes. Looking at workers' political preferences shows that they favour redistribution policies more than other groups of voters (Rennwald 2020). Social-democratic parties, leaving behind their original, leftist roots following the Third Way approach, started to turn towards the middle class, focusing less on workers than they initially did (Afonso and Rennwald 2018). The Third Way wave shifted the emphasis from solidarity, which was at the core of trade union-centred social democratic parties, to progressivism. Progressivism, or in other terms, reformism, based on Blaive (2025), is not rooted in achieving freedom from the bottom up; it comes from those at the top of the hierarchy. Those who follow this idea favour reforms over everything else, even if they must be done against everyday people's needs and motivations (Blaive 2025). This can often explain why voters have turned away from the parties that advocate this approach.

## ***1.2 International perspective: The rise of right-wing parties and their connection to workers***

Right-wing parties realised the consequences of the Third Way approach and took advantage of the situation. In the early 2000s, populist right-wing parties included more welfare policies in their economic programs than before to make them resonate better with the left of the political spectrum (Chueri 2022; Röth et al. 2018). The reason behind this shift lies first in the left's turn towards the middle class (Afonso and Rennwald, 2018) and secondly in the economic crisis in 2008, which made the need in the population stronger for state-initiated

social protection. However, these policies took place in the form of a dualistic version of welfare distribution: their policies distinguished between those who, in their opinion, deserve redistribution and those who do not (Chueri 2022). Since they wanted to address workers left behind by the effects of globalisation, they tried to ensure that their target group felt like they would be compensated for the past. Therefore, the parties formed two groups: the deserving and the undeserving (Häusermann 2021; Bale 2003; Chueri 2022) and shifted their focus to the former by emphasising the role of individual responsibility (Fenger 2018). Here, they included those who worked hard to provide a better life for themselves (including workers, pensioners, for instance) (Bale 2003), comparing them with the “lazy”, like criminals or immigrants (Bale 2003; Otjes et al. 2018). This strategy can also be defined as exclusionary welfarism (Jessoula et al. 2022).

The other feature that made the right’s legitimacy possible was that they dominated certain narratives and themes (Bale 2003). Instead of relying so explicitly on racism, as they have done previously, they made immigration, globalisation and nationalism their centre of discussion points (Arzheimer 2012). The workers, whom the right-wing parties want to address, usually do unskilled or semi-skilled work, which means they are the cheapest and the most easily replaceable workers (Bale 2003; Arzheimer 2012). Therefore, this is the group for whom immigration on a larger scale could mean a danger, since the immigrants moving to Europe usually take these same jobs but for an even lower amount. This is where right-wing parties brought in their anti-immigration narrative and their exclusionary welfare policy proposals, calling immigrants “others” from whom the hard-working and deserving group, the workers, could not be protected well (Jessoula et al. 2022).

Lastly, before looking at Hungary specifically, it should be mentioned that another appeal of the right wing is their “outsider” character (Röth et al. 2018). Again, because of the workers’ disappointment in the global, the domestic elite and the neoliberal promise, the anti-elite notion of right-wing parties is also influential in their successes. Right-wing parties often want to

diminish existing social groups and structures in their narratives to renew the whole societal order (Betz 1993; Röth et al. 2018), which makes the working class open to their narratives.

### ***1.3 Hungary in focus: The decline of the left***

To understand how the left has lost its ability to represent workers, it is necessary to briefly look at the so-called Soviet socialist order in the country and the transition process in 1989. Scheiring (2020) describes the later years of the Soviet regime in Hungary as a “welfare dictatorship based on a redistributive mixed economy” (p. 1165). This regime aimed to create a stable life for the people with diminishing inequalities (Scheiring 2020). The work of Scheiring (2020) in this field is essential because he interviewed workers from Hungary’s traditionally industrial regions with strong left-wing roots and asked them about their perceptions of the communist system and the transition. He found that because of the political oppression of the state, workers did not favour the communist regime despite its redistributive aims; hence, the years of transition made them hopeful (Scheiring 2020).

However, things did not go as expected. After the first free national elections, six parties got into Parliament with right-wing governance (Bozóki 1990). The main goal of the governing coalition, with the leadership of the Hungarian Democratic Forum, was to change the political culture entirely and give space to neoliberal policies by bringing in the country’s free market through intense privatisation (Bunce and Csanády 1993). One reason for this process was the appearance of foreign capital and its dominance in the economic field (Bozóki 2012).

This globalisation and deindustrialisation resulted in the disillusionment of workers. Firstly, deindustrialisation meant an increase in unemployment, which primarily affected workers who were less privileged than those with some capital (Scheiring 2020). Globalisation also enabled the higher classes to integrate more quickly into the global elite, while workers had to cope with the new social order with fewer opportunities (Friedman 2003). Workers, therefore, became sceptical of foreign capital while also recognised that the renewal of the political elite

was not successful (Bartha 2014; Kovács 2013). Scheiring (2019) described this as the revolving door phenomenon, referring to how the political elite from the Soviet regime transferred to the leadership of the democratic order.

The governance of Ferenc Gyurcsány from the Hungarian Socialist Party, who was elected prime minister in 2004, is crucial when analysing the decline of the left. Gyurcsány was a follower of Third Way politics, a believer in neoliberalism and a strong advocate of reformisation (Szakács 2004). One of the first tipping points of this attitude was a national referendum, which asked whether people would introduce tuition fees in the education and medical system (Bozóki 2012). Besides this radical approach, Gyurcsány made a mistake in 2006 when he admitted that they lied to the people in a speech that was later leaked to the public (Bozóki 2012). In 2009, after the economic crisis strengthened, he had to step down as president (Bozóki 2012). The early 2000s are essential when understanding the decline of the left because until 2006, the Socialist Party governed almost all the industrial towns full of workers, which changed entirely after these mistakes as the right-wing parties took their places in the next elections (Scheiring 2020). From the interviews of Scheiring (2020), the conclusion can be drawn that workers felt that they were betrayed by the party when they focused more on economic reforms than their welfare and in the 2020s, they still say that their problems are relevant because of the acts of the Socialist Party.

#### ***1.4 Hungary in focus: Right-wing parties and their relationship with workers***

Bartha (2011) suggests that the decline of the left resulted in making workers more open to “neo-nationalist populism” (p. 96). Neo-nationalist populism uses the populist approach in mobilisation and combines it with traditional nationalism to form identities based on national similarities and a response to globalisation (Gingrich and Banks 2006). While traditionally, nationalism reflects inclusivity, welcoming others to the nation, as will be discussed later, the three studied parties use a form of nationalism that excludes certain groups of people from the

Hungarian nationality. Karácsony and Róna (2011) prove by their analysis that many ex-socialist voters got behind right-wing parties.

Hungary in the mid-2000s was a fertile ground for the international trends in how right-wing parties dominate public narratives, namely promoting anti-globalisation, anti-immigration, anti-institutional issues, and exclusionary welfare policies. After the crisis of the Hungarian Socialist Party, Fidesz and Jobbik, the prominent right-wing parties of the time, realised that they had to position themselves against the government and its institutions. They managed to explain the problems with globalisation by reinforcing the conflict between the global and national goals, strengthening nationalist narratives (Kovács 2013) that can give back the power to those who felt it had been taken out of their hands.

Anti-immigration narratives also helped the right-wing in addressing workers. The uncertainty that unskilled workers face when cheaper labour comes to the country can result in hospitality and the need for safety (Bale 2003; Arzheimer 2012). Since the vast wave of immigration in 2015, Fidesz, Jobbik and Mi Hazánk have all used anti-immigration narratives for this reason, explicitly connecting anti-immigration policies with the decline of public safety (Bíró-Nagy 2022).

There are two additional themes that Hungarian right-wing parties use to address workers, besides those relevant in the international examples. They understood the disappointment of workers regarding the transitional process; therefore, unlike the left, they have critically reflected on the regime change of the 1980s (Kovács 2013). Another theme that can be added to the international ones is racism against Roma people. Based on the research of Karácsony and Róna (2010), when they were looking at why Jobbik, at the time the other popular right-wing party besides Fidesz, became popular in 2009, they found that the core of their voters are those who, in their opinion, were subjected to “Roma violence” in the past. To add to these themes, it can also be argued that the role of public safety is very influential when looking at why workers are now more open to right-wing parties than before.

## **CHAPTER 2 – THE WORKING CLASS EXISTS: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Until now, the paper has outlined how over the last couple of decades, social-democratic parties declined and lost their working-class voter base both internationally and from a Hungarian perspective. To explain this process, the turn towards the Third Way approach and the middle-class, as well as the failures of the transition process from the Soviet system to capitalism, are inevitable to discuss. On the other side of the political spectrum, right-wing parties managed to take this to their advantage by emphasising narratives that relate to the experiences of the working class.

This research has four theoretical building blocks, which this second chapter will discuss. The core concept that is involved throughout the study is the concept of class, specifically the working class. The first sub-chapter will introduce the central debates in contemporary political discourse around class and argue why it is still essential to describe social processes. It will also detail how this research defines the working class and gives insight into Hungary's modern class structure. The second part will construct another critical theoretical view: whether postmaterialist voting has replaced class-based voting. Then, the next sub-chapter will show how populism can be applied to the study's central questions and how this study will look at them throughout. Later, issue-ownership will be introduced and combined with its actuality regarding the thesis.

### ***2.1 Reconsidering the class structure***

#### **2.1.1 Class theory in the modern era**

Classical class theory, including the concept of the working class, has disappeared from the academic and everyday discourse (Éber; Rennwald 2020). References to the working class usually happen only when political analysts look at exit polls in elections by mixing up the concept of the working class with a lower level of education or income and not basing the

definition of this group on occupations as traditionally (Rennwald 2020). These contemporary approaches towards the working class include many stereotypes towards this group, usually connecting them with uninformedness or violence (Jones 2012). The strategy of right-wing parties is, in this sense, misleading because the emphasis on anti-immigration sentiments, while responding accurately to the need for safety in workers, strengthens these stereotypes even more, while, for instance, working with redistribution narratives would not (Rennwald 2020).

The word “worker”, like “communism” or “socialism”, all associated with Marxism or the Soviet Union, invoke negative reflexes so that people will judge these terms and refuse to use them (Bartha 2021) to rebel against the Soviet system (Éber 2020). The transition process in Hungary, which wanted to differentiate itself from the Soviet system, switched the class-based narrative to a nation-based approach during the regime change (Scheiring 2020). This included arguing that the class scheme is no longer relevant and that the working class does not exist because the term “working class” can only be applied to those with a strong worker identity (Éber 2020). Scheiring (2020) suggests that this is one reason workers became more open to neo-nationalist narratives. However, it can be argued that the class scheme is still relevant; it just has to be refreshed to fit the context of the contemporary system. Firstly, it should be emphasised that while the idea of a class system is rooted in Marxist philosophy, one should not necessarily be a Marxist or a supporter of the fallen Soviet Union to use it – instead, class can be a tool to describe one’s economic interests and material background (Rennwald 2020).

There is much empirical data on the existence of the class structure. For instance, to argue that class position, structure, and class relations are still relevant could be demonstrated by looking at social mobility data: Hungary had the lowest social mobility in the European Union, according to Eurofound (2017). It can also be supported that half of Hungary’s population can be called wealthless; more specifically, they have less than seven million forints (around seventeen thousand euros) in wealth (Kolosi and Tóth 2016). Tóth (2016) argues that the lower

two-thirds of the Hungarian population does not reach the middle-class standards, and two-thirds can be found in the lower half of the class structure (Róbert 2015).

Before going into more detail about how the Hungarian class structure could be best described, it is essential to look at the work of Oesch (2008), who came up with a more contemporary version of how one could identify the working class. It has to be addressed that the original class structure was based on workers in the industrial sector, which has decreased until now (Rennwald 2020). Oesch (2008) still tries to rely on the tradition that occupations give the base for creating the categories of workers and capitalists but revitalises the concept. The framework describes the contemporary class structure based on occupational work logic (Oesch 2008; Rennwald 2020). The horizontal aspect of this framework consists of the interpersonal, technical, organisational and independent work logic (Oesch 2008). Interpersonal work logic involves occupations where workers deal with others' needs through social approaches (Oesch 2008). This has two vertical categories: socio-cultural professionals and semi-professionals on the higher end and service workers on the lower (Oesch 2008). The technical work logic means that workers here use technical skills, including in the vertical sphere, technical professionals, semi-professionals and production workers (Oesch 2008). The organisational work logic relates mainly to administrative tasks, associate managers, and office workers (Oesch 2008). The independent work logic applies to business owners or self-employed professionals (Oesch 2008).

<i>Employees</i>			<i>Self-employed</i>
<i>INTERPERSONAL SERVICE WORK LOGIC</i>	<i>TECHNICAL WORK LOGIC</i>	<i>ORGANIZATIONAL WORK LOGIC</i>	<i>INDEPENDENT WORK LOGIC</i>
<b>Socio-cultural professionals and semi-professionals</b>	<b>Technical professionals and semi-professionals</b>	<b>Higher-grade and associate managers and administrators</b>	<b>Traditional bourgeoisie (large employers [ &gt; 9] and self-employed professionals)</b>
Medical doctors Social workers Teachers	Computing professionals Mechanical engineers Safety inspectors	Financial managers Managers in small firms Public administrators	Accountants Hotel owners Lawyers
<b>Service workers</b>	<b>Production workers</b>	<b>Office clerks</b>	<b>Small business owners with less than 9 or no employees</b>
Children's nurses Home helpers Waiters	Assemblers Carpenters Machinery mechanics	Bank tellers Mail sorting clerks Secretaries	Farmers Hairdressers Shopkeepers

**Table 1. The Oesch class scheme**

**Source: Oesch (2008 p. 338)**

Based on the changes of these categories, Oesch (2008) places the middle class in the positions of professionals in socio-cultural spheres, professionals in technical fields and managers, while members of the working class can be found in the lower part of the vertical axis, in service workers, production workers and office clerks. The traditional category of capitalists can be found in all sectors of the independent work logic (Oesch 2008). Based on this framework, workers comprise 49% of the population (Rennwald 2020), which explains why it is still relevant to study this group.

Occupations that give the base to the framework of Oesch (2008), are also relevant in terms of political preferences. Even though there is a significant shift of workers who vote for right-wing parties, not every one of them is involved in this transition. Kitschelt and Rehm (2014), in their study, for instance, looked at how occupations affect one's political preference and the differences between the different sectors. They divided occupations to the same three

horizontal categories as Oesch (2008) did – organisational, technical, interpersonal task structure – and combined them with a horizontal axis, where the lower part consists of occupations where one has less authority and has less dispositional capacities (having less money or power to use outside of work), and where the upper part belongs to occupations with high level of authority and dispositional capacities (Kitschelt and Rehm 2014). They found that workers with low autonomy and dispositional capacities, are likelier to opt for an authoritarian government and favour exclusive policies, while those with high autonomy and dispositional capacities favour distributive policies and place themselves to the left in the political spectrum (Kitschelt and Rehm 2014). As Table 2 shows, workers in the organisational sphere lean more towards the centre-right, with being against redistribution, technical workers are more in the centre, and interpersonal workers are in the centre-left (Kitschelt and Rehm 2014).

		Logic of task structure		
		Organizational	Technical	Interpersonal
<b>High dispositional capacities and autonomy</b> ([associate] professionals)	Greed	Strongly pro-market, anti-redistribution	Moderately pro-market, anti-redistribution	Equivocal on markets and redistribution
	Grid	Libertarian governance, with qualifications	More in favor of libertarian governance	Most in favor of libertarian governance
	Group	Inclusive conception of citizenship	More inclusive conception of citizenship	Most inclusive conception of citizenship
	Left-right self-placement	Center-right	Center	Center-left
<b>Low dispositional capacities and autonomy</b> ([un]skilled vocational white-and blue-collar employees)	Greed	Strongly in favor of redistribution		
	Grid	Disposition toward authoritarian governance		
	Group	Disposition toward exclusive group membership		
	Left-right self-placement	Center to left placement		

**Table 2. Occupations and political preferences**

**Source: Kitschelt and Rehm (2014 p. 1681)**

These findings are essential in this research for several reasons. Firstly, they emphasise the relevance of looking at the class structure as a base for political preferences. As Oesch (2008) also described, having a specific occupation affects your worldview and preferences, and as a result, later, which party you will vote for (Kitschelt and Rehm 2014). Secondly, the table of Kitschelt and Rehm (2014) explains why the strategy of using anti-immigration narratives and suggesting exclusionary welfare policies is successful in the circles of unskilled workers, and also, why Third Way social-democratic parties address only the upper part of the labour class and the middle class efficiently.

To end this sub-chapter, discussing how the Hungarian class structure could be defined is necessary. Several models try to establish Hungary's structure from a class perspective. An example is the "pregnant baby sponge" model, which describes the elite, the workers, and a horizontally expanding middle-class dimension (Kolosi 2000). Later, Kolosi revised his theory and devised a pyramid model (Kolosi and Pósch 2014). Éber (2020) describes the Hungarian class structure differently. He defines the country as outlining the shape of a drop of water, which represents how it is pulled apart upwards and downwards (Éber 2020). This means the rising inequalities between the top and the bottom of society have continued since the 1980s (Éber 2020). The benefit of the drop-of-water model is that it demonstrates a movement that emphasises how this process of the separation between the elite and workers is an ongoing and intensive process that the other models neglect by arguing for a static approach. This research, therefore, uses the concept of Éber (2020) as a theoretical framework for the Hungarian class structure.

### **2.1.2 Postmaterialism versus class-based voting**

Inglehart and Rabier (1986) argued that because of the long-term prosperity in the years of peace after the Second World War and the growth of the middle class, emphasis on economic demands by the people and policy suggestions by parties fell into the background. Cultural issues, like anti-immigration or anti-globalisation, among other topics that are out of the scope

for the research (like environmentalism or human rights), are emphasised more instead of who owns the means of production (Inglehart and Rabier 1986). In 2017, Inglehart and Norris (2017) studied the success of authoritarian and right-wing parties through postmaterialist voting. They found that attitudes towards immigration strongly affect voting choices (Inglehart and Norris 2017). However, unlike this research, they state that classes and material requirements do not have such an influence on party preferences as other cultural questions.

The work of Hochschild (2018), her internationally acknowledged book, *Strangers in Their Own Land*, studies the relationship between cultural and economic preferences of groups and their effects on party preferences from another point of view. While exploring the population of cities in the South of the United States, where the vast majority of people vote for republican candidates, she found that people even vote against their material interests (Hochschild 2018). For instance, in Louisiana, even though the pollution of the local factories means serious health risks for the population, they still vote for politicians who do not campaign with a plan to solve this problem (Hochschild 2018). Instead, they support candidates who pledge to keep working opportunities at the same level and who make them radical in specific cultural questions, such as immigration or racism. Populations at these states are usually firm believers of the distinction between the deserving and the undeserving because they believe in the American Dream and the notion of being able to move forward with hard work (Hochschild 2018). However, when she went after the reasons for this controversy, she found that the population she studied feels like they have been left behind by the progressive decision-makers who favour other groups, usually minorities, by putting them first. The findings of Hochschild (2018), at first glance, can be seen as another proof of the dominance of postmaterialism over class-based preferences. However, what should be acknowledged is that whom Hochschild (2018) has written about are workers who want to gain better economic positions. The interpretation of Inglehart and Norris (2017) does not emphasise this aspect of Hochschild's (2018) work. They focus only on how cultural narratives mobilise the characters of the book.

## **2.2 Populism as a central concept**

With the rise of hybrid and more autocratic regimes in the last couple of decades, populism has become one of the most widely used concepts for explaining these changes, which means there is no overarching definition (Jansen 2011). Neopopulism is a sub-category of populism that emerged in the 1990s in countries where governments implemented strong neoliberal policies but still were able to sustain a strong voter base (Jansen 2011). Neopopulist regimes usually have high inequalities and weak institutions (Acemoglu et al., 2013). One characteristic of neopopulist leaders is to use redistributive narratives and emphasise that they will work for the preferences of the majority, however, they implement policies that favour the elite (Acemoglu et al. 2013). As we have seen in the previous chapter, redistributive narratives can help win over the working class. Still, it is essential to understand that implementing these policies differs from how they were communicated.

Another essential aspect of populism relates to how the followers of this approach mobilise their voters. Based on Jansen (2011), populism can also be defined by zooming in on mobilisation, especially on the involvement of marginalised groups using anti-establishment and nationalist views. This theory strongly correlates with what was already mentioned, how right-wing parties address workers through narratives, so we can see why populism integrates into this issue.

Lastly, another combination of nationalism and populism is the concept of neo-nationalist populism. On the one hand, it uses the characteristics of populism, its mobilisation effects and how it addresses the “people”, while also favouring the elite in policy making. On the other hand, it is combined with nationalism in the sense that it aims to create an identity relating to the specific country, state and culture (Gingrich and Banks 2006). Furthermore, it is neo-nationalistic because its base lays the reaction against globalisation and its effects (Gingrich

and Banks 2006). As we have seen how right-wing parties use anti-globalisation narratives when approaching workers, the concept of neo-nationalist populism is fundamental.

### ***2.3 Issue ownership as the leading force behind narratives***

The research uses the concept of issue ownership to support that certain topics are identified with specific parties by the voters (Lefevere et al. 2015). Based on the literature, there are two kinds of issue ownership: competence issue ownership is about the parties' perceived competency in dealing with the specific issue, while associative issue ownership is how the voters associate a topic with a party (Walgrave et al. 2015). It is still important to differentiate between the two: even though a party is associated with an issue, it does not necessarily give them competence regardless of the voters' stances towards the specific issue (Lachat 2014). It can also be suggested that competence ownership can have a more substantial effect on voter behaviour than associative issue ownership (Lachat 2014).

Understanding these two concepts will be helpful for the research because, as has already been stated, one of the main strategies right-wing parties use to address workers lies in the topics they talk about. Associating these narratives with a party and believing that they will be able to deal with the potential problems these topics include will affect voters, which also means that the parties trying to address the same base compete with each other to dominate specific narrative fields. This is also relevant for the research since it looks at the differences between parties.

## **2.4 Summary of theoretical framework**

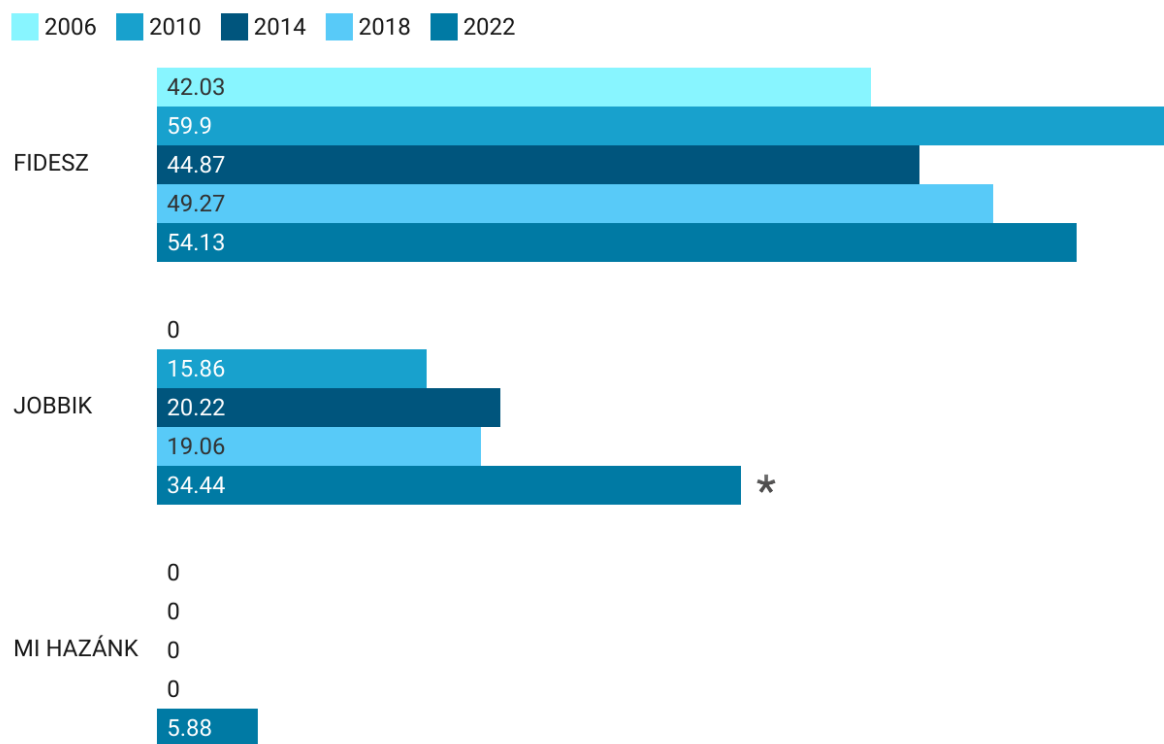
The second chapter introduced the main theoretical building blocks of the research. By following the debate around the existence of the class structure, it was stated that this study is for modernising the concept of class. To do so, Oesch's (2008) system will be used to define the working class by including service workers in the category. After arguing for the actuality of the social class, the primary theoretical debate this study will contribute to was outlined: whether the concept of postmaterialism can win over class-based voting. The analysis chapter will follow the statement that many cultural issues that parties campaign on still contain materialist questions as their core. Before moving on to the next chapter, the concept of populism and issue-owning was introduced to close the study's theoretical framework.

## CHAPTER 3 – RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research question and hypotheses

The main research question of this study is how the studied right-wing parties address the working class and whether there are any visible differences between them in their strategies. To develop the hypotheses for this research, it is necessary to look at the past results of the three parties in the national elections.

#### Percentage of Votes / Party / National election



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**Figure 1. Percentage of Votes / Party / National election**

**Data source: Országos Választási Iroda (2006, 2010, 2014, 2020, 2022)**

While in 2006, Fidesz lost its governing position to the Hungarian Socialist Party, after 2010, it dominated the national elections by receiving 59 percent of the votes (Országos Választási Iroda 2010, 2014, 2018, 2022). Jobbik, not being able to win any seats in 2006, gained more and more popularity in 2010, 2014, and 2018 (Országos Választási Iroda 2010, 2014, 2018, 2022). Their 2022 election results cannot be analysed well since they ran in coordination with other opposition parties (Országos Választási Iroda 2022). Mi Hazánk first ran in 2022, got into Parliament instantly by winning 5.8 percent of the votes (Országos Választási Iroda 2022). To get an insight into their current positions, we can look at the most recent public opinion poll at the time of the writing of this chapter, which shows a 40 percent support for Fidesz, 5 percent for Mi Hazánk – which is the lower limit to get any Parliamentary mandates, and not enough support for Jobbik to get any seats (24.hu 2025).

Based on this data and the previous literature review, three main hypotheses can be laid for this research.

H1. The internationally observed themes are relevant to the Hungarian right-wing parties and their strategies to address the working class.

H2. The results of the governing party, Fidesz, will reflect a strong but not the strongest frequency of all the themes from the three studied parties.

H3. The emergence of Mi Hazánk and their strengthening position means that they strongly emphasise the studied themes, while the party they left behind, Jobbik, will use the themes with less weight over time.

### **3.2 Data sampling**

Political discourse and speeches are tools for political leaders to organise society, create relationships between politicians and voters, and communicate specific political actors' plans, ideas, and opinions (Dylgjeri 2017). They can also help mobilise voters or strengthen the speakers' position in the political hierarchy (Oyewole and Olufemi nd.). Speeches represent a

platform in politics where politicians can improve their narratives. To do so effectively, they need to bring their personalities to their communications (Simpson and Andrea 2017). These reasons can explain why speeches are valuable tools in studying how party leaders address a particular group of voters, in this case, the working class.

This thesis analyzes speeches of Hungarian right-wing party leaders from 2006 to 2024 with qualitative and quantitative text analysis methods. The starting point of 2006 is significant, as it marks a turning point in Hungarian politics with the collapse of the ruling left-wing party, MSZP. Scholars often identify this year as the beginning of the country's political shift toward the right (Karácsony & Róna, 2010; Scheiring, 2020). The analysis of the speeches ends in 2023 because at the beginning of 2024, the appearance of a new party, Tisza, rewrote the electoral landscape entirely (Sata 2024), making that year impossible to fit into the design. Therefore, as a sample, the research looks at the leaders of Fidesz, Jobbik and Mi Hazánk. They are the right-wing parties with such significant support that they became the ruling party or had representatives in Parliament.

The study covers 18 years, examining 84 speeches. The analysis includes two speeches per leader: one delivered each year on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of October, the national holiday commemorating Hungary's revolution against Soviet rule, and another significant speech from the same year, usually annual review speeches. The benefit of these speeches is that they usually take place every year and are usually reported broadly by the media. Involving annual review speeches and not analysing two commemorating speeches everyday gives variety to the thesis too. I study two speeches per year because it gives depth to the research, but it still makes the coding processes manageable. By focusing on the same speeches every year, the research maintains consistency and provides a floor for comparison between parties. If these speeches were unavailable, I chose another celebratory speech from that year. While this might reduce thematic variety in specific cases, it preserves consistency in structure (two speeches per year), ensures the involvement of broadly available public communication, and maintains the

comparability necessary for the analysis. Regarding the speeches that took place around 2006 and 2008 and were unavailable, I decided to analyze interviews with the party leaders. Even though an interview is a discussion between multiple questions asked by the interviewer, politicians always try to take advantage of these situations to talk about their narratives to strengthen their associative issue-ownership levels in voters. The primary sources of the texts were YouTube recordings of the speeches, videos from the parties' and politicians' social media sites, government-owned websites, and archives. While the speeches are not necessarily explicitly about workers, the themes that appeared in the literature as helpful in addressing workers are still identified.

From Fidesz, the speeches of Viktor Orbán, party president since 2003 and Prime Minister since 2010, will be analyzed (Bakró-Nagy and Cseke 2023). In the case of Jobbik, the primary focus will be on Gábor Vona, who led the party from 2006 to 2018 (Barna L. 2024). Still, the first leader of the party, Dávid Kovács, who stepped down at the end of 2006, and later leaders Tamás Sneider (president from 2018 to 2020), Péter Jakab (from 2020 to 2022) and Márton Gyöngyösi (president from 2022 to 2024) (24.hu 2006; 24.hu 2018; 24.hu 2020; 24.hu 2022) would also be analyzed. Mi Hazánk arose as a result of a party split in Jobbik. They were founded in 2018, and from then on, László Toroczkai leads the party, so he will be the focus of my analysis for this party (Toroczkai n.d.).

## TIMELINE OF SPEAKERS



Figure 2. Timeline of speakers

### 3.3 A mixed methods research

This research used qualitative and quantitative text analysis methods to better understand the analysed texts. Qualitative thematic text analysis was conducted first to see whether the themes that the literature mentions as tools for right-wing parties to address the working-class can be found in the analyzed texts or not, and then to compare and contrast the three parties and how frequently they use these themes. Quantitative text analysis was then used to supplement the qualitative analysis: by using computerized analysis, it can further support the findings of the qualitative study, and can also compare the three parties more precisely, both in how differently they use the keywords that arise from the qualitative themes, and in their sentiment towards the working-class.

### 3.4 Qualitative Thematic Text Analysis

Reflexive thematic analysis is a method that makes it possible to analyze texts by looking at specific code patterns (Braun and Clarke 2012). The main characteristics of this method are that the coding process is reliable, it is usually based on previous studies, that the coding is

backed by a code book that details the definitions of the codes, and lastly, that the researcher has an essential, reflexive role when interpreting the data (Braun et al. 2019). Keeping in mind these attributes of reflexive text analysis, after selecting the texts, the audiovisual sources were transformed into written transcripts with the help of Happy Scribe, an online converter, from audio to text that was also able to produce a dependable translation from Hungarian to English. The translation was later manually validated while going through the texts by me, whose native language is Hungarian. The reflexive thematic analysis was conducted using NVivo. With the help of this text analysis program themes commonly associated with working-class support for right-wing parties based on the literature review were analysed, based on the code book of this thesis (Appendix B). The topics are the following:

- (A) Neo-nationalism
- (B) Regime change in the 1990s
- (C) Working class conditions
- (D) Anti-establishment
- (E) Anti-globalisation
- (F) Anti-immigration
- (G) Welfare redistribution
- (H) Deserving vs. undeserving groups
- (I) Workfare country
- (J) Public safety
- (K) Anti-roma remarks

What is essential to emphasise here is that even though only two themes relate closely to the experience of the working class (working class conditions and workfarist Hungary), the study suggests based on the literature review that the other themes are also relevant to the working class, making them useful for the communication of right-wing parties. Sometimes, there could

be some overlap between specific themes but the code book was structured to avoid these instances (see Appendix B).

The qualitative analysis was conducted based on Bryne's method (2022). The first step was getting familiar with the speeches and reading them over. Only then was the time to establish the codes, name them, create the code book to base the coding process, and do the reporting (Bryne 2022). This part of the research followed a deductive approach since the codes were based on existing literature, and new themes were not included in the discussion.

### ***3.5 Quantitative text analysis***

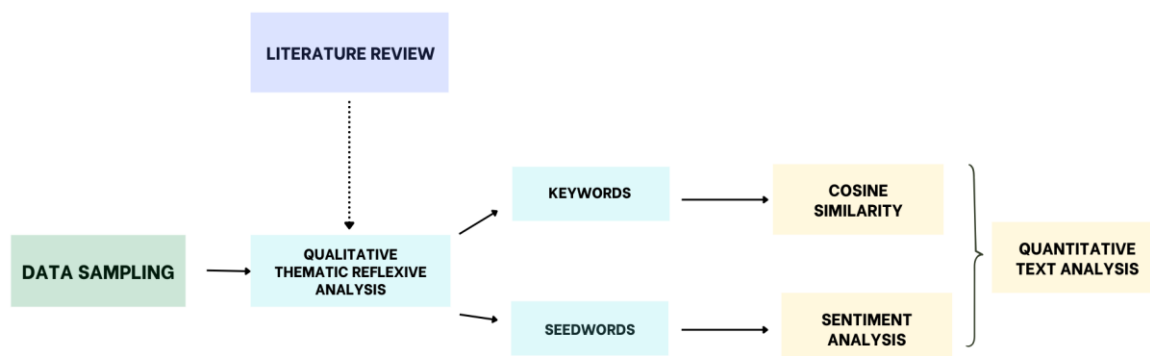
To give the clearest picture about how right-wing parties address the working class in Hungary, the qualitative reflexive thematic analysis was combined with quantitative text analysis methods. Quantitative text analysis emerged in the 1990s to provide a solution for analysing large amounts of texts effectively and to minimise human errors in the process (Nielbo et al. 2024), which makes it worthwhile in the case of this specific research too and gives a beneficial supplement to the qualitative part of the study.

Based on the experiences in the qualitative analysis, to analyze the speeches with a quantitative method, eleven keywords (Appendix C) for measuring cosine similarity and eleven seedwords for the sentiment analysis were chosen manually for the themes that the qualitative analysis also worked with. After cleaning the texts, tidyverse package was used when modifying the texts, quantida for analysing the texts, ggthemes and ggrepel for data visualisation, and LSX for the sentiment analysis. Based on these results, the text models of the speakers were created to compare and contrast the authors' speeches based on how the politicians use the words created from the themes of the qualitative research. Cosine similarity was used here to measure similarities between the speeches and their language around the analysed themes (Srivastava 2023) by creating vectors from every text and measuring their differences in space.

The second part of the research was to conduct a sentiment analysis of the three parties and their attitude towards the working class. Sentiment analysis is a method to measure the positive or negative sentiment that surrounds the analysed seedwords and themes. Based on the qualitative thematic analysis of the study, it was clear that all the politicians from the parties turned to workers with a positive attitude. Therefore, the sentiment analysis only focused on the extent of positivity and how this differed between parties. Latent Semantic Scaling, a semisupervised document scaling method, was used to make a detailed comparison (Watanabe 2020). The technique makes it possible to determine the placement of the involved documents on a scale designed by the researcher based on given seed words and their value, usually between a positive and a negative value (Watanabe 2020). The content of the documents was then analyzed by the algorithm based on the distance from the seedwords, and since it is a semisupervised method, it gives less space for errors made by humans (Watanabe 2020).

In the case of this research, to measure the extent of the positive sentiment of the three parties towards the working class, the following seedwords were chosen manually: “workers”, “honest”, “labor”, “hardworking”, “deserving”, “productive”, “job”, “wages”, “support”, and “rights”. These words existed in the texts of all parties, no adjustments were made for the parties; however, the frequency of their usage was different.

# METHODOLOGY



**Figure 3. Methodology**

## CHAPTER 4 – HOW HUNGARIAN RIGHT-WING PARTIES ADDRESS THE WORKING CLASS

Now that the research has introduced the existing literature about the relationship between the working class and right-wing parties and established the study's theoretical framework with the most valuable concepts, the detailed methodology used and the hypotheses, this fourth chapter will show the analysis results. The first sub-chapter will discuss the overall trends in how the analysed parties use the themes. After, the individual results of the parties will be introduced by providing a short historical background of the party's evolution and then presenting the results from the most dominant themes to the least dominant. Then, the results of the quantitative analysis will be outlined: the Cosine Similarity Matrix, which shows the differences in how the politicians use the outlined themes. In the last section, the results of the quantitative sentiment analysis will be discussed.

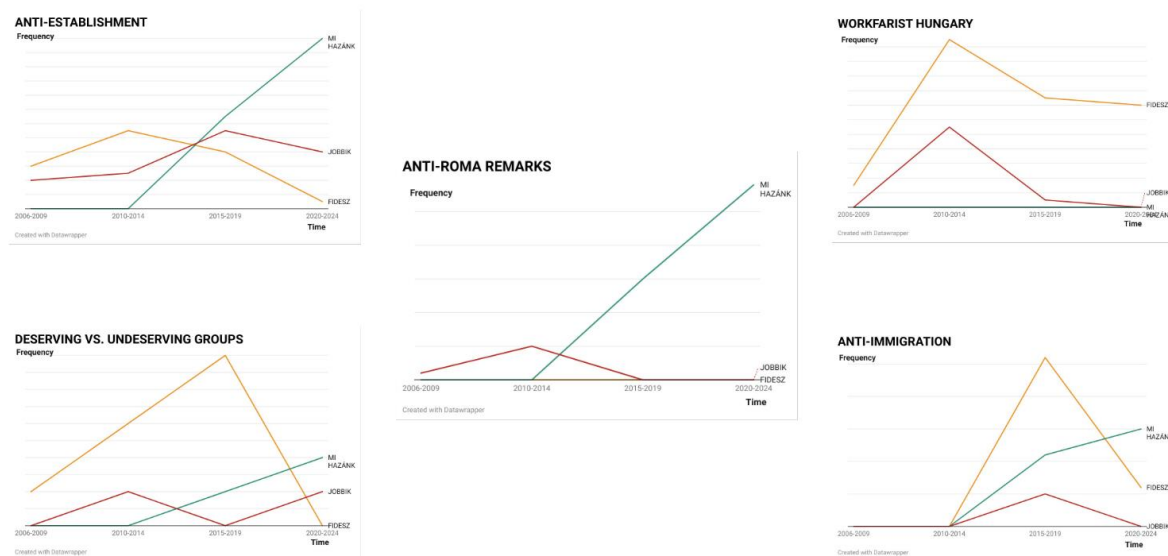
### ***4.1 Shifts in emphasising the themes across the three parties***

Figure 4 and 5 visualise the eleven themes and their changes over time in the case of all parties. They show that Fidesz and Jobbik's frequency of using the analysed themes declined between 2019 and 2024. Mi Hazánk is an exception since in their case, only one of the themes is not rising, referencing the workfare country that is not represented at all.



**Figure 4. The studied themes and their changes over time in the case of all three parties**

**1.**



**Figure 5. The studied themes and their changes over time in the case of all three parties**

2.

An important finding of Figures 4 and 5 is that even though Jobbik's dominance over these themes is the least strong, and also shows a declining tendency, many times they still win over Fidesz between 2020 and 2024. They are stronger in anti-establishment, anti-globalisation, redistribution narratives, the deserving-undeserving divide and workers' references. On the

other hand, Fidesz is still more dominant than Jobbik regarding anti-immigration, the workfare culture, and comments on the transition.

One reason for the weakening tendency of Fidesz is that they shifted their narratives from their traditional topics to the war between Russia and Ukraine and built their 2022 campaign around that (Madlovics and Magyar 2023). They created fear and emphasised that Hungary should not be involved in the conflict, tried to lead the political discourse in a way to say that the opposition wants to join the war, and they also brought in Russian narratives, for instance to criticise Ukrainian President, Zelensky (Madlovics and Magyar 2023). Their central narrative around the war was that it is unfair that Hungary is influenced by the negative side of the war, such as rising energy or import prices (Madlovics and Magyar 2023). The focus on the war stayed until the present moment, when in 2025, Fidesz launched a new National Consultation about Ukraine's potential membership in the European Union (Erős 2025). The government's active involvement in this theme gives less space to others: this can explain the declining tendency visualised in Figure 5 and 6.

The main explanation for the changes in Jobbik lies in their deradicalisation process. This shift started when Gábor Vona decided around 2017 that, since Fidesz does not give space to extreme right-wing ideas other than their own, Jobbik has to move towards the centre by focusing on becoming a "people's party" instead (Hyttinen 2022). The deradicalisation process increased when, in preparation for the national elections in 2022, Jobbik, with the leadership of Péter Jakab, joined the opposition's coalition: they ran together with green, social-democratic and liberal parties to try to win over Orbán without success (Cseke 2021). The alliance resulted in Jobbik losing 17 mandates compared to the previous elections (Tóth-Bíró 2022). Based on statistics conducted after the elections, it can be suggested that due to the ideologically divided coalition, a quarter of the past voters of Jobbik stayed at home on the day of the election, weakening the position of the opposition and Jobbik (Republikon Intézet 2022).

What is visible in the case of Jobbik from the data is that between 2020 and 2024, many of the studied themes converge to zero: only the deserving and undeserving divide is used to an extent, and anti-establishment, redistribution narratives, comments on workers' conditions, and neo-nationalist points exist. These tendencies align with their slow weakening – the polls showing that they will not have enough votes to get into Parliament in 2026, and their unstable leadership, which almost changes from year to year after 2018. With the disappearance of the main themes of this research, their relevance in the political arena also fades away. Another explanation is the appearance of Mi Hazánk, which addressed the more radical side of the party.

The most apparent trend in the data is that Mi Hazánk shows in nearly all the studied themes (except comments on the workfare society) a strong increasing tendency after 2018, when they left Jobbik and established Mi Hazánk. By being radical, they want to stand out from the political parties to gain the support of those voters, primarily the working class, who do not find representation and feel betrayed by others, as discussed in previous chapters. The decline of Jobbik and the fact that they have no choice in winning any mandates in 2026 can support their argument that leaving Jobbik behind was a necessary step and that it is only through a radical stance that right-wing parties can assert their dominance. As Tisza appeared as a new party in 2024, being moderately right-wing and now the potential opponent of Fidesz (Sata 2024), Mi Hazánk has to keep its level of radicalisation to mobilise more right-wing supporters.

## ***4.2 Fidesz: Addressing the working class from government***

### **4.2.1 A Brief history of Fidesz**

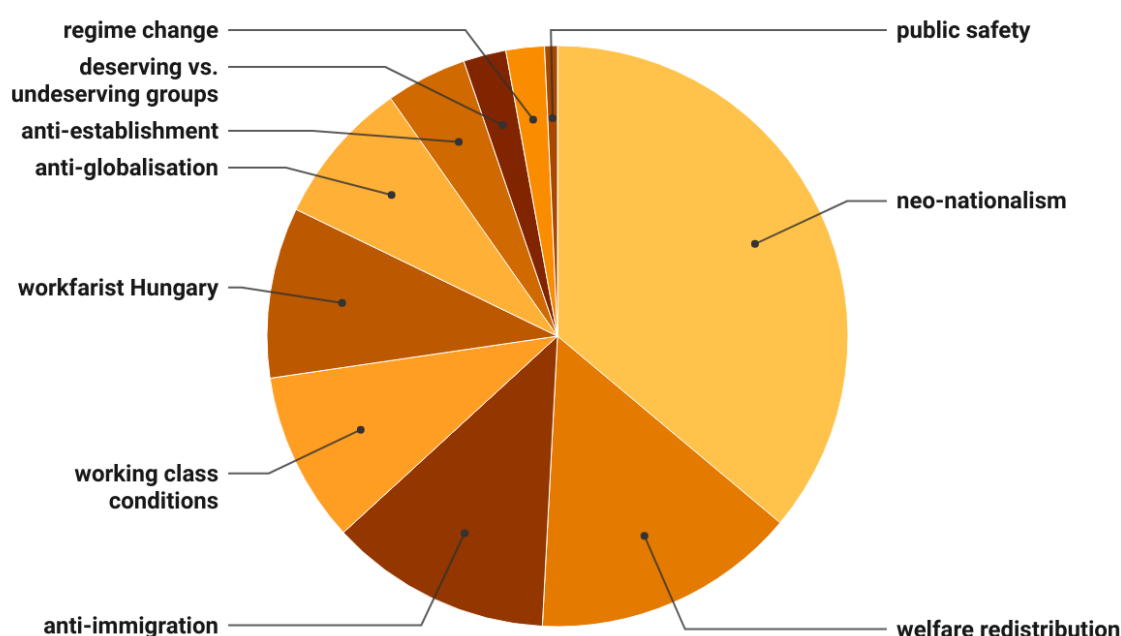
Fidesz was established in 1988 by a group of young, liberal students living in the same college who wanted to replace the state-communist regime (Bozóki and Fleck 2024). Between the time of their foundation and the present moment, Viktor Orbán has been the party's leader for more than 30 years (Bakró-Nagy and Cseke, 2023). The party first won national elections in 1998,

and after they were in opposition for eight years, between 2002 and 2010, they have now ruled Hungary for 15 years (Bozóki and Fleck 2024).

#### 4.2.2 Recurring themes in Fidesz's discourse

During these fifteen years, Orbán has been in power and has had many opportunities to include the themes studied in this research. Figure 8 shows all themes and their frequency in Orbán's speeches between 2006 and 2024, while Figure 8 visualises the themes' changes every four years.

### The themes of Fidesz between 2006 and 2024



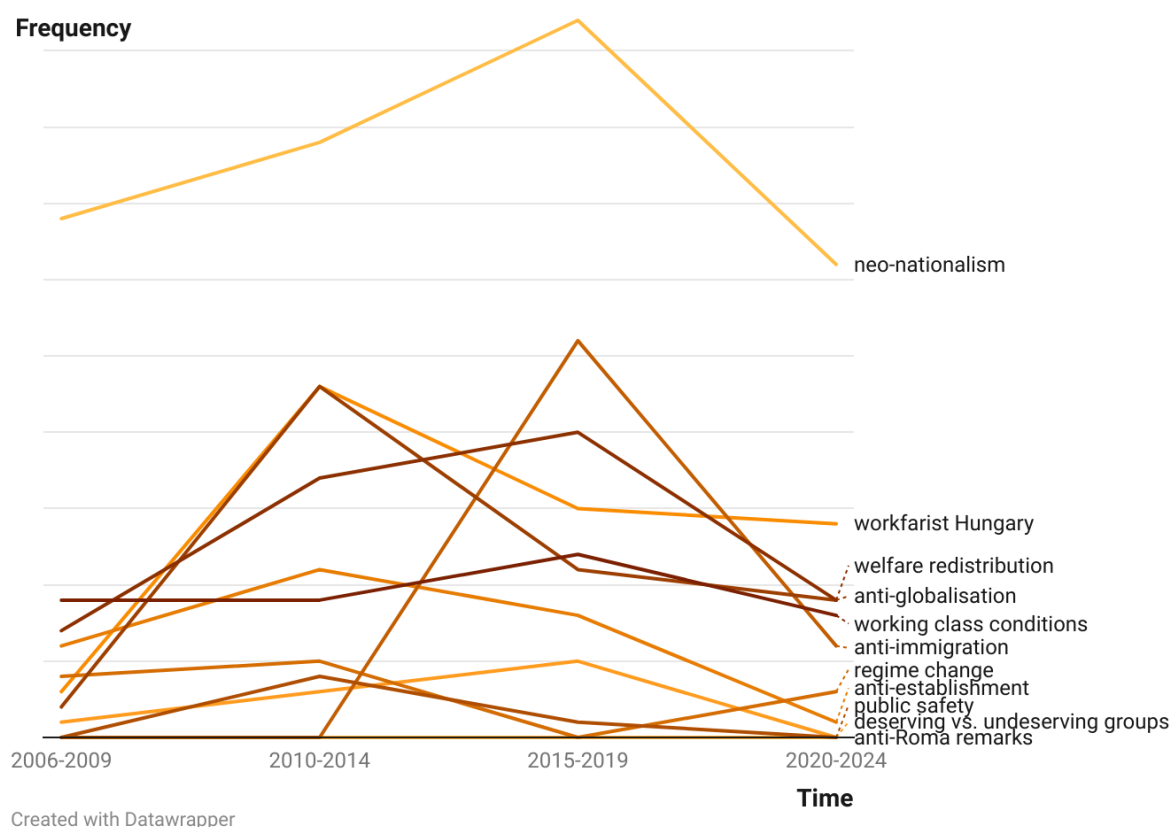
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**Figure 6. The themes of Fidesz between 2006 and 2024**

From Figure 6, it becomes transparent that the most dominant theme of Fidesz is neo-nationalism. After that comes the theme of welfare redistribution and anti-immigration. Reflections on the working-class conditions and a workfare state in Hungary are also prevalent and connected to each other in Fidesz's speeches. While the anti-globalisation narrative is also frequent in the speeches, themes about anti-establishment, the deserving versus undeserving

division, comments on the regime change, and public safety are the least frequent topics of Fidesz between 2006 and 2024. Lastly, explicit anti-Roma comments were not found in the speeches.

## Fidesz over time



**Figure 7. Fidesz and its usage of the studied themes between 2006 and 2024**

Looking at the themes and how they changed over time in the case of Fidesz, it can be suggested that some themes were the most frequent between 2010 and 2014, while others were between 2015 and 2019. Focus on the workfare state, anti-globalisation, on the regime change, and anti-establishment narratives were primarily used in the first term of Fidesz, after 2010, while anti-immigration, neo-nationalism, welfare redistribution, and the division between the undeserving and deserving people were emphasised mostly in the second term. An overall declining tendency can be seen in Figure 8 – nearly all of the themes have been weakening until 2024.

What becomes clear from the analysis of Fidesz is that their central theme is neo-nationalism. The other themes are also relevant but less frequent in the analyzed speeches. About half of the

themes peaked between 2010 and 2014, while the other half in 2015-2019. A weakening tendency is visible in the years 2020-2024, which might suggest that they changed tactics in these years.

### **4.3. *Jobbik: Changing strategies and leaders***

#### **4.3.1 The ups and downs of Jobbik**

Jobbik (The Movement for a Better Hungary) was initially established as a movement but only became a party in 2003 (Kovács 2013). In the beginning, they had strong right-wing, sometimes even extreme right-wing narratives about the Roma population, about rejecting the Trianon Treaty or having strong campaigns about multinational corporations (Barlai 2012). However, in recent years, they had a deradicalising turn.

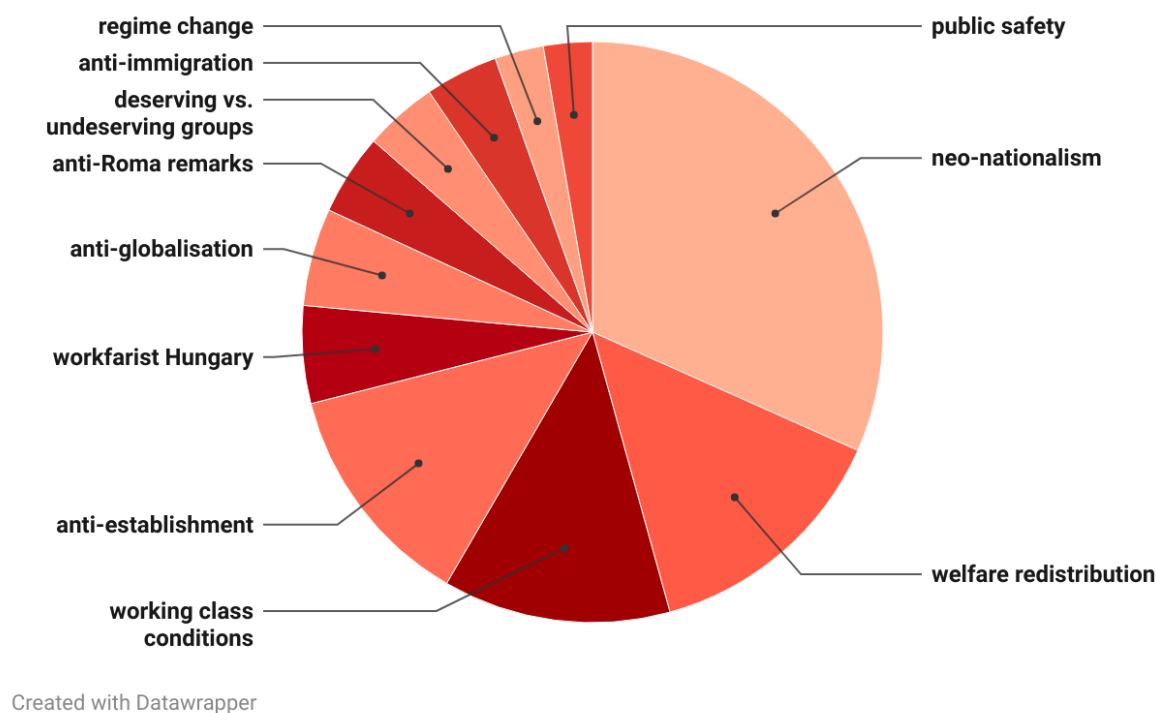
At the end of 2006, Kovács, one of the party's founders, resigned after the party established the Hungarian Guard, an informal law enforcement system (24.hu 2006) that was eventually banned in 2009 (Hyttinen 2022). Gábor Vona became the party leader, which he held until 2018 (24.hu 2018). In the next couple of years, there were a lot of fluctuations in the leadership: in 2019, Tamás Sneider became the leader; between 2020 and 2022, Péter Jakab had the role, and in 2023, Márton Gyöngyösi (24.hu 2018, 2020, 2022). These changes are visible in their national elections too: while in 2014, they got 20.22 percent of the votes and in 2018, 19.06 percent, to 2022, they only received seven mandates (around 3.5% of the mandates) (Országos Választási Iroda 2014, 2018, 2022), based on the latest polls, in 2026 they do not have a chance to get into Parliament (24.hu 2025).

#### **4.2.2 Shifts in Jobbik's approach**

Similarly to Fidesz, the central theme of Jobbik is neo-nationalism. They also mainly emphasised welfare redistribution issues, commented on the conditions of the working class, and focused on anti-establishment narratives. The other themes are less frequent in the case of Jobbik, namely: Hungary as a welfare state, anti-globalisation, anti-Roma remarks, division

between the deserving and undeserving, anti-immigration and the regime change. Jobbik is the only party that used all the studied themes.

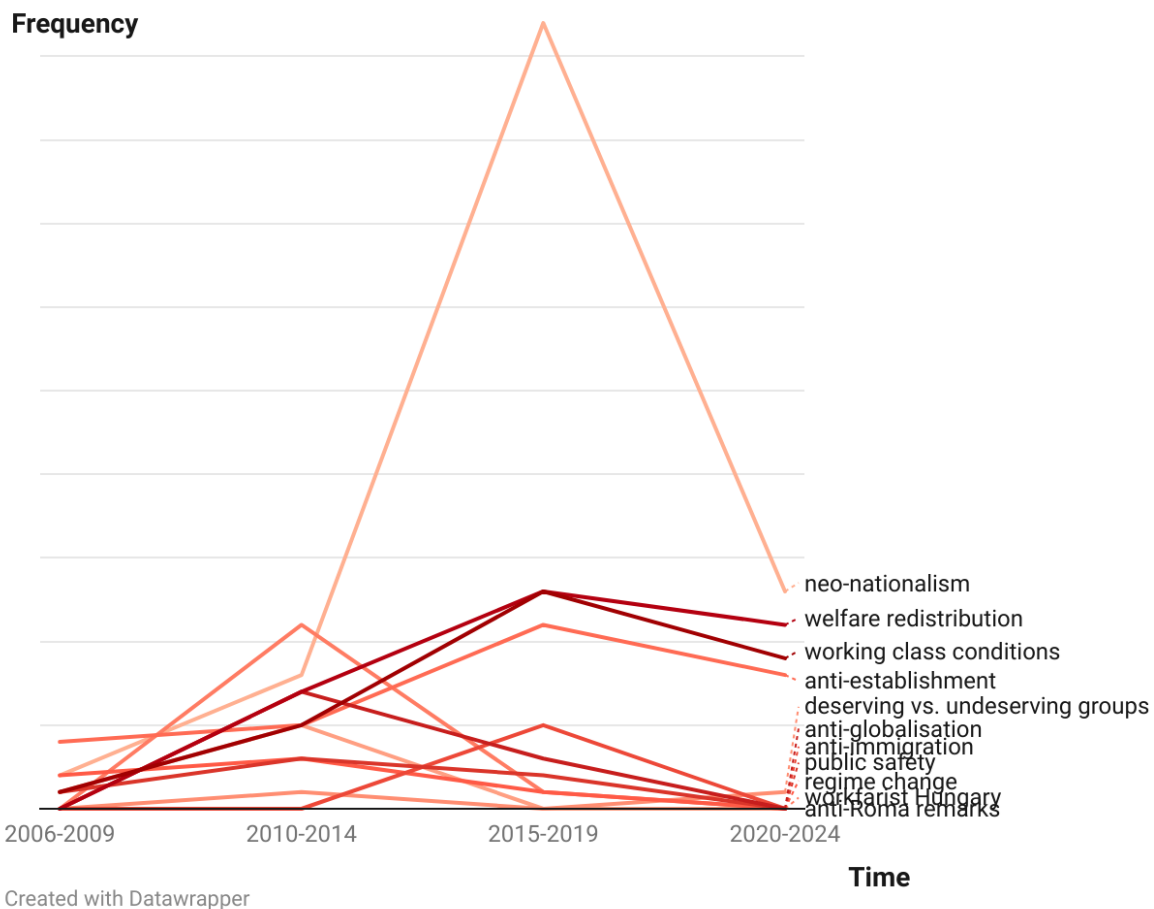
## The themes of Jobbik between 2006 and 2024



**Figure 8. The themes of Jobbik between 2006 and 2024**

Even though some themes peaked regarding how often Jobbik used them between 2010 and 2014, most topics were the most frequent between 2015 and 2019. Anti-globalisation, Hungary as a workfare state, and public safety were the most frequent in the former timeframe, while neo-nationalism, welfare redistribution, anti-establishment, anti-immigration and the reflections on the working class' condition were primarily used in the period of 2015 and 2019. A declining tendency of the topics is also visible in the case of Jobbik, more dramatically than in Fidesz, almost half of the studied themes converged to zero until 2024.

## Jobbik over time



**Figure 9. Jobbik and its usage of the studied themes between 2006 and 2024**

The conclusion from the results of Jobbik is that, as detailed later, their deradicalisation process influenced how often they used the themes over time. While many themes increased between 2015 and 2019, similarly to Fidesz, until 2020 and 2024, the frequency of the themes decreased dramatically in their speeches.

### **4.4 Mi Hazánk: Taking the lead**

#### **4.4.1 A forward-thinking decision: leaving Jobbik for a more radical path**

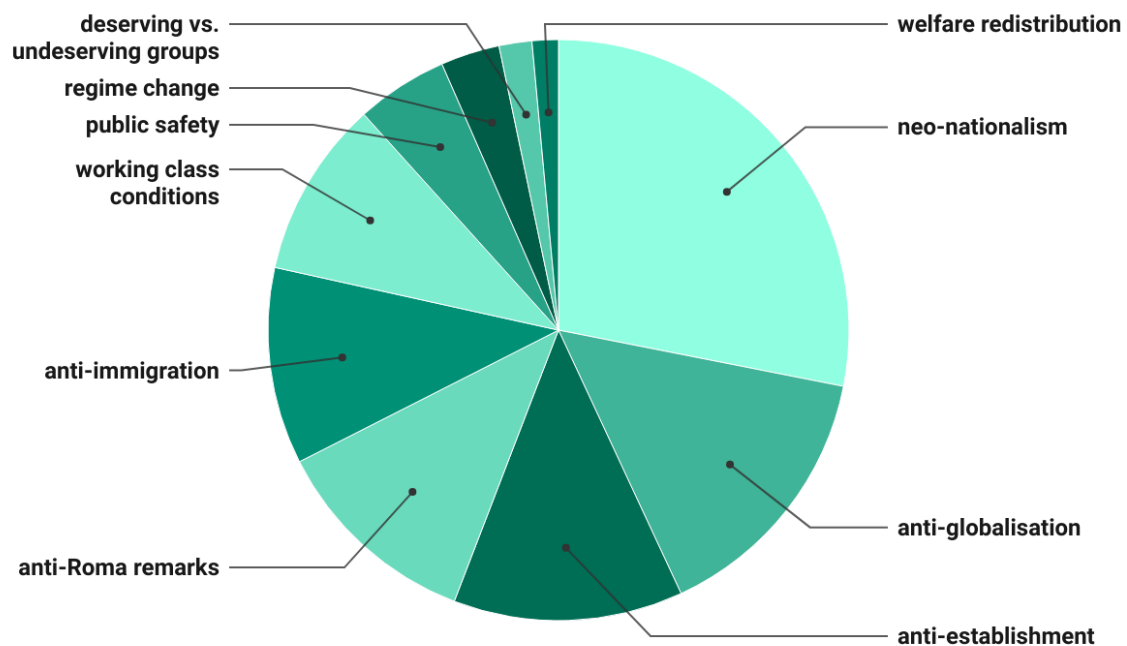
Mi Hazánk (Our Homeland) was formed in 2018 after many members of Jobbik became disconnected from the new “people’s party” direction of the party, who missed the original, more radical approach of Jobbik (Dayıoğlu 2024). The face of this separation was László Toroczkai, who also became the elected party leader of Mi Hazánk (Dayıoğlu 2024). Mi

Hazánk has managed to grow since its establishment by taking up a position between the government and the opposition: they try to address those who cannot find representation in either (Dayioğlu 2024). Therefore, they did not join the opposition coalition in 2022, which made it possible to get into Parliament instantly (Nemzeti Választási Iroda 2022) in the party's first national elections. Based on the latest polls, they have the most chance to get seats in 2026, although they only had four percent of support from the required five (24.hu 2025).

#### **4.4.2 Mi Hazánk: The only party increasingly using the themes**

Figure 10 visualises the themes and how frequently they are compared to each other in the speeches of Mi Hazánk between 2018 and 2024. Neo-nationalism is the most dominant theme, just like in the case of Jobbik and Fidesz; however, the rest of their themes do not follow their patterns. Anti-globalisation, anti-establishment, anti-immigration narratives, anti-Roma remarks, and comments on working-class conditions are also frequent in the party's communication. Public safety, the regime change, the divide between the deserving and undeserving, and welfare redistribution are less emphasised. The theme of the workfarist Hungary does not appear in the speeches of Mi Hazánk.

## The themes of Mi Hazánk between 2018 and 2024

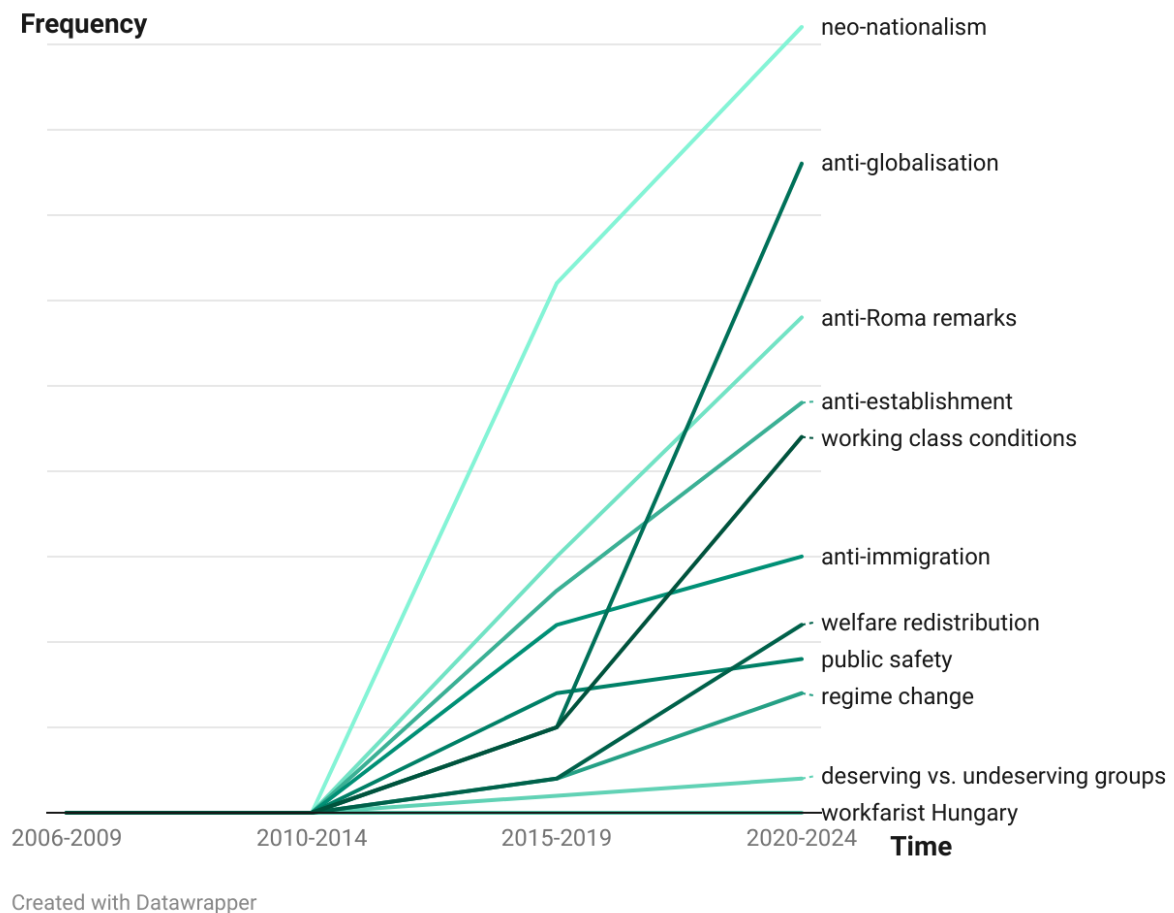


Created with Datawrapper

**Figure 10. The themes of Mi Hazánk between 2018 and 2024**

Unlike Fidesz and Jobbik, Mi Hazánk shows a rising tendency in how frequently they use the studied themes. The themes of neo-nationalism, anti-globalisation, anti-Roma remarks, anti-establishment, and welfare redistribution show the strongest elevation. While this tendency was prevalent from the party's establishment, many themes started to be emphasised on an even higher level between 2020 and 2024.

## Mi Hazánk over time

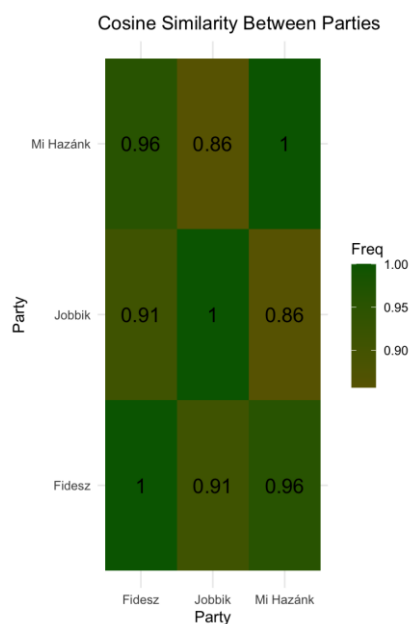


**Figure 11. Mi Hazánk and its usage of the studied themes between 2018 and 2024**

To sum up the results of Mi Hazánk, it should be mentioned that they are the only party of the three studied that uses the themes increasingly over time. While their central theme is neo-nationalism, they use anti-globalization and anti-establishment themes more often than the others. Unlike Jobbik and Fidesz, they also use the more radical themes frequently, such as anti-Roma remarks.

#### 4.5 The cosine similarity of parties

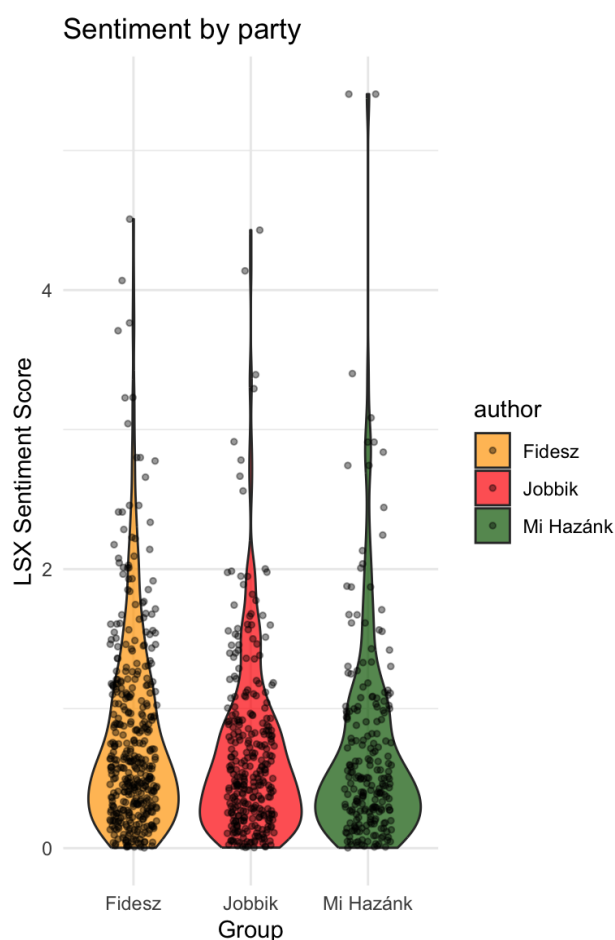
Figures 4-11 showed the results of the qualitative thematic analysis. Now that the main patterns are visible, the conclusions of the quantitative analysis can be used to paint an even broader picture of how Hungarian right-wing parties use the narratives to address the working class. This matrix illustrates the cosine similarity between the analyzed parties, providing insights into how similarly they used the themes that the research focused on. The closer the cosine similarity value is to 1, the more aligned the parties' speeches are. Fidesz and Mi Hazánk show the highest mutual similarity score (0.96), followed by Fidesz and Jobbik (0.91) and Mi Hazánk and Jobbik (0.86). This indicates that Fidesz talks about the themes similarly to Jobbik and Mi Hazánk, and vice versa, while Mi Hazánk managed to differ from Jobbik, as they had planned.



**Figure 12. Cosine Similarity Matrix between parties**

#### 4.6 Sentiment of parties towards the working class

In a violin plot format, the Sentiment Distribution visualises the distribution of sentiment LSX scores toward workers across the three parties based on the seedwords that were chosen manually after the qualitative analysis (Appendix C). The higher the LSX score, the more positive discourse about workers. The three parties show relatively similar distributions, with most sentiment scores below 2, suggesting generally neutral to slightly positive sentiment. The plot also shows that outliers with significantly higher sentiment scores exist across all parties.



**Figure 13. Sentiment by party**

While median sentiment does not drastically differ across the groups, Mi Hazánk appears to have a wider spread with more extreme positive values than Fidesz and Jobbik. This might mean a broader variability in how Toroczkai talks about workers, with more references to the

working class. On the other hand, Fidesz and Jobbik are more consistent in their approach towards the working class but have a less positive sentiment overall.

#### **4.7 A Comparative discussion of the results**

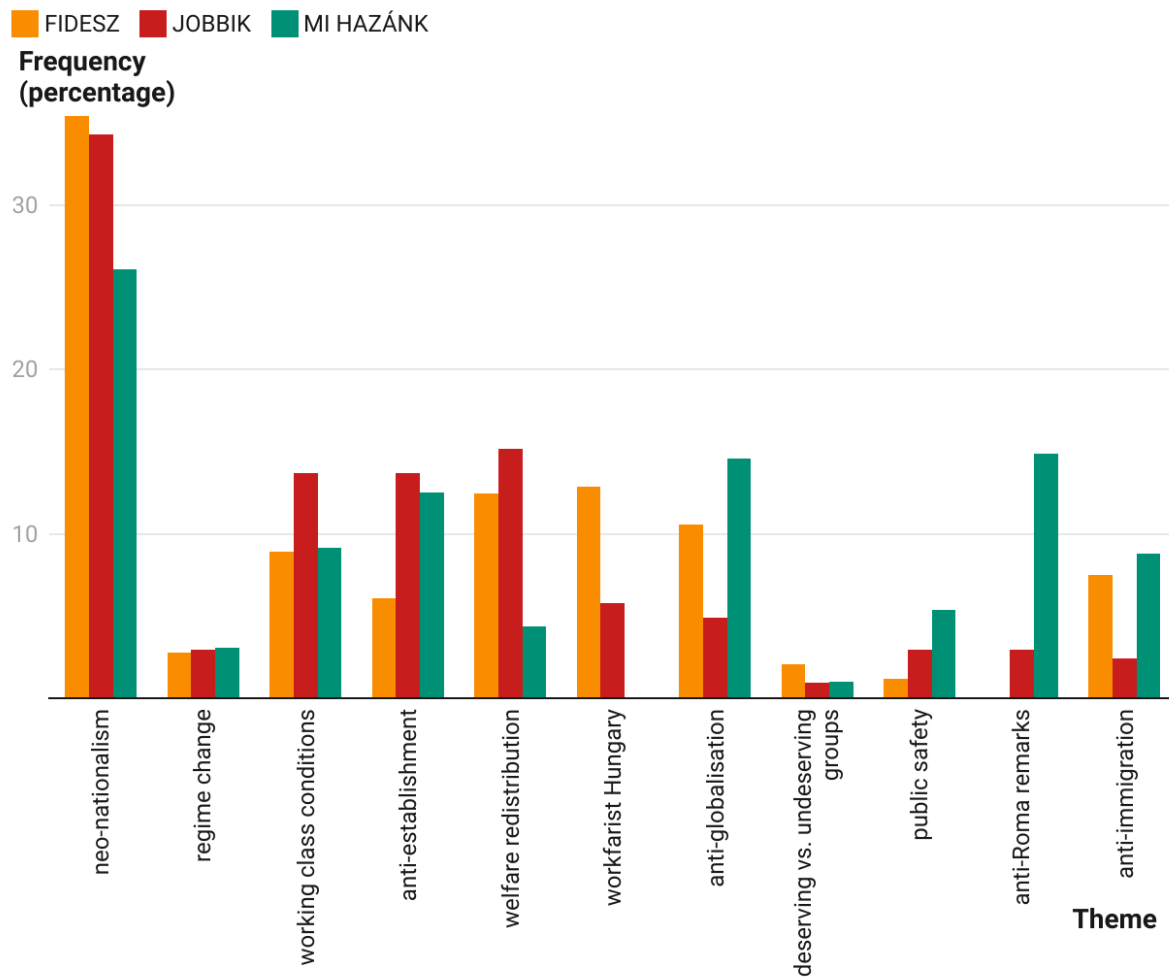
The main objective of this research is to observe the differences and similarities between the three main Hungarian right-wing parties, Fidesz, Jobbik, and Mi Hazánk and how they use the narratives usually used internationally to address workers. In the previous few chapters, the data of all three parties individually and their general tendencies were introduced. In the next part, more focus is placed on comparison by looking at the dominance of different themes in the three parties and adding some explanations to the findings.

##### **4.7.1 Converging themes and differing emphasis**

Figures 14 and 15 visualise the dominance of the selected themes in the speeches of all three parties between 2006 and 2024. Figure 14 shows the frequency of the themes in percentages, demonstrating the rate of how often parties use the themes in their speeches. Figure 15 on the other hand shows the differences in absolute frequencies between parties, indicating how many times they used the themes between 2006 and 2024 altogether. Both findings are important in the conclusion, however, Figure 14 is capable of alleviating the potential imbalances that could arise from Fidesz's governing position.

Even though Mi Hazánk only exists since 2018, while Fidesz and Jobbik were analyzed from 2006, which could result in a disproportion within the data, as the charts show, Mi Hazánk can be easily compared with the other two parties even under these circumstances. Since all the themes are used by all parties, with few exceptions, the study's first hypothesis, that the internationally occurring themes are relevant in Hungary, too, can be accepted.

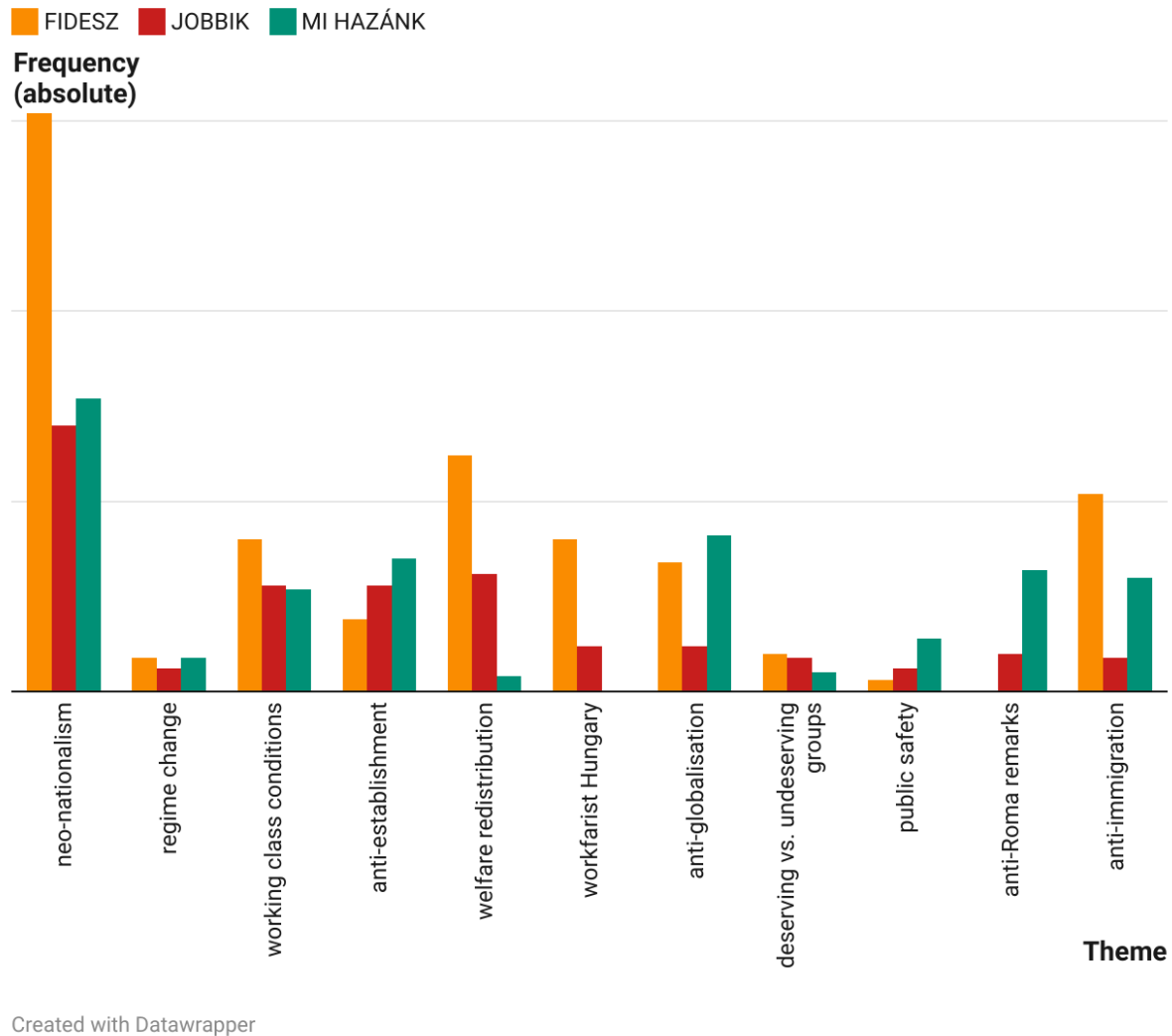
## Comparing the three parties (percentages)



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**Figure 14. Comparing the three parties (percentages)**

## Comparing the three parties (absolute frequency)



**Figure 15. Comparing the three parties (absolute frequency)**

### 4.7.2 The dominance of neo-nationalism

As it turned out from the individual analyses and from Figure 14 and 15, neo-nationalism is the most dominant theme in the case of all parties, and within the results of Fidesz are outstanding. This is not unexpected: populism is an essential concept in the case of Orbán. His personalised power and the centralised system he created, focused around one party and being fluid in an ideological background, are all representatives of populism (Körösényi and Patkós 2017, Bozóki and Fleck 2024). Bozóki and Fleck (2024) emphasise nationalism with the metaphor of Fidesz: they believe that Hungarian families make up a national tribe, including

even those Hungarians who live in the territories that belonged to the country before the Trianon Treaty. Using phrases that target strengthening the national identity and describing the Hungarians with specific traits that apply to all in the country makes this theme the most frequent in Orbán's speeches. Populism, as a way to address the "people", the masses, can also be a tool to address the working class, as they give almost half of the population, based on the study's theoretical framework (Gingrich and Banks 2006, Rennwald 2020). Nationalism often comes in pair with populism. Usually, two types of nationalisms are contrasted: inclusive, which includes different groups within the nation and exclusive, which does not accept certain people (Saifullah 2017). Fidesz, Jobbik, and Mi Hazánk combine populism with exclusionary nationalist narratives. This is why we can call the nationalist narratives they use, neo-nationalist. It also means combining the populist approach to achieve mobilisation by forming identities based on national similarities (Gingrich and Banks 2006).

Characteristics of Hungarians, what it feels like to be Hungarian, emphasising that Hungary is not just a country but a community, were also common under all leaders of Jobbik, but especially between 2015 and 2019. This was when Gábor Vona decided that since Fidesz does not give space to extreme right-wing ideas other than their own, Jobbik has to move towards the centre by focusing on becoming a "people's party" instead (Hytinen 2022). This might explain why neo-nationalist narratives were the most frequent in these years: by affirming people's Hungarian identity, they wanted to gain more followers.

While Mi Hazánk also follows a similar pattern in how they use the narrative of neo-nationalism, by trying to enhance the national identity of their voters, their neo-nationalist tendencies are combined with a strong anti-globalisation sentiment as well (Dayıoğlu 2024).

#### **4.7.3 Focusing on welfare redistribution**

The welfare distribution theme is Fidesz's second most frequent theme, possibly because they are in a governing position. Their approach is in strong connection with their emphasis on the

workfare state, which will be detailed in Chapter 4.7.7. Fidesz wanted to redistribute welfare mostly by creating jobs. Besides their focus on jobs, they also mention several times the need for increasing wages and improving children's learning conditions. They also concentrate on the pension system, creating welfare for the elderly, as one of their most loyal voters, which is realised primarily by bringing back the 13<sup>th</sup> month pension (Ádám and Simonovits 2019). Lastly, Fidesz also began many family support programs in the form of tax reduction schemes and other income supplements; however, it is no secret that by these policies, they want to increase the number of births (Grzebalska and Pető 2018).

Jobbik also mentioned many times the improvement of the pensioners' circumstances while emphasising the need for programs that help small enterprises develop. Creating jobs also occurs in their speeches. What is different in their case from Fidesz's is that they often contrast the Hungarian wages to the European level and try to reach that level. At the same time, Fidesz in their speeches does not explicitly refer to Europe in this topic. Besides this difference, Jobbik emphasises the state of agriculture, while favouring programs that would improve farmers' conditions.

Unlike in the case of the other themes, Mi Hazánk falls behind the other two parties in this theme. The analyzed speeches primarily emphasise the strong need for wage increases and a better pension system that makes it possible to live well after retirement.

#### **4.7.4 Anti-immigration strategy**

The anti-immigration theme is also an essential part of the history of Fidesz. In 2015, at the beginning of the intense immigration wave into Europe, Fidesz's popularity declined until Orbán found the potential to start a strong anti-immigration campaign (Bíró-Nagy 2022). Besides communicatory moves, like a billboard campaign and a National Consultation, they have built a fence at the border of Hungary and Serbia (Bíró-Nagy 2022). As a result of their campaigns, by deepening a strong, deserving - undeserving divide by creating fear in the

population, they have gained their popularity back. This tendency is evident from the data of this research, as anti-immigration themes appeared in 2015 with no previous applications. Even though this theme was essential to Fidesz's communication in the last decade, its strong emphasis has declined. One potential reason for this is that while in the first years of the immigration wave, Orbán was an outlier in his strong anti-immigration stance in the EU, nowadays, he is not alone – many countries apply restrictive policies against immigration (Guardian 2024). Now that he has achieved victory in this area to an extent, he no longer emphasises it as much as before.

To better understand Jobbik's approach to the anti-immigration theme, it is essential to detail the relationship between Jobbik and Fidesz more. The win of Fidesz in 2010 and the unexpected strengthening of Jobbik happened simultaneously (Karácsony and Róna 2010). After Fidesz got back into power, they studied Jobbik and the popularity of their actions to see if they could bring in more narratives from the far-right (Bozóki and Fleck 2024). Even though Jobbik was against the Orbán government from the opposition, their position helped Fidesz since they usually supported the right-wing policies of Fidesz (Bozóki and Fleck 2024). If Fidesz felt that the social preferences of the population would let them propose more extreme policies, sometimes they even stole ideas from Jobbik, which resulted in making the environment lean more towards the right while also keeping Jobbik out of power (Bozóki and Fleck 2024). This pattern also applies to the present relationship between Mi Hazánk and Fidesz. In terms of the anti-immigration narrative, Gábor Vona mentioned many times that the fence that Fidesz built at the beginning of the immigration wave in 2015 was originally the idea of Jobbik, to communicate their more radical position.

However, Mi Hazánk took an even more radical stance after its establishment. Toroczkai, the mayor of a town called Ásotthalom, tried to ban the building of mosques and muezzins, and women wearing a hijab or burqua in response to the higher level of immigration (24.hu 2016). What differentiates Mi Hazánk from the other parties in how they talk about immigration is

that they also include guest workers in the discussion more often, connecting this to their anti-Roma sentiments, stating that a bigger percentage of guest workers is constituted of Roma people, and that guest worker programs keep down the Hungarian wages.

#### **4.7.5 Opposing globalisation**

Fidesz mainly used the anti-globalisation theme with the idea that Hungary must take back control over its economy and culture. Until 2013, their primary focus was the International Monetary Fund, which gave loans to Hungary under the social-democratic government, and which Fidesz wanted to cancel – they succeeded in 2013 (ATV.hu 2024), but they refer back to this act later too. The other actor from whom Fidesz intends to take back control is the European Union. They believe that it transports western ideas that must be accepted by the member states, sometimes Fidesz even combines this theory with immigration, stating that immigration is a tool to create western, EU dominance.

Jobbik, as in the case of the anti-establishment theme, is more focused on multinational corporations and their effects on the country. They want to make Hungary less dependent on these multinational forces, which also means that they strongly emphasise the importance of strengthening Hungarian companies and jobs, so it is unnecessary to rely on foreign countries and their industry.

While Fidesz and Jobbik are both critical of the European Union, Jobbik would favour strong international ties if Hungary's sovereignty were safe; Mi Hazánk believes in economic independence. Mi Hazánk not only uses anti-globalisation narratives more than Fidesz, but they also represent a more radical stance on this issue. Mi Hazánk explicitly blames many times globalisation, its leading actors (like the elite of the United States) and Hungary's economic dependency on foreign countries as the reasons for the degradation of the country's sovereignty and economic downfall (Toroczkaï 2021). They also combine their anti-globalisation narratives with anti-establishment references: a recurring phrase in the speeches of Toroczkaï

is the “globalist pig-headed lords of the world” (Toroczkai 2021), which reflects a strong anti-globalisation sentiment and an overall resistance to the current international elite.

#### **4.7.6 Anti-establishment rhetoric**

Although Fidesz, as the governing party of Hungary, is the country's elite, they use the anti-establishment narrative too to strengthen their power. They take a stance against the domestic elite such as ex-politicians, prime ministers of the country and their parties, especially Ferenc Gyurcsány and his party, and compare themselves to them. Even though many members of Fidesz have gained exceptional wealth, they take a position against the rich. Lastly, their anti-establishment theme is firmly built around the international elite, being against the leaders of the European Union, to strengthen the country's sovereignty in their narrative.

While Jobbik, as an opposition party, also defines itself against the former or current leaders of the country, and they also criticise the elite of the European Union. They often confront the wealthiest of the country and emphasise the high level of corruption that makes the rich more affluent, while taking away the money from average people. Connected to their anti-globalisation sentiments, they are also against multinational corporations, and label them as part of the elite and establishment.

Mi Hazánk fits into the pattern of criticising the domestic political elite and corruption, however, refers to the transition, too, when many elite members transferred from the communist regime to the new one. As Jobbik, they are also against the international elite, such as multinationals; however, they confront the American banking system explicitly. They also mention tech moguls, such as Mark Zuckerberg, who should not be in such an influential position. One explanation is that Facebook has banned Toroczkai's profile due to hateful online behaviour (Kerner 2019).

#### **4.7.7 Workfare instead welfare in Hungary**

The reason behind why Fidesz is so dominant in the theme of a workfarist Hungary, is that at the beginning of 2010, their second turn in government, they stated that they wanted to create a workfare society (Bozóki and Fleck 2024) where only those will get any help from the welfare system, who work. The Fundamental Law of Hungary states that “everyone shall be obliged to contribute to the enrichment of the community through their work, by their abilities and potential. Hungary shall strive to create the conditions that ensure that everyone able and willing to work has the opportunity to do so” (Fundamental Law of Hungary nd). As a result, unemployment benefits decreased, and a public work program was established (Hungler and Kende 2019), creating another deserving and undeserving category: the workers and the unemployed. Roma people were targets of this program on the one hand, but on the other, it was a tool to put them in the undeserving category, as in the unemployed population, they were more represented (Hungler and Kende 2019). While hundreds of thousands were involved in the public work system, criticisms can be applied, such as the discrimination against Roma workers, the dependency that this system creates, and the underlying concept that it replaces benefits (Hungler and Kende 2019).

Since making Hungary a workfare state instead of a welfare state is possible mainly from a governing position, this theme is primarily relevant to Fidesz. When using this topic, Jobbik is in sync with Fidesz's narrative, but as they are an opposition party, they do not repeat the arguments of the governing party frequently. This could be a possible explanation for why this theme was not found in the analyzed speeches of Mi Hazánk. Also, this theme reached its peak in the case of Fidesz in 2019, so when Mi Hazánk was established, this issue was less salient.

#### **4.7.8 Working-class conditions**

For Fidesz, the theme of working-class conditions is tied to how they use the workfarist Hungary theme. They emphasise job creation and a support system that is made for those who work. While they do not want to help the unemployed, in their communication, Fidesz promises

to help the living conditions of workers, as they earn it. Besides their focus on the workfare state, they use this theme in the context of increasing wages.

The years of 2015-2019 were when Jobbik used the themes most frequently. This was the time of one of Jobbik's most influential campaigns, which included welfare redistribution, anti-establishment themes, and especially the one related to the conditions of the working class. They designed billboards with the motto: “You work. They steal.” comparing the everyday workers’ experience with the government and its elite figures, indicating that the reason for the lack of redistribution policies results from corruption (Rényi 2017). This campaign made Fidesz respond with a pretty radical act: they recalled the Parliament during the summer, when usually there are no votes, to restrict the law on putting up billboards (Hvg.hu 2017). This is another sign that suggests that before their decline, which lasted until now, Jobbik had a few years when they were relatively successful.

This topic is also essential to Mi Hazánk, especially after 2020. This can be explained by the answers the party gave to the COVID-19 pandemic. Mi Hazánk was the only party openly campaigning against vaccines and restrictions, giving them strong media coverage over the years (Pál 2022). While they often used conspiracy theories, especially about vaccines (Turza 2023), they also used more realistic narratives around lockdowns that reflected many workers’ experiences. Toroczkai mentioned many times in his speeches over these years that closing many businesses leaves the workers in an uncertain position, which should not be forgotten when making policies (Toroczkai 2022). Therefore, their approach to the policies around the pandemic correlated to an extent with their usage of this specific theme.

#### **4.7.9 Ethnic biases: Anti-Roma remarks**

Anti-Roma remarks is the only theme that does not appear in Fidesz's analyzed speeches. One reason for this finding is that a governing party cannot allow itself to talk with these kinds of extremities to keep a majority. The other one is that, even though no explicit comments were

made on the Roma population of Hungary, by putting them into the undeserving category, and making them dependent on the public work system, Fidesz also acted against the Roma population many times – with actions instead of words. Even though they rely strongly on nationalist narratives, who they constitute as members of the nation is subjective on their part: for them, the country consists of Hungarians only, without the Roma population (Bozóki and Fleck 2024).

As Jobbik's deradicalisation process will be detailed later, one indicator of this trend can be seen in how often they use anti-Roma remarks. In the peak of this topic, Gábor Vona once said that two-thirds of the country is a supporter of Jobbik, just not everyone knows this (Index.hu 2012), by which he referred to the country's position toward Roma people and their dominance in this racist narrative. While the theme has some representation from 2015 and 2019 to the last four years, it nearly disappeared from their discourse in the last analysed timeframe.

Another potential reason for the relatively strong position of Mi Hazánk is its focus on the Roma population. One motivation for the split between Jobbik and Mi Hazánk was the deradicalisation of this topic (Dayıoğlu 2024). Therefore, Toroczkai managed to emphasise their anti-Roma sentiments besides the anti-Muslim narrative that dominated the right-wing discourse more during the immigration wave (Vékony 2019). Building a divide between Hungarians and Roma people is not only visible in the speeches of Toroczkai but also in the choreography and symbols of the protests and meetings of Mi Hazánk, which strongly resemble the characteristics of Jobbik in their more radical years (Hytinen 2022). While Toroczkai is entirely against the integration of Roma and favours segregation, on the other hand, Jobbik and Orbán are for their integration.

#### **4.7.10 Public safety messages**

The issue of public safety is less salient in the speeches of the three parties. Fidesz primarily connects the need for increasing public safety with immigration problems, so in their case, the

themes of public safety and anti-immigration show a strong connection. Jobbik, on the other hand, emphasises more the importance of public safety with quite radical methods, like the legalisation of the death penalty, or chemical castration. The reasons behind establishing the Hungarian Guard also lie in this motivation. One aspect that Jobbik and Mi Hazánk share in this issue is that they mostly connect the lack of public safety to the Roma population, by emphasising the concept of “Roma crime”. So, the themes of public safety and anti-Roma remarks come hand in hand with this example.

#### **4.7.11 Constructing deserving versus undeserving groups**

As it turned out from analysing the topics before, Fidesz mainly creates a division between the deserving and the undeserving by separating those who work and those who do not. This is at the core of the idea of the welfare country: working people can ask for help from the state, and the unemployed are not allowed to. Jobbik also continues this pattern by focusing on merit and its importance, but uses it more widely, not only in the welfare system. Mi Hazánk, as Jobbik to an extent, creates a division explicitly between Hungarian people and Roma people, by emphasising that these two groups are entitled to different welfare conditions.

#### **4.7.12 Disappointments in the regime change**

Comments on the regime change of the 1990s are one of the least-used topics of the three parties. When Fidesz expresses criticisms against the shift, they sometimes mention the disadvantages of the free market and place a stronger emphasis on the problem of making alliances with foreign countries, which led to economic dependence. They also claim that freedom was expected from the regime change, which did not arise – this narrative is used to promote their regime, by which they claim that freedom is now available. Jobbik is also concerned with the regime change as it led to the country losing its sovereignty, and the process of how leaders of the previous regime became members of the political elite in the new one. Mi Hazánk also follows the parallel with how they use the anti-establishment topic.

## CHAPTER 5 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

The thesis has demonstrated, until now, the results of the qualitative reflexive thematic analysis and quantitative text analysis. The former included visualisations of the eleven studied themes through the parties' address to the working-class, and their frequency in the speeches of the three parties one by one, their fluctuation over time, and also contrasted the three parties with each other. The latter included the Cosine Similarity Matrix and the sentiment analysis results. The conclusion that can be drawn from the Cosine Similarity Matrix is that the three parties are similar in using the keywords connected to the themes of the qualitative research. The most significant difference is between Jobbik and Mi Hazánk, which demonstrates how well Mi Hazánk has managed to differentiate itself from its original party, Jobbik. The results of the sentiment analysis follow this pattern: from the qualitative analysis it became clear that it is only beneficial to look at the positive side of the spectrum which shows little discrepancy between the three parties' approach, and this is underscored by the results which also show an almost equally positive sentiment in all the parties – only Mi Hazánk has some more positive outliers. This is also consistent with the qualitative data showing that Mi Hazánk became more committed towards the studied themes and addressing the working class.

Since all the studied themes were used in the speeches of all three parties, Hypothesis 1, namely that the internationally applied themes of how the right-wing attempts to address the working class are all relevant to Hungarian-right wing parties' strategies can be supported. The second hypothesis can also be accepted, since while Fidesz is the strongest in how frequently they use some of the themes, in the other themes they are not the most forceful, which might come from their governing position. Lastly, the third hypothesis of the research can also be approved, as Jobbik follows a weakening tendency in how they use the themes, while Mi Hazánk is the opposite; they managed to take over in how they use the strategies to address the working class.

There are some limitations of the thesis that have to be mentioned regarding the results. Firstly, only two speeches at specific occasions were studied every year which cannot give the full picture of the communication of parties. Secondly, while analyzing the communication of the party leaders is important, politicians within the same parties can have differing strategies regarding the working class which this thesis does not study. Furthermore, a limitation of the quantitative analysis can be that the keywords used in cosine similarity and the seedwords in the sentiment analysis were chosen by hand based on the qualitative research. Lastly, since speeches from the years of the late 2000s were not so widely available, these years interviews had to be used more often which might weaken the comparability of the analysed texts.

## CONCLUSION

This thesis examined the different strategies that Hungarian right-wing parties use to address the working class. It follows the argument that the working class and class-based voting still exists and should not be forgotten when analysing the success of right-wing parties. The thesis also contends that while analysing right-wing parties as a category helps understand the contemporary political processes, and that it is also essential to look at the differences and similarities of the right-wing parties within countries, separately. The thesis supports the existing literature in the assumption that Hungarian right-wing parties are purposeful in addressing the working-class by using narratives around neo-nationalism, the regime change of the 1990s, conditions of workers, anti-establishment, anti-globalisation, anti-immigration, welfare redistribution, the difference between the deserving and undeserving, the workfare state, public safety, and racism against the Roma population. The main result of this research is the observed trend in the parties' use of the assessed themes over time. Looking at the speeches of Fidesz and Jobbik, a declining trend is found in how often they use the themes, while Mi Hazánk shows a strong elevating trend.

This also gives space for further ideas to study this topic. One of the most obvious steps would be to include left-wing, social-democratic parties too in the analysis and to see how differently they use these narratives, if they use them at all. This would make it possible to support or decline the suggestion that left-wing parties have turned towards the middle class instead of the working class. Another way to expand on this research would be to analyze the voting patterns of the working class as looking at politicians' speeches only describes one part of the equation. It would also be helpful to see whether these narratives effectively reach the working class as targets or whether the parties mobilise a different group as a result of their strategies. Including the new Hungarian right-wing party, Tisza, who is currently the primary challenger of Fidesz, would be a more forward-looking approach, in understanding better their strategies and how it will affect the approach of Fidesz in terms of the working class. Furthermore, by

including more types of communication platforms, such as social media, the strategies of the right-wing parties would be clearer. From a theoretical perspective, focusing on how the definition of the working class changed over the timeframe, and how the studied themes altered as a result, would also be influential to study. Lastly, to see more clearly whether postmodernism is more influential than class-based voting, more cultural issues, like LGBTQ rights or climate change, could be analyzed in the speeches and compared with the frequency of more material themes.

The main contribution of this thesis is that, in contrast to the prevailing practice of using the label “right-wing” with no nuances, this research examined the differences among parties within the right-wing realm in the context of Hungary. It shows their similarities and also emphasises the distinctions of how they use specific themes in their communication. This extensive look at the speeches of Fidesz, Jobbik, and Mi Hazánk, the analysis of about 90 speeches in 18 years with a mixed text analysis methodology, offers a unique approach to this field of research.

Fidesz has been in government for fifteen years in Hungary, building a more and more authoritarian regime over time. Last year, a new right-wing party, Tisza, emerged, which has a chance to win the next national elections in 2026. However, the support of left-wing parties has strongly declined. This research tried to outline the strategies of right-wing parties because the left has to find new ways to get voters to build a country that is not based on illiberalism but on democracy and solidarity. To do so, studying the strategies of their successful opponents is necessary, especially those that managed to win the original base of the left: the working class. By analysing how the right addresses them, it might be possible for the left to design a plan to win them back. The reality that we spend the majority of our time in the workplace is unlikely to change soon, therefore the left has to take advantage of it and mobilize workers.

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## APPENDICES

### *Appendix A. List of the Analyzed Speeches*

#### **Viktor Orbán**

<b>Document Title</b>	<b>Delivery Date</b>
Viktor Orbán's Annual Assessment Speech	29 January 2006
Speech by Viktor Orbán on 23 October 2006	23 October 2006
Viktor Orbán's Annual Assessment Speech in 2007	16 February 2007
Speech by Viktor Orbán on 23 October 2007	23 October 2007
Viktor Orbán's Annual Assessment Speech in 2008	14 February 2008
Speech by Viktor Orbán on 15 March 2008	15 March 2008
Viktor Orbán's XIth (2009) State of the Union address in Millenáris Park	09 March 2009
A fateful struggle begins	23 October 2009
Hungary has to be rebuilt	05 February 2010
Viktor Orbán's ceremonial speech on Kossuth Square	23 October 2010
1848 and 2010 also brought renewal	15 March 2011
Viktor Orbán's Annual Assessment Speech	09 February 2011
We will not accept to be governed by foreigners	23 October 2012
Viktor Orbán's Annual Assessment Speech	07 February 2012
Hungary is doing better	23 February 2013
The heroes of 1956 have left a legacy of greatness	23 October 2013
Viktor Orbán's Annual Assessment Speech In Millenáris Park	16 February 2014
Viktor Orbán's celebratory speech	15 March 2014
Viktor Orbán's Annual Assessment Speech	27 February 2015
Speech by Viktor Orbán on the 174th anniversary of the 1848/49 Revolution and War of Independence	15 March 2015
Viktor Orbán's Annual Assessment Speech	28 February 2016
Speech by Viktor Orbán on the 60th anniversary of the 1956 revolution	23 October 2016
19th anniversary speech of Viktor Orbán	10 February 2017
Speech by Viktor Orbán on the 61st anniversary of the 1956 Revolution and Freedom Fight	23 October 2017
Viktor Orbán's Annual Assessment Speech	18 February 2018

Speech by Viktor Orbán on the 62nd anniversary of the 1956 Revolution and Freedom Fight	23 October 2018
Viktor Orbán's Annual Assessment Speech	10 February 2019
Speech by Viktor Orbán on the 63rd anniversary of the 1956 Revolution and Freedom Fight	23 October 2019
Viktor Orbán's international press conference to mark the start of the year Viktor Orbán's 21st Annual Assessment Speech – feb 10.	09 January 2020
Viktor Orbán's speech before the agenda	15 February 2021
Speech by Viktor Orbán on the 65th anniversary of the 1956 Revolution and Freedom Fight	23 October 2021
Viktor Orbán's Annual Assessment Speech	12 February 2022
Speech by Viktor Orbán at the opening ceremony of the Mindszentynem	23 October 2022
Viktor Orbán's Annual Assessment Speech	18 February 2023
Speech by Viktor Orbán on the 67th anniversary of the 1956 Revolution and Freedom Fight	23 October 2023

### Dávid Kovács

Document Title	Delivery Date
Studio interview with Dávid Kovács, President of Jobbik Hungary	28 February 2006
Jobbik launches recruitment drive	13 March 2006

### Gábor Vona

Document Title	Delivery Date
The Speech of Gábor Vona in Szombathely	21 November 2007
Gábor Vona about Trianon	04 July 2007
Hungarian Guard 3rd Inaguration	29 March 2008
Gábor Vona: Open letter to László Tőkés	September 2008
Gábor Vona in Keresztút	10 August 2009
Gábor Vona in Rájátszás	10 June 2009
Gábor Vona in MTV1 Hungary Votes	24 March 2010
Gábor Vona – Horthy Commemoration	16 November 2010
Facebook greeting - Gábor Vona	21 April 2011
Gábor Vona in Ma Reggel	21 September 2011
Gábor Vona's Annual Assessment Speech	28 January 2012
The Speech of Gábor Vona at October 23th 2013	23 October 2013
Gábor Vona's opening speech 2012	18 January 2013

The Xth Congress of Jobbik – the speech of Gábor Vona	26 October 2012
Meeting of self-sustaining villages - Gábor Vona	20 July 2013
Gábor Vona's Annual Assessment Speech	19 January 2014
Gábor Vona - Jobbik Election Congress 2014	24 May 2014
Hungary is in trouble	01 February 2015
Gábor Vona's speech on 23 October 2015	23 October 2015
Gábor Vona - Jobbik Election Congress 2016	29 May 2016
Gábor Vona's speech on 23 October 2016	23 October 2016
Gábor Vona – Jobbik May Day	01 May 2017
Gábor Vona's celebratory speech	23 October 2017
Gábor Vona's opening speech 2018	19 January 2018
Gábor Vona's speech at March 15	15 March 2018

### Tamás Sneider

Document Title	Delivery Date
Tamás Sneider's speech at the Jobbik 23 October commemoration	23 October 2019
Tamás Sneider	10 April 2019

### Péter Jakab

Document Title	Delivery Date
Speech of Péter Jakab, presidential candidate - 2020 Jobbik Renewal Congress	09 February 2020
We can break down the borders	04 June 2020
Unity is the true reserve of the nation	25 January 2021
The countryside wants to live!	21 June 2021
The Speech of Péter Jakab	18 February 2022
The Speech of Péter Jakab	15 March 2022

### Márton Gyöngyösi

Document Title	Delivery Date
Márton Gyöngyösi in the ATV programme "A Straight Talk"	09 June 2023
Márton Gyöngyösi's season-opener speech 2023	01 March 2023

### László Toroczkai

Document Title	Delivery Date
László Toroczkai – ATV – The Straight Talk	18 July 2018
Toroczkai László's speech at the commemoration of Mi Hazánk on 23 October	23 October 2018
László Toroczkai's Annual Assessment Speech	28 January 2019
Toroczkai László's speech at the commemoration of Mi Hazánk on 23 October	23 October 2019
László Toroczkai: Year Assessment	27 January 2020
László Toroczkai at the Family Day of Our Fatherland	20 September 2020
Evaluation - The New World Order in detail	03 March 2021
The same global power has been trying to oppress us for centuries - Speech by László Toroczkai on 23 October	23 October 2021
The internationalist enemy is here now! (Corvin köz, full speech)	23 October 2022
Live coverage of the Our Homeland Annual Review	29 January 2022
Viktor Orbán is wrong or he is lying (Annual Review speech)	28 January 2023
Lobbying against globalism! Speech of László Toroczkai on 23 October	23 October 2023

### Appendix B. Code Book for Qualitative Analysis

Theme	Definition	Inclusion criteria
Neo-nationalism	Phrases, quotes, reflections that want to strengthen Hungarian identity among the listeners.	References to what it means to be Hungarian, what kind of people Hungarians are, referring to the listeners as “Hungarian”.
Regime change	Phrases that reflect back on the 1990s and the transition process from state-communism to democracy.	References to the intellectuals involved in the transition, or the political actions of that era, even in comparison with the present.
Working-class conditions	Phrases, words that reflect on the circumstances of workers.	References to workers even explicitly by calling them workers or a synonym, or reflecting to their working conditions, their livelihood.
Anti-establishment	Phrases that emphasis an anti-elitist stance, being against the current establishment.	References to any resolution that embraces that the speaker is against the elite, that they are not part of the political establishment.
Welfare redistribution	Phrases that advocate for welfare redistributive policies.	References to redistributive actions that the party did or wants to do when they are in power: creating policies that make a certain part of the population wealthier.
Workfarist Hungary	Words, phrases that emphasise work’s superiority.	References that emphasise that the government looks out for those who work, that unemployment has to be reduced.
Anti-globalisation	Phrases that create an anti-globalist stance.	References that take a stance against the global order that affects the country’s sovereignty.
Deserving vs. Undeserving groups	Phrases that diagnose a deserving and undeserving opposition.	References to some people as deserving to get state help, while others as being undeserving.
Public safety	Phrases that reflect on the state of public safety.	References to public, physical safety, not including material or spiritual welfare.
Anti-Roma remarks	Phrases with racist tone against the Roma population.	Negative references to the Roma population of Hungary on the basis of their origins, distinguishing between the Roma and the Hungarian population.

Anti-immigration	Phrases that are against migration.	References to anti-immigration policies or those that explicitly state that immigrants have to cannot enter the country.
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***Appendix C. Words analyzed with multinomial distribution and cosine similarity***

Theme	Assigned word for quantitative text analysis
Neo-nationalism	Hungarians
Transition	Regime-change
Workers	Workers
Anti-establishment	Elite
Redistribution	Wages
Work culture	Jobs
Anti-globalisation	Austerity
Deserving	Honest
Safety	Crime
Racism	Gypsy
Anti-immigration	Migrants