



Péter Krekó, Attila Juhász. *The Hungarian Far Right: Social Demand, Political Supply, and International Context.* Explorations of the Far Right Series. Stuttgart: ibidem Verlag, 2017. 260 pp. \$40.00, paper, ISBN 978-3-8382-1184-8.

Reviewed by Cristian Cercel

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Commissioned by Gary Roth (Rutgers University - Newark)

At the European elections in May 2019, Viktor Orbán's Fidesz Party secured (yet again) a sweeping victory, receiving more than 50 percent of the votes. In exchange, Jobbik, the ultranationalist party that has generally tried to position itself as more to the right than the stark conservative, right-wing Fidesz, managed to get only 6.34 percent of the votes, a radical decline as compared to the 14.67 percent share that it got in 2014 and the 19 percent in the national elections of 2018. Fidesz and Jobbik have been and continue to be the political actors shaping the right-wing side of the political landscape in Hungary and by extension the whole of the political landscape, since at least over the past decade the left has been largely failing to come up with a relevant voice and a relevant counterweight to this right-wing turn.

Against this general background, the volume authored by Péter Krekó and Attila Juhász, even if published two years ago, is still timely, as it can furnish significant impulses toward understanding the current situation in Hungary. The book provides a multifaceted exploration of the Hungarian far right and thus casts an interesting light over the political and social processes that have taken place over the past ten to twenty years. Jobbik has become Hungary's second largest political force at the national level, combined with a move

toward the right by Fidesz. This has contributed to a consolidation of Orbán's rule, which seems to have solidified its position.

Krekó and Juhász's goal is to explain the interconnections between the ascension of the far right and the illiberal tendencies in Hungary. In doing this, they seek to examine the social and political factors responsible for the rise of Jobbik. They also note the interesting and apparently peculiar fact that over the past years Jobbik has been slowly moving closer to the political center on some issues, a phenomenon closely linked in effect with Fidesz moving more to the extreme. According to Krekó and Juhász, "analysing the far-right in Hungary is like shooting to a constantly and quick moving target" (p. 15). At the same time, the authors emphasize that the explanation according to which "Jobbik pushed Fidesz more to the extreme position is simplifying and misleading" (p. 13).

The Hungarian Far Right: Social Demand, Political Supply, and International Context is divided into six chapters. The first chapter lays out the book's approach, followed by two chapters addressing the demand for and supply of the far right's ideology and political stances in Hungary. The fourth chapter engages with Jobbik's worldview. The final two chapters discuss the political

strategies that have been used by political and media actors against the far right and bring to the fore an interrogatory concluding remark, namely, the question whether Hungary has been “taken hostage by the far right” (p. 235).

Concluding something that overly resembles in style a dry literature review, Krekó and Juhász argue that it is time to ditch “earlier sociological models” aiming to explain the support for far-right policies and to focus on “attitudes” and “value preferences” (“the supply side”), as well as on the generation of “demand for support of far-right policies” (p. 35). This argument needed to be better qualified, and a properly spelled out dialogue between their supply-demand model and some of the other models/explanatory theories succinctly alluded to would have strengthened the book as a whole. The two largest empirical chapters of the book address what the authors call “social demand” for and “political supply” of far-right policies, on the basis of a measurement tool developed by analysts of the Political Capital Institute, while also attempting to situate their findings for the Hungarian case in the broader European context. Krekó and Juhász emphasize on various occasions that a “center-periphery” conflict (or the perception thereof) is “an essentially important dichotomy behind the resurgence of the populist forces all over the world” and perhaps even more so in Eastern European countries (p. 74). Furthermore, according to them, what average Jobbik supporters often have in common is a shared perception of a threatened social status.

The political and ideational entanglements connecting Fidesz and Jobbik in the 2000s are also addressed, especially in the chapter on the “supply side.” The authors show how Orbán has been presenting himself (and his Fidesz) as a moderate political actor capable of governing, a self-presentation in effect relying on Jobbik’s presence on the political scene and on a fragmented left. A difference in language, despite a commonality in views and ideas, has also contributed to the consolida-

tion of this rapport between Fidesz and Jobbik. At the same time, the book also makes some inroads into a peculiar change of positions appearing to take place in Hungary, with Fidesz moving (successfully and credibly) from the mainstream to the more extreme and Jobbik partially attempting to move (less successfully and less credibly) from the extreme to the mainstream. In the words of Krekó and Juhász, “occupying the center looks [like] a wise move when the Hungarian government is shifting more and more to the right, becoming a genuine radical-right party” (p. 131). However, if one were to take into account the results for Jobbik at the recent European elections—which I have referred to at the beginning of this review—it would appear that the half-hearted attempt of Jobbik to move toward the center has not been a success. It remains to be seen what will happen in the future.

The fifth chapter, engaging with Jobbik’s worldview, is also the longest in the entire book, representing in effect one of the few English-language overviews of the (shifting and dynamic) ideas underlying the Jobbik phenomenon in Hungary. Thus, it is a particularly relevant reading. The final chapter, much shorter (tellingly perhaps?), addresses political and media strategies used to counter the far right in Hungary, also suggesting, albeit only in passing, potential future strategies in this respect.

All in all, *The Hungarian Far Right* is an interesting reading for all those wanting to know more about the appeal of the far right in Hungary. It should also be noted that a more careful proof-reading and copyediting would have definitely improved the book, yet this is to be ascribed first and foremost to the publishing house and only secondarily to the authors.

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