

## *Securitizing Migration in Contemporary Hungary*

*Working paper*

**by**

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The 2015 migration crisis in the European Union (EU) serves as a meta-issue which links various policy problems, from fears of terrorism to economic welfare, border control, matters of identity and a general European responsibility for refugees. This multifaceted issue affects different member countries in various ways, and responses also vary considerably. Out of the most affected countries, Hungary—now the first entry point for the Balkans migration route into the EU—has received increased media attention internationally, and was often accused of misconduct with regards of the treatment of migrants. Prime Minister Viktor Orban first mentioned his plans of regulating migration into Hungary in the wake of the Charlie Hebdo attacks in January 2015, after which the government launched a coordinated campaign that demonized migrants as a threat to national security, irrespective of personal motivations. The Hungarian government’s strong anti-immigration rhetoric and policies that followed—most importantly the construction of a border fence in the South—have shocked many observers, begging the question of what made such a shift possible and how it came about.

Xenophobic tendencies in Hungary have been steadily increasing since the introduction of the campaign, and the discourse by now clearly dominated by the security frame. Though the precise mechanisms of persuasion and their effectiveness are still under investigation, this paper is based on the assumption that the increase in hostility towards migrants in Hungary can be linked to the government securitization campaign. Success so defined is puzzling as the campaign predated the summer migration wave, meaning that at the time of its launch, the everyday Hungarian had no real experience with mass migration. Even though the news were full of reports about refugees fleeing the Middle East, the rapid securitization of migration and the resulting increase in xenophobia therefore cannot simply be attributed to societal shock and feelings of insecurity at the sight of massive migrant waves (cf. Karyotis 2012). In early 2015, against government politicians’ rhetoric of an “invasion”, Hungary was experiencing limited, transitory migration.

This paper retells the Hungarian anti-migration campaign as a case of securitization. Securitization is a frequently analyzed process within security studies that explains how security issues emerge, as the political elite elevates various areas of normal politics into the realm of emergencies, invoking fears of threats to national security and thereby enabling control over the issue. Migration has been assessed through the lens of securitization many times, with excellent in-depth case studies from Canada/Australia, to Western Europe and Greece (Huysmans, 2000;

Karyotis, 2007; Wæver, Buzan, Kelstrup, & Lemaitre, 1993; Watson, 2009). So what makes the Hungarian case special, other than its topicality and its locality? Indeed, the current Hungarian discourse on migration as a security threat bears some striking resemblance to some of the Western European discursive structures of the 1990s and early 2000s that depict migration as a multi-faceted source of danger, threatening national job markets, identities and lives in the form of terrorism. This paper argues that, despite the liberal borrowing of tried and tested frames, the Hungarian securitization campaign is unique due the conditions underlying its inception and its rapid evolution.

In order to highlight this crucial gap between discourse and underlying condition, the paper relies on a refined version of securitization theory—one popularized by Thierry Balzacq (Balzacq, 2005b, 2011)—that moves beyond the narrow speech act focus of the Copenhagen School (Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998; Wæver, 1995) and expands it to include practices and processes of securitization. Securitization seen as a pragmatic act then invites three assumptions: effective securitization is audience-centered; it is context-dependent; and it is power-laden. For the purposes of this paper, the approach is used to highlight that, despite similarities in discursive structures, various European societies are receptive to different constructions of security, which also include non-discursive elements (securitization tools and instruments). In an attempt to improve on Balzacq's framework, the paper draws attention to the role non-traditional desecuritizing actors—most importantly civil society—can play, as well as to the role of non-policies as securitization tools, i.e. the elite's deliberate neglect of an issue in order to demonize the subject of security.

The paper proceeds with a short introduction of the practice approach to securitization. It then offers a brief overview of European securitizing discourses with regards to migration, identifying key rhetorical structures. Arguing on the basis of similarity, we then present the Hungarian securitizing campaign as a case study. By highlighting its core elements, we suggest that the core of the Hungarian discourse is an adaptation of pre-existing European discourses that adds little to how migration has generally been securitized in terms of the frames used. Building on Balzacq's theory, the paper identifies the specificities of the Hungarian case in terms of its socio-political context. The paper concludes with a short list of preliminary findings.

## Speech acts and practices

In its original formulation by the Copenhagen School (CS), securitization is the process when a securitizing actor uses the rhetoric of an existential threat on an issue, and thereby takes it out of the realm of normal politics into the realm of emergency politics, where any appropriate measure can be taken to curb the threat. This definition has since been applied to countless cases, but has also come under theoretical criticism due to its exclusive focus on securitization as a self-reflexive speech act, its undertheorizing of appropriate audiences, and its strict separation of normal and emergency politics. Put simply, its underlying assumption is that the word “security” has a performative character—drawing on the speech-act theory of Austin—but there is disagreement on whether this act is independent from an audience (self-reference) or only acquires its performativity when used by particular actors in specific contexts (intersubjectivity) (cf. Buzan, Wæver, & Wilde, 1998, pp. 24–25).

Another definition, one that this paper adopts, draws less of a strict line between the world of normalcy and the world of emergency politics. Its major proponent, Thierry Balzacq, defines securitization as

an articulated assemblage of practices whereby heuristic artefacts (metaphors, policy tools, image repertoires, analogies, stereotypes, emotions, etc.) are *contextually* mobilized by a securitizing actor, who works to prompt an audience to build a coherent network of implications (feelings, sensations, thoughts and institutions) about the critical vulnerability of a referent object, that concurs with the securitizing actor’s reasons for choices and actions, by investing the referent subject with such an aura of unprecedented threatening complexion that a customized policy must be immediately undertaken to block it. (quoted in Balzacq, Leonard, & Ruzicka, 2015, p. 2, emphasis added)

In standard securitization, the utterance of the world security on its own creates a new social order wherein normal politics are bracketed, and emergency measures can be taken to counteract a threat, but, as Balzacq (2005a, p. 4) notes, the discursive action of security thus holds a high degree of formality, so securitization lends itself to the interpretation that it has a fixed code of practice (a *conventional procedure*). He argues that securitization should be rather understood as a strategic practice that “occurs within, and as part of, a configuration of circumstances, including the context, the psycho-cultural disposition of the audience, and the power that both speaker and listener bring to the interaction” (Balzacq, 2005a, p. 4). The practice oriented version of securitization combines processes of threat construction/design with that of threat management; and this sequential and differentiated conceptualization draws attention to a

number of issues, specifically non-discursive securitization instruments (see Balzacq et al., 2015, p. 13), the role of the audience(s) and veto powers, as well as the intersubjective context within which securitization as an exercise in persuasion occurs, which includes power relations among securitizing actor and audiences. Its key components are therefore the securitizing actor, the referent subject (that which is threatening), the audience, and the context and adoption of distinct policies.

For practice-oriented securitization theory, the differences in securitization outcomes can be best accounted for by reference to their context. This context can mean a number of things, ranging from the political regime within which the securitization attempt unfolds to intersubjective meanings that govern threat perceptions, or the institutional structures that define relevant audiences. Due to the wide variety of possible contexts, there is therefore no universal “logic of security” (cf. Waeber, 1995), only different, context-dependent articulations. Thus, in the case of migration, the specific frame used to classify the phenomenon as a security threat largely depends on the national identity of the receiving—or in Hungary’s case, transit—state as elites draw on established national symbols and myths to shape the discourse, achieve the issue’s securitization, and enable/limit policy options.

The aforementioned institutional structures and discursive practices that produce relevant audiences within the context of securitization merit special attention; they necessitate the analysis of actors beyond the government and the agencies to which they delegate authority in threat identification. Three such actors that are key to securitization stand out: the political opposition, the judiciary and the media. These three institutions represent veto powers in democratic states that are able to question the securitization claims of the governing elite, and check the legitimacy of the policies they introduce. Once we move away from the CS’s understanding of securitization, the securitizing actor cannot simply rely on the performativity of the speech act, but must engage various audiences, among them these institutional players who can challenge the securitizing act. Since there is a need to argue one’s position in often very diverse settings, rhetoric and persuasion need to form part of security analysis, highlighting differences across issues, but also states as they present differing answers to similar issues.

When it comes to migration, the media has been frequently highlighted as a key institution (Bourbeau, 2011; Vultee, 2011; Williams, 2003). The media namely has an important role in reproducing society and in maintaining dominant constructions of the self and the other,

so it also plays an instrumental role in securitization by constructing the “us” and the “them”, by explaining what the conflict is about and what can be done to stop it (Watson, 2009, p. 21). This instrumental role does not necessarily mean autonomy: though the media can sabotage securitization attempts by presenting counterframes—either their own or more frequently borrowed from desecuritizing actors—but in most cases it merely serves as a forum through which the securitizing actors communicate their own frame. In the case of migration, the media’s coverage has indeed been mostly reflecting the claims of the governing elites (Statham and Geddes 2006). Since the media rarely generates its own frame, but selects from those available, the power relations among securitizing actors and those that present counterframes influences the media image. In addition, it has to be noted that the media often focuses on the dramatic, the sensational, so selective reporting and the selective use of frame elements may lead to a distorted image of the issue at hand, which in turn partly explains why security frames receive precedence. For these reasons, the analysis of media coverage is essential to any understanding of the securitization of migration.

Apart from seeing securitization more than a speech act, the practical understanding of security also moves beyond discursive means when explaining threat construction. In a 2008 article, Balzacq drew attention to processes “above and beneath” the level of discourse, to the “empirical referents of policy” (policy tools or instruments) used to alleviate problems that have been defined as a threat (for applications in the EU context, see Léonard, 2011). Discourse predates or otherwise limits the choice of policy tools, and the choice of policy instruments, Balzacq (2008, p. 78) maintains, is the realm of intense power games. Despite their different logics and mechanism, however, discourse and policy instruments mutually reinforce each other in the policy process. A crucial distinction has to be made: not all instruments of securitization are securitizing tools. Instruments of securitization post-date a successful securitization. In other words, they do not construct a threat per se; but are built to curb an already securitized threat. They may or may not become securitizing tools. A securitizing tool in turn is “an instrument which, by its very nature or by its very functioning, transforms the entity (i.e. subject or object) it processes into a threat”, and can therefore be a substitute for the discursive logic of securitization (Balzacq, 2008, pp. 79–80). Policy instruments are never purely technical solutions to a problem: they are both political and symbolic. Their selection, use and effect depend on political factors, and require political mobilization. On the other hand, they are symbolic in the sense that tell the

population what the securitizing actor is thinking and what its collective perception of a problem is (Peters and van Nispen, 1998 quoted in Balzacq 2008, p. 81). Within this article, we will discuss the barbed wire fence constructed on the Serbian-Hungarian border as an *instrument* of securitization that also acts as a highly symbolic securitization *tool*. In addition, we introduce the concept of non-policy as a securitization tool: by only offering limited solutions to a problem, the securitizing actor can present both its willingness to curb the constructed threat, but also let it become more visible/acute for the audience in order to justify further, stricter policies. Non-policies in our interpretation do not represent policy failures, but a conscious non-discursive move that underlines the rhetoric of the security frame and provokes a sense of insecurity in the audience.

The following section presents the securitization of migration through examples from Western Europe. The goal of the section is to highlight common elements across discourses and to show how securitization dynamics usually unfold with this particular policy area.

### **Securitizing migration in Europe**

Western European societies have had extensive experience with migration, but with very different overtones across time. After the end of World War II, migrants and refugees were welcomed as a useful labor force that could contribute to recovery in Europe. Moreover, under the shadow of the Cold War ideological conflict, refugees from Communist states were seen as a sign of victory over the East, and were also welcomed with open arms. These same societies after the end of the bipolar conflict have experienced an increase in migration flows from outside of Europe. With this new wave came the emergence of a discourse about danger with reference to chaos, disorder, and a “clash of civilizations”, where fear is primarily about “the different, the alien, the undocumented migrant, the refugee, the Muslim, the ‘non-European,’” essentialized into the figure of *the migrant* (Ceyhan & Tsoukala, 2002, p. 22). These public fears were only exacerbated by the 9/11 terrorist attacks (Guild, 2003; Huysmans & Buonfino, 2008; Karyotis, 2007).<sup>1</sup> The discourse around the supposed negative effects of migration has since been a way of summarizing and explaining away some of Western Europe’s problems by moving the issue of migration from economics and socio-cultural analysis—which frequently presents findings dismissing these threats (see Karyotis, 2012, p. 390)—into the realm of security, under the

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<sup>1</sup> For a critical view on 9/11’s effects on the European level see Boswell, 2007; Lahav, Messina, & Vasquez, 2014.

umbrella concept of “new security challenges”. This process of shifting the discourse on migration towards that of objective security threats is an instance of the logic of securitization and has been addressed by a number of authors both in its European and global context (Huysmans, 2000; Léonard, 2011; Mistri & Orcalli, 2014; Wæver et al., 1993; Wunderlich, 2012). The current wave of refugees and migrants hoping for a better life has also been fitted into this master frame of the threat of the non-European migrant that is both harder to assimilate due to cultural differences, and also holds a lower skill-set that for instance intra-EU migrants, which in turn diminishes his/her economic value for the host society.

The above securitization discourse that started in the 1980s also led to a change in policy from Western Europe to Canada and Australia: Western states have been systematically making the movement of migrants and refugees harder through visa restrictions, mandatory detention, return policies, international “safe havens”, offshore processing, “safe third country agreements and declarations”, withdrawal of benefits etc. (see Watson, 2009, Chapter 1). Echoing the logic of emergency politics, these policies bracketed the states’ legal obligations to help refugees and override the discourse about asylum seekers and migrants all around the Western World, limiting available policy options. These shift in the perception of migration have been addressed by securitization scholars in great detail (see more recently Fox & Akbaba, 2013; Karyotis, 2012). Though country case studies often draw attention to idiosyncracies, a number of marked similarities are visible from these studies across European domestic discourses. This continuity in Western discourses and policies, as well as the obvious parallels between these and their Central and Eastern European counterparts necessitate an overview of the extant literature.

Many categories are used to qualify migrants in the receiving countries which the academic literature adopts, and these categories are key to the politicization of migration. A common one is economic, family and humanitarian migration (Watson, 2009, p. 2), which reflect three different motivations that often overlap within an individual. Often a fourth category is used: “unauthorized” or “illegal”, or more recently “irregular” migration where migrants have crossed borders without the authorization of the receiving state. Commonly in Western societies, all migrants are attributed economic status, with the burden of proof falling on the migrant vis-à-vis his/her motivation. This conflation of economic motivation draws attention to the threat migrants may or may not present to the local economy: the migrant either threatens local jobs or will become a burden on the receiving country’s social benefit system. But this characteristic of

the discourse also draws public attention away from the category of asylum seekers<sup>2</sup> and refugees, who are protected by international laws that put the burden of protection and justifying asylum on the receiving state. As Watson (2009) notes, humanitarian migrants are also often constructed as economically burdensome for the hosting state, providing no clear benefits. Meanwhile, economic migrants are securitized as a threat to domestic labor markets in both senses of the notion.

Such internal contradictions in the discourse on migration are neither uncommon, nor are they seen as problematic by the public and the elite, since the underlying fear with migration is more complex than a mere fear of job loss. The securitization of migration is achieved through the use multiple and overlapping discourses: migrants were presented as a threat along a cultural/identity axis (Islamophobia), the aforementioned economic axis (job loss and benefit-seeking), and a security axis (terrorism and crime) (Huysmans, 2000). In addition, this securitizing discourse also overlaps with the discourse about the crisis of multiculturalism in Western European societies (Triadafilopoulos, 2011) as well as the post-9/11 discourse on Islamist terrorism, which further underline the identity and security axes, lending them both racial overtones (see e.g. Ibrahim, 2005; Wæver et al., 1993). This crucial question of identity and social order is characteristic of the European discourse on migration, and it is also where Europe differs from many other Western states. As Watson (2009, pp. 6–7) notes, in Australia and Canada, the logic of the migration discourse is not about race, but about the state trying to reassure its population about the benefits of *controlled* migration. So the underlying assumption is that only uncontrolled migration presents a security threat as it can lead to social breakdown. Since a racialized discourse would conflate the two categories, the two states seek to limit the discourse to questions of controlling entry. Nevertheless, the *practice* of the implemented of policies made to achieve said control is clearly racialized, Watson shows. With his examples, even though the racial aspect is rarely featured in the discourse about migrants in or at the borders of the receiving state, but come up when it is about “risky” states of origin so in places removed from the receiving state.

The perpetuity of the anti-migration discourse of the 1990s is linked to the absolute politicization of migration in these states. In Western Europe, multiculturalism, Islamophobia and migration have been central election issues for decades, used to mobilize voters on both

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<sup>2</sup> Asylum seeker are people who have sought international protection but whose refugee status is still indetermined.

sides. What makes the current discourse about migration from war-torn regions is that the discourse seems to have shifted from economic threats towards hard security and identity threats. In Europe, the racialized and xenophobic discourses developed partly due to the activities of extreme right-wing parties that frequently oppose migration of any kind. With them gaining strength since the global financial crisis hit in 2008, migration has become an even more divisive issue, especially for moderate right wing parties that seek to avoid alienate xenophobic segments of their electorate (Ceyhan & Tsoukala, 2002, p. 30). Even moderate politicians often attribute social tension and the terrorist acts of the past 14 years to both the failure of multiculturalism—which, for Euroskeptical parties, also means the failure of the EU—and migrants' inability to assimilate to European culture. With hard security concerns looming in the background, the discourse becomes one about a “clash of civilizations” where European culture and identity are threatened. Mainly relying on myths and consciously concealing potential benefits, this identity discourse so far has led to inefficient control measures because of a fear of political costs; and it also has justified a more radical and racialized perception of migration on the extremes of the political spectrum (see e.g. Dover, 2008; Mistri & Orcalli, 2014).

The main myth in question has been the sovereign state under threat by an “invasion of illegal migrants”. The state, representing society, is the referent object of security, and is also charged with mitigating the threat. Policies aimed at counteracting the threat of migration therefore reflect a territorial approach: they seek to regulate access to the state (Watson, 2011). The same myth of the sovereign state underlies the way that Western European media have been presenting police expulsions of undocumented migrants. Sensationalist media reporting further strengthens the image of an illegal wave of migration. In reality, this image has proven to be erroneous (Ceyhan & Tsoukala, 2002, p. 34).

A cursory look at the domestic discourse on migration in Hungary, but also in other Central and Eastern European states—most notably Slovakia and the Czech Republic—shows clear similarities with Western European discourses of the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s. These states are therefore not pioneers of securitization when it comes to the rhetoric of migration, but rather adopters of a pre-existing West European discourse about both the dangers of migration writ large, and assimilation/integration policies referred to as multiculturalism. Though these societies have practically no first-hand experience with migration—save for the limited influx of refugees

from the Balkans in the 1990s—elite attempts at securitizing the current migration wave have been very effective, and nowhere more than in Hungary. These states also differ on a number of other issues. First, they have no sense of “historical obligation” like Western European states do about accepting migrants from former colonies—an argument that is used by supporters of liberal migration policies. Second, these societies are mostly racially—and in the case of Hungary and the Czech Republic, also ethnically—homogeneous. In these “white societies”, othering migrants from the Middle East and Africa is therefore more straightforward, and racialized. Third, these countries are not receiving but transit states. With migrants only passing their territory, references to economics and identity-based threats should therefore by definition be weaker for securitizing actors. On the other hand, the fact that the flow of migrants passes these countries still challenges the myth of the sovereign state and its ability to control its borders (which are incidentally also the borders of the EU in the Southeast). In addition, this racialized othering also puts these states in direct opposition to member state initiatives that are aimed at burden sharing, like the often discussed EU-wide quota system<sup>3</sup>.

This latter point about border control leads to an interesting difference: since the state does not need to justify controlled migration as the desired outcome of its securitization policies, securitizing actors can freely racialize the discourse, painting over differences in motivations across migrants. This racialization can in turn be used to reinforce the cultural threat trope, even expanding it beyond the state to the European level (see the clash of civilizations metaphor). Moreover, since migrants do not wish to settle in Eastern member states, local elites can more readily antagonize migrants for gaining political capital, meaning that the political constraints present in Western Europe are much weaker in Eastern Europe, and in transit states in general. Thus, in the current Hungarian example, the race issue that is so removed in the Canadian case takes precedence. With the above examples that Watson (2009) uses, the state claiming that racial and cultural differences alone can threaten social order would directly harm its attempt to remedy socio-economic problems through controlled migration as such rhetoric would entice xenophobia in the population.

Due to the above similarities in the discourse, but also policy choices, the discourse on migration in contemporary Hungary is a clear case of securitization. Hungary is not an innovative new player in the European discourse, but more of an implementer and adapter of

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<sup>3</sup> For developments, visit [http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/migration/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/migration/index_en.htm).

preexisting discursive structures. Differences lie more in local institutions, policy practices and the intersubjective context wherein securitization unfolds, which all make particular audiences sensitive to specific threat constructs.

In the following section, we will present and analyze the securitization dynamics underlying the current discourse on migration in Hungary by relying on Balzacq's framework. We will devote special attention to the political context that spurred the securitization move, the presence of both discursive and non-discursive elements, the use of non-policies, and the non-traditional role of desecuritizing actors. In terms of methods, we rely on discourse analysis and interpretive process tracing.

### **Securitizing migration in contemporary Hungary**

The rapid successful securitization of migration and the striking increase in xenophobia in Hungary are puzzling when one takes a look at the sequence of events that led to the erection of a barbed wire fence on the Serbian-Hungarian border. On the one hand, the securitizing campaign of the government was launched months ahead of the summer migration wave. On the other hand, migrants were constructed as both an economic and a cultural threat, despite it being clear that they were merely passing through the country. Following the guidelines of the practice-based approach to security, in order to better understand the Hungarian government's motivations behind the securitization of migration, as well as the reasons why a large portion of the population so readily accepted the securitizing move, we need to have a closer look at the context.

As with any political decision, cost-benefit calculations are key to understanding the actions of the elite. When an actor engages in securitization, it seeks to elevate an issue into the realm of security, thereby limiting possible policy options. Such actions are always running the risk of not being successful, either because they fail to persuade key audiences, or a successful desecuritization act negates their effect. Unsuccessful securitization acts then may bring a loss of political capital. Though the final goal of securitization is placing an issue on the agenda and then taking control over it, motivations differ among elites and individuals. Actual fears of a phenomenon may propel elites to securitize an issue, like environmentalist groups do with climate change (Hayes & Knox-Hayes, 2014; Mason, 2013). Nevertheless, highly dramatized

national security crises also garner public attention and support, and through securitizing certain issues, the elite can divert public attention from other fields, like a struggling economy. In turn, the successful mitigation of the newly constructed threat can provide a government with political capital, and can be used to discredit opposition. The easier an issue is to mitigate, the more likely such a shift in support is. We argue that this latter kind of cost-benefit calculation was the primary motivation behind the Hungarian government's initial securitization attempts in early 2015.

Following its landslide victory in the 2010 elections, the governing party<sup>4</sup>, FIDESZ, used its constitutional majority to redraw the political-institutional map of Hungary. Claiming to speak on behalf of the whole population, the party and its Prime Minister capitalized on disillusionment with the first two decades of democratic change, as well as EU membership. Instead of offering wide-ranging reforms, however, the government sought to monopolize political space and solidify its hold over the country—all under a strong nationalist rhetoric that offered a sense of exceptionalism to Hungarians battered by economic misery.<sup>5</sup> The list of restrictive policies range from dismantling checks and balances, curbing the rights of various minorities, filling independent institutions with party loyalists, nationalizing foreign-owned sectors, to introducing a one-party constitution and rewriting the election system to benefit the party in power. These institutional changes, coupled with near-total control over the media and large-scale corruption define Hungary's illiberal democracy, famously popularized in Prime Minister Orbán's 2014 speech in Băile Tușnad, Romania.<sup>6</sup>

These changes were only met with limited opposition, and organized opposition movements could only be mounted before the 2014 elections, and around topical issues, like the proposed "internet tax" in the fall of 2014<sup>7</sup>. Nevertheless, by late 2014 FIDESZ's public support was crackling under a series of corruption scandals, an underperforming economy, high unemployment and the general feeling of fatigue with the aggressive politics of the government.

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<sup>4</sup> Though officially FIDESZ governs in coalition with the micro-party KDNP (Christian Democratic People's Party), the latter never ran independently in elections since 2005. Therefore for the purposes of this paper, we will take it as a faction within FIDESZ and will use "governing party" and FIDESZ interchangeably.

<sup>5</sup> See Kim Lane Scheppele's analysis of the changes under FIDESZ at <http://www.thenation.com/article/hungary-and-end-politics/>

<sup>6</sup> Full speech available at <http://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-speech-at-the-25th-balvanyos-summer-free-university-and-student-camp>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29846285>

Support for the party fell from its 2010 peak of around 50% (depending on the polling organization) to a record low by the end of 2014 after the internet tax demonstrations<sup>8</sup>. This loss in support necessitated new action to mobilize the core electorate and draw back lost voters. Meanwhile, FIDESZ's extreme right wing opposition, Jobbik, became the second strongest political force in Hungary, overtaking the democratic opposition as the main challenger of the governing party (a fact reflected by the 2014 national election results). In an attempt to stop disillusioned voter gravitating towards Jobbik, FIDESZ had been taking over some of the extremist party's most symbolic program points since 2010—most importantly a relativization of Hungary's role in WWII, increasing the role of the state, a rhetoric of public order, a stricter penal code, and nationalist slogans invoking myths of Hungarian exceptionalism. The government rarely condemned anti-roma or anti-European remarks coming from Jobbik, and even co-opted the party in parliamentary debates, including the one that made the 15 September laws on migration possible<sup>9</sup>. Beyond mobilizing FIDESZ's core electorate, catering to Jobbik sympathizers and drawing them closer to the governing party is the other motivation explaining the government's initial approach to migration. Since migration during the first few months of 2015 was limited when compared to current numbers, and not directed at Hungary as a destination, migrants represented an “easy target” for securitization—i.e. defining them as the next threat to Hungarians that only a strong government could repel. The preexisting institutional structures could then be used to take over public discourse with the government's frame and crowd out alternative views, eventually forcing desecuritizing agents to adopt novel approaches to depoliticizing migration. In this sense, power relations underlying the context of securitization of migration in Hungary are so skewed that they can be externalized for the purposes of the analysis. FIDESZ's monopoly over Hungarian politics namely effectively negates the veto power of the judiciary, the parliamentary opposition, as well as the media, leaving NGOs and non-institutionalized civilian movements as the promoters of a desecuritization frame. However, as Watson (2009, p. 21) notes, though NGOs can also question securitization claims, they often do not possess enough social capital to be effective on their own and require the assistance of one of the three main actors, or, in our case, nonconventional methods.

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<sup>8</sup> Graph comparing measured support for the governing party across polling organizations <http://kozvelemenykutatok.hu/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/fidesz-szept-teljes-2015.png>

<sup>9</sup> FIDESZ has since lost its supermajority in parliament due to lost early election in a number of rural electoral districts. Now the governing party is even more relying on Jobbik's support.

The turn towards migration as a security challenge, which forms part of the political spectacle of FIDESZ’s governing style (see later), has once again mobilized supporters, drawn in extremist voters due to its hard stance on aliens, divided up the population along familiar lines used since 2002—enemies of migration (true Hungarians) vs. the left/liberals as supporters of multiculturalism, therefore by definition un-Hungarian—and crucially avoided political costs traditionally associated with securitizing migration in Western Europe. This latter point merits our attention: when securitizing migration, the elite runs the risk of engaging two different groups: a softer stance might alienate extremists (see the French case in Ceyhan & Tsoukala, 2002, p. 30), while a more radical/racialized stance on migration might alienate pre-existing migrants and moderate voters. Given that Hungary has had no prior experience with migration and multiculturalism, and that the current wave only passes the country, FIDESZ’s securitization attempt offered higher benefits than costs. Moreover, since a crisis script applied on migration evokes feelings of danger and insecurity, they are by default high on the public agenda. As such, securitizing migration was yet another way for the government to detract both public and media attention from high profile scandals that wrecked support: a steady increase in FIDESZ’s support is clearly visible ever since the launch of the billboard campaign.<sup>10</sup>

<b>Chronology of events: January 2015 – September 2015</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>2014</b> Orbán’s “illiberal democracy” speech in Băile Tușnad, wherein he speaks about the “decline of the West”, partly due to multiculturalism and liberal migration policies.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>7 January 2015:</b> Charlie Hebdo shooting, Hungarian PM Orbán blames Western European migration for the attacks. Claims that economic migrants bring no benefits, only danger to Europe. Hungary opposes migration.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>January-March:</b> 23,000, mainly Kosovar refugees reach Hungary. The increase in Kosovar migration is due to relaxations of travel rules allowing them to travel through Serbia, political turmoil and unrest in Kosovo fueled by poverty, high unemployment, and economically debilitating corruption.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>February 11:</b> Antal Rogán, one of FIDESZ’s prominent figures warns of economic migrant threatening Hungary and calls for more draconian immigration policies. Economic migrants and refugees in same category. Elements of the rhetoric: migrants take jobs and Hungarians have to pay for their stay.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>April 24:</b> “National consultation on migration and terrorism” links terrorism to the migration issue, expanding on the earlier threat of economic migrants. Orbán’s preface calls it a preparatory poll grounding policy adjustment. Methodologically questionable propaganda, suggested answers, no real choices. Response rate very low, still presented as a success.</li> </ul>

<sup>10</sup> Graph comparing measured support for the governing party across polling organizations <http://kozvelemenykutatok.hu/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/fidesz-szept-teljes-2015.png>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>May:</b> First major poll on xenophobia since Orban’s Charlie Hebdo remarks published by TARKI. 46% of respondents are xenophobic, 9% not xenophobic. However, 94% of undecided respondents confess to anti-Arab sentiments.<sup>11</sup></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Early June:</b> an online version of the “National Consultation” questionnaire is launched to boost return rates.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>June 2:</b> Orban talks about “modern mass migration of peoples” at a conference, thereby comparing the current situation to the fall of the Roman Empire. This historical analogy suggest a sense of urgency and impending doom. Orban argues that if Europe “mismanages” the current wave, it will become multicultural, from where there is no going back. Multiculturalism and migration as a threat to European identity first mentioned.<sup>12</sup></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>June 8-21</b> Hungarian mock political party MKKP collects donations to fund humorous anti-poster campaign.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>June 17</b> Government announces that a \$106 million, 175km long fence will be constructed along the Serbian border</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Early June:</b> government issued billboard campaign to support the “national consultation”. The billboards were all in Hungarian, but targeted at “the migrant”, using the informal form of addressing, considered the least polite.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>June 20</b> (World Refugee Day) UNHCR billboards in Hungary celebrate contributions by refugees (counterframe)<sup>13</sup></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>June 23</b> Hungary stops receiving refugees sent back under the Dublin III Regulation, effectively suspending the agreement</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>June 29:</b> Civilian forum for helping refugees Migration Aid (MIG AID) appears on Facebook, hosted by Sándor Újhelyi. It follows the model of MIGSZOL in Szeged. MigAid does not become an organization, it is to this day an informal forum managed by unpaid volunteers.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>July 1</b> MKKP mock-posters appear nationwide</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>July 13</b> Construction of border fence begins</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>June-August:</b> informal social media-based campaign to damage billboards and/or subvert their message through humor.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mid-June 2015.</b> Government announces that 4 meter high fence is being planned at Serbian border.<sup>14</sup></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>August 5</b> After a month the Municipality of Budapest, state railway and the Budapest public transport authority agree to form “transit zones” at train stations in Budapest. Civilian activists move in to help refugees at undersupplied transit zones.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mid-August</b> “Temporary border barrier” completed (3 rows of barbed wire), migrants easily continue to cross</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>24 August</b> Germany suspends the Dublin III Regulation for Syrian refugees, choosing to process their applications in Germany.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>August 28</b> 71 migrants found dead in Austria in Hungarian truck</li> </ul>

<sup>11</sup> See the report at [http://www.tarki.hu/hu/news/2015/kitekint/20150505\\_idegen.html](http://www.tarki.hu/hu/news/2015/kitekint/20150505_idegen.html)

<sup>12</sup> Full text of Orban’s speech available at <http://www.kormany.hu/hu/a-miniszterelnok/beszedekek-publikaciok-interjuk/orban-viktor-eloadasa-a-helmut-kohl-az-egyesites-kancellarja-cimu-nemzetkozi-konferencian> (in Hungarian)

<sup>13</sup> See <http://www.unhcr.org/5583d1466.html>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/22/migrants-hungary-border-fence-wall-serbia>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>End of August:</b> trains transport migrants from collecting points to camps. Red Cross, Humanitarian Baptist Aid, Order of Malta – Hungarian Association. UNHCR, Medicines Sans Frontiers, other international charity organizations assist the efforts.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>September 1</b> “Not in my name” pro-migrant demonstration draws a few hundred supporters</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>September 3</b> Peaceful migrant demonstrations at Keleti station, gov’t. media reports of “unrest”</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>September 3</b> Police tricks migrants: supposed train to Austria instead takes them to the Bicske refugee camp.<sup>15</sup></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>September 4</b> Refugees banned from boarding trains towards Western Europe, westward train traffic effectively halts. Migrant groups begin a march towards Austria along the highway, supported by activists<sup>16</sup></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>September 5-6:</b> Austria and Germany open borders to receive Syrian refugees as a responding to reports of Hungarian maltreatment. Chaos with trains, those who have tickets are not allowed to get on trains, situations is changing by the hour, no state plan. Police evacuates camps, transporting and directing refugees to Hegyeshalom at Austrian border.<sup>17</sup></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>September 7</b> Hungarian minister of defense Csaba Hende forced to resign due to slow construction of border fence</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>September 13</b> Germany stops accepting trains transporting migrants from Hungary<sup>18</sup></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>September 14</b> First stage of border fence completed</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>September 15</b> New legislation in effect</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>September 16</b> Clashes between migrants trying to enter Hungary and riot police in Horgoš<sup>19</sup></li> </ul>

*Discursive elements of the security frame*

We cannot allow illegal immigrants threatening the jobs and security of Hungarian people.

We have the right to defend our culture, language and values. The states of Central Europe, only recently having recovered from the financial crisis, cannot allow themselves to become the victims of erroneous policies from Brussels.<sup>20</sup>

Preface, “National Consultation on Migration and Terrorism” poll

The current politicization of migration in Hungary is part of a wider political spectacle—the creation and circulation of symbols in the political process (Edelman, 1988)—wherein the conditions of belonging are contested. Within such spectacles, politics emerges as a drama where

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/03/budapest-station-reopens-no-trains-running-western-europe-migration-crisis-europe>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/refugee-crisis-hundreds-walking-from-hungary-to-austria-after-international-trains-blocked-10487493.html>

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/austria-and-germany-open-borders-to-migrants-offloaded-by-hungary\\_55eba52ee4b093be51bbb825](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/austria-and-germany-open-borders-to-migrants-offloaded-by-hungary_55eba52ee4b093be51bbb825)

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3232744/We-t-German-authorities-call-urgent-action-migrant-crisis-locals-say-Munich-brink-humanitarian-disaster.html#ixzz3oSzEgJ8x>

<sup>19</sup> <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/09/16/world/europe-migrant-crisis/>

<sup>20</sup> <http://nemzetikonzultacio.kormany.hu/> (in Hungarian, translation by authors)

meaning is conferred through evoking crisis situations and political myths. It legitimates political decisions through invoking threats and dangers, and also governs role-taking by the actors. Within this spectacle, one of the key issues is cultural identity, which in turn enables the politicization of migration (Huysmans, 2000, p. 762). This dramatic interpretation of politics on behalf of the governing party leads back to the 2002 general elections which FIDESZ surprisingly lost against most polls, despite a sound economy and the promise of an unproblematic EU accession. Despite getting the majority of votes (48.7%), the governing party had to hand over power to a Liberal-Socialist coalition that about 51% of the votes, securing it a shaky majority in parliament<sup>21</sup>. Shocked by these results, FIDESZ supporters called fraud, and Orbán gave a series of speeches where he called for unity on the Right, with the slogan being “the Fatherland cannot be in opposition” (“*A haza nem lehet ellenzékben*”). This image of a government-in-exile effectively divided Hungarians into true Hungarians (FIDESZ voters), and traitors/communists/liberals (supporters of the government); as well as lending FIDESZ’ time in opposition a war-like tone, wherein “retreat was impossible”<sup>22</sup>. This rhetoric followed the party throughout the 2000s—in 2006 the party lost once again—and intensified as it turned out that the Socialist PM Ferenc Gyurcsány had been lying about the state of the economy before the elections. This scandal further justified the division Orbán imposed on Hungarian politics.

With FIDESZ’ landslide victory over the scandal-ridden Socialists in 2010, the rhetoric did not change: the party had to look for new “enemies” to fight. This trope of Hungarians under attack, with only the government—more specifically, the PM—there to save them has been applied to a strikingly varied mix of issues, ranging from the “war on unemployment”, the “war on national debt” all the way to 2014’s “war on utility costs” (*rezsiharc*). This war-rhetoric has also been consistently used to delegitimize FIDESZ’s critics, Hungarians and *not* the government serving once again the referent object of the “attacks”. Again, the group of foes is very diverse, ranging from the EU on various occasions<sup>23</sup>, to foreign multinational corporations, the Western press (“a liberal conspiracy against Hungarians), Western liberals, Hungarian watchdog NGOs<sup>24</sup>, and his domestic opposition (“the fight against Communism”). This constant rhetoric of war

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<sup>21</sup> For results see [http://valasztas.hu/en/ovi/201/201\\_0.html](http://valasztas.hu/en/ovi/201/201_0.html)

<sup>22</sup> Quote from Orbán’s election campaign speech given in Buda Castle on 10 April 2006. [http://24.hu/belfold/2006/04/11/orban\\_viktor\\_varbeli\\_beszede/](http://24.hu/belfold/2006/04/11/orban_viktor_varbeli_beszede/) (in Hungarian)

<sup>23</sup> Source: <http://www.euractiv.com/future-eu/hungarian-eu-presidency-slithers-news-506315>

<sup>24</sup> Source: <https://euobserver.com/political/125537>

forces the government into a role of the tough fighter, justifying restrictive domestic policies and the dismissal of compromise on even the most minor of issues. Though PM himself seems to relish confrontation and acting as a savior to his most loyal voters, these securitization-like rhetorical maneuvers have had mixed results. Some were highly successful in mobilizing support (esp. the massively populist war on utility costs). Clearly, the politicization of migration falls into this category: the discursive tools used are similar, with slight alterations.

Our analysis of the official discourse from January 2015 on reveals a strong, hostile and racialized language towards migrants, which served as the major legitimizing factor in introducing restrictive policies like the border fence, or stricter penal code for “illegal” border crossing published on 15 September 2015. Security considerations with clear racist and Islamophobic overtones dominated public discussions and have led to a shift in public opinion towards xenophobia<sup>25</sup>. The official discourse—including the above collection of regulations, similarly to Greece’s “Law for Aliens” of 1991 (see Karyotis 2012: 395)—does not differentiate between asylum seekers and economic migrants, nor does it distinguish irregular from regular migration. Instead, all these categories are subsumed under the term “*bevándorló*” (migrant). This term in Hungarian has an additional layer: it suggests an inward direction of movement, meaning that it refers to migrants coming into Hungary. This term is often married with the “illegal” or “*megélhetési*” (economic/rent seeking) qualifier, and is constantly repeated in official communication, including press reports of the state television.

With relatively low migrant numbers at the beginning of 2015, official discourse mainly warned of economic migration as a potential threat, disregarding research on its benefit, as well as the massive outflow of Hungarians towards Western Europe that could have justified a government shift towards controlled migration. Elevated domestic and international media attention was directed at the question of migration after the January 2015 Charlie Hebdo attacks, when Orban put the blame squarely on Western integration policies, making no distinction between economic migrants and extremists as he claimed that “economic migration is a bad thing for Europe. One should not think of it as a beneficial thing, it only brings problems and dangers into the life of European people. Therefore it must be stopped. This is the Hungarian

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<sup>25</sup> Polling organization Tárki ([www.tarki.hu](http://www.tarki.hu)) publishes regular reports on xenophobia in Hungary. For a summary of the January 2015 poll see <http://www.politics.hu/20150506/tarki-survey-finds-xenophobia-record-high-in-hungary/>

position”<sup>26</sup>. The rhetoric of the Hungarian government from the beginning of the concerted anti-migration campaign in late March 2015 matured as the security and identity axes supplanted the economic axis. Ever since, the rhetoric has been very consistent, and mirrors those of the European receiving states (see Bourbeau, 2011; Huysmans, 2000; Karyotis, 2012 and many more). It identified migration as a threat to the Hungarian state (terrorism), and, due to assumed cultural and religious differences, is the main threat to ethnic homogeneity (influx and higher birth rates), and the national tradition (Islam). It was, as in many other cases, reified as a threat to the survival of first the national community, and more recently, European civilization, defined as exclusively Christian. Not only did this discourse exclude the migrant from society, but framed them as dangers to said society: they are uncivilized, unclean, and disorderly, they do not respect our laws and they are prone to committing crimes. Other adjectives commonly used by government officials include: terrorist, disrespectful, shifty, parasitic, deviant, Muslim, violent, anti-women, lying and ungrateful. Migration in turn was defined in terms of an invasion/flood metaphor, which further helped to translate feelings of social anxiety due to economic uncertainty into opposition against migrants (Huysmans, 2000, p. 769).

The "criminal migrant" is yet another familiar trope from Western European discourses, one that relies on dubious statistical data, commonsensical arguments, mandated “expert” testimonies, and misrepresentative media reports (Ceyhan & Tsoukala, 2002, p. 25). This image transforms all migrant, irrespective of individual motivations, into threats to any receiving or transit country. Even if one accepts that migrants are passing Hungary towards Germany and other, more prosperous European states, as long as they are in Hungary, they represent a clear and present threat. One of the consequences of the criminalization of migration is the elimination of distinction between migrants and asylum seekers/refugees. This, as in other EU countries with similar discourses, can be seen in the reduced the number of asylum seekers granted refugee status. With migrants criminalized, all of them become subject to suspicion by the host population, shifting the public discourse on economic migration—a bad thing in this context—and refugees—moral obligations to help those in aid—towards separating “real” refugees from “impostors”, i.e. economic migrants or terrorists in disguise. It is then hardly surprising that the majority of the population considers most asylum seekers “fake”/

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<sup>26</sup> Remarks quoted in CNN’s “Quest Means Business”, see transcript at <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/150112/qmb.01.html>

As mentioned, initially migration was securitized primarily as an economic threat. Following the exponentially increasing pressure of growing migrant waves, the “job loss” frame was dropped for an identity-based threat frame, wherein the economic threat only manifested in the costs Hungarians would have to bear while hosting migrants. Migrants therefore now threaten Hungarian culture, but also European civilization at large. Underlying this us versus them opposition is the strong national myth that a homogeneous Hungarian society had existed, and a loss of cultural and ethnic homogeneity would threaten social order. Within this frame, the future of the community is a choice for or against migration, leaving no middle road open for a more nuanced treatment of a complex issue, especially the state’s obligation to protect refugees (see Huysmans, 1995; Watson, 2009). Here, the role of Hungarians is that of the crusaders, the last defenders of Europe from a Muslim threat: It is not for fun that we are doing what we are doing; no one likes serving in a border fortress [...] But this historic role of protecting the external borders has now fallen to Hungary”.<sup>27</sup> In recent interviews, Historical role here refers to the now commonly used analogy of the medieval Turkish invasion of Hungary. This analogy consequently assigns the role of defenders of Europe to Hungarians, playing on their sense of exceptionalism. In turn, any European criticism, and the proposed quota system that would have migrants moved back to Hungary can be seen as betrayal.

#### *Non-discursive elements of the security frame*

As the practice-based interpretation of securitization emphasizes, securitization dynamics are active beyond the level of discourse: securitization acts are more than speech acts, they involve non-discursive instruments. In the Hungarian case, the highly symbolic, but less effective border fence is an obvious candidate for policy tools. It sends clear signals about government intentions and reflects the promoted frame of danger, an invasion and a hostile/alien out-group. This physical border serves as an excellent securitization tool, yet its function as a securitizing instrument is questionable at best: it diverted migration flows towards Croatia, yet migrants still travel through Hungary. Nevertheless, as a symbolic tool, the fence garnered wide support.

The other non-discursive element on the other hand lies outside the framework promoted by Balzacq, and we term it “non-policy”: the conscious neglect of a policy issue for short term

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<sup>27</sup> <http://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/news/today-bavaria-s-borders-are-being-defended-by-hungary>

benefits in terms of securitization. Balzacq and his collaborators seek to shift attention towards the practical aspects of securitization, and non-policies do fit the non-discursive label, yet they are chiefly about failure. As the media have frequently reported, the Hungarian state showed striking ineptitude when dealing with mass migration, an ineptitude that culminated in the failed management of the so-called transit zones in Budapest. Not only did the government fail to offer effective policy instruments, it gave way to a new actor, civil society, thereby shifting the burden of governance. This failure becomes even more puzzling when we consider the fact that the government received ample warning from FRONTEXT about the extent and composition of each wave.<sup>28</sup>

For months weeks after the first large wave of Syrian refugees arrived to Hungary, government policy was limited to taking refugees who were apprehended while crossing the border to registration stations (where their fingerprints were taken), in accordance with the Dublin III Regulation, the EU's legal framework for processing asylum claims<sup>29</sup>. Following their registration, they received a document about their registration (in Hungarian), a temporary railway/bus ticket, and had 48/36 hours to get to their assigned refugee camp, but they were only given a blank map of Hungary with the capital, the camp and their entry point highlighted. Refugees were instructed to go to railway stations, but they were given no official help about which trains to board—a task that was fulfilled by civilian organizations. Once in Budapest, refugees sought to continue their journey either to the West or to their assigned camp, but again received no information about schedules nor did they receive access to local public transportation in order to switch railway stations. Refugees received no information about their rights and obligations, about travel routes

The lack of government policy solutions (securitizing instruments) is surprising at a first glance, given that, as we mentioned, there was ample information to suggest both the changing composition of migration as well as increases in volume. Not only were no real domestic answers presented, help was not sought from Brussels either. This spectacular failure of the Hungarian government, and the poor setup of transit zones, we argue, represent a particular form of securitization tools, which we call non-policies. As reports of FIDESZ's mid-September 2015

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<sup>28</sup> <http://visegradrevue.eu/a-calculated-non-action-miscalculated-hungarys-migration-crisis/>

<sup>29</sup> The framework makes the country where the asylum seeker enters the EU responsible for the refugee until his/her claim is processed.

party meeting suggests, PM Orbán clearly did not seek real solutions, but wanted to use migration to divert attention from problematic domestic issues.<sup>30</sup> By forcing migrant entering at the Serbian border into busy transportation hubs in Budapest, supplying them with little information and thereby prompting them to stay in transit zones without basic amenities, the government could create a now visible image of the migrant as a dirty, unkempt, and potentially dangerous alien. Other than forcing migrant-citizen interaction under unfavorable circumstances, the chaotic images of these zones also presented ammunition for the ongoing media campaign: for instance, media imagery on state television usually used juxtapositions where government officials were wearing medical masks when interacting with migrants.

Thus, instead of provoking citizen opposition due to government neglect, transit zones overcrowded with clueless migrants offered a non-discursive tool for the government securitization campaign wherein the pre-established image of migrants could be reinforced, and blame could be shifted onto them for the situation in said areas. However, at this point, non-policies remain undertheorized, and will be a key focus of our future research.

### *Desecuritizing migration?*

The logic of securitization envisions the elite engaging in discursive contestation about the motivation and identity of migrants, with reference to their relationship to the receiving state. This contestation is often also supported by non-discursive securitizing tools, and is frequently resisted by other actors aiming to desecuritize the issue. According to Michael C. Williams (Williams, 2003), the success of a securitization act is influenced by “the different capacity of actors to make socially effective claims about threats.” So, political elites are not always able to rely on securitization to claim control over an issue. This ability is contextual and is conditioned by power relations between the securitizing actor and various audiences/veto powers. In the Hungarian case, however, political power relations are extremely asymmetrical. Due to FIDESZ’s dominance of the media, competing frames offered by the opposition and local NGOs received little to no visibility. As both the judiciary and parliament have been filled with party

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<sup>30</sup> See <http://vs.hu/kozelet/osszes/orban-a-menekultvalsag-a-kellemetlen-ugyekrol-elterelte-a-figyelmet-0920#!s53> (in Hungarian)

loyalists, other, traditional veto powers also lacked the necessary political power to mount a desecuritization campaign.<sup>31</sup>

These asymmetrical power relations forced desecuritization agents to adopt new approaches. The centerpiece of these efforts were the counter-offensive mounted against the government's anti-migration billboard campaign, and the previously unprecedented grassroots campaign of activists in Budapest and major cities to help refugees into and out of transit zones. Both issues were highly symbolic, therefore they caught the attention of the Western media, offering further visibility to the desecuritization frame. Within this frame, Hungarians were depicted as a solidaristic people with a xenophobic government, a people that is willing to help refugees in need.

The à propos of the early June poster campaign was to boost awareness of the April 2015 government pseudo-poll "National Consultation on Migration and Terrorism". National consultations are a key element of illiberal democracy in Hungary: they have been used to supplant referenda, offering a semblance of influence to supporters of the government. These questionnaires are little more than propaganda pieces with questionable methodology, biased and suggestive question. They serve the purpose of communication between the government and its supporters, are issued by the first, and are usually tied to a populist campaign. They provide tropes for supporters to shape public discourse, raise awareness about the government option, and are frequently used to demonstrate both the presence of democratic institutions and wide support for government policy against critics. The language used in the migration-related consultation is symptomatic of the securitization frame constructed by FIDESZ: it labels migrants as terrorists, and as a source of economic and cultural threat. The billboard—which could also draw on Western examples—campaign is equally hostile and reflects to the image of the criminal/alien, with slogans like "If you come to Hungary, you need to abide our laws/respect our culture" and "you cannot take away the jobs of Hungarians". The billboards were clearly not

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<sup>31</sup> The leftist-liberal opposition has adopted an extreme desecuritizing frame that rejects any security implications migration might have. This kind of extreme opposition against any government policy has been the norm since FIDESZ's 2010 election victory, and is characteristic of Hungary's fragmented political culture. In this case it only resonated with a small segment of the population, and enabled the government to link leftist criticism to the threat: supporters of migrants are the enemies of Hungary and Western civilization. Meanwhile, the extreme right opposition has been actively supporting the government's securitization acts: it echo's the framing of migrants as a threat and votes for government policies.

targeting migrants, but the general population: they were all in Hungarian and used the informal speech register, which in this context suggests condescension.

The poster campaign provoked outrage in many, and as soon as they were planted, a number of them were either painted over and/or rewritten. Those who did so mostly relied on humor to mock the hatred that the government media campaign, including billboards radiated: they painted over certain words and letters to form a new meaning to the poster. When police tried to stop these acts of vandalism and even posted special units that were to patrol areas where the poster were located, *Átlátszó*, a human rights watchdog organization posted a manual written by their legal experts that told people wishing to abuse the posters how to do it to avoid prosecution. Two organizations elected to respond the campaign in kind: the mock-political party *Magyar Kétfarkú Kutya Párt* (Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party-MKKP) and the UN's refugee agency, UNHCR, both launching poster campaigns of their own, but independently of each other. Though the

Though spurred by the anti-migration campaign, MKKP's response was more a reflection of widespread dissatisfaction with FIDESZ's regime. As MKKP's blog states:

The main issue is not the refugee politics of the government. The main issue is rather the government's way of spending the people's money on a campaign that shows them who to hate. It is about the government's abuse of an already weak social solidarity in order to gain popularity. They have already fought against the homeless, the gay, the addicts and practically against all minorities.<sup>32</sup>

MKKP began collecting money for their campaign shortly after the billboards appeared. They were able to collect 33.3 million forints in donations by the early June, which showed unprecedented levels of activism among Hungarians. This amount of funds—roughly one tenth of the cost of the government campaign—allowed MKKP to pay for 800 billboards, which, since they well positioned, allowed their message to reach a fairly wide audience. As mentioned, the campaign was not exclusively about migration, but involved other topical issues that had been the source of dissatisfaction with Orbán's government, including corruption, mass migration to Western Europe, or the controversial Paks II deal with Russia. Crucially, some of the posters were written in English as a direct response to the government campaign that seemingly targeted

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<sup>32</sup> <http://mkkp.hu/wordpress/>

migrants, but were in Hungarian. Humorous slogans reflecting on the politicization of migration included:

“Migrants don’t want to work and take our jobs.” (In Hungarian)

“We hate everyone.” (In English)

“The hate campaign loves you.” (In Hungarian)

“Come to Hungary, we’ve got jobs in London.” (In English)

“If you are the Prime Minister of Hungary, you have to obey our laws.” (In Hungarian)

“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in. (Matthew 25:35)” (In Hungarian)

The goal of the campaign was to ridicule government fear-mongering, to raise awareness about systemic problems of Hungarian politics, and to reach out to the international public. The campaign was therefore targeting the government’s securitization campaign, but did not offer a specific counterframe about migrants themselves.

UNHCR on the other hand wanted to present a counterframe about migrants that was to change the public’s perceptions. They set of billboards, posted in Budapest metro stations, showcased refugees who have successfully integrated into Hungarian society. Not offering a comprehensive solution to the migration issue writ large, the UN campaign sought to problematize the undifferentiated, xenophobic treatment of migrants, and highlight the importance of assisting refugees. The posters themselves underlined this latter point: when helped, these refugees can become productive and successful members of Hungarian society. Though the posters spurred heated debates in social media, they did not really engage the population outside of Budapest due to their limited circulation.

The third element of the desecuritization campaign came from the NGOs and civilian activists working with refugees in transit stations, refugee camps and border towns. NGOs such as the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, the Association of Pediatric Practitioners, *Menedék Alapítvány* (Refuge Foundation), *Menhely Alapítvány* (Shelter Foundation), and *Oltalom* (Sanctuary) Charity Society worked together with ad hoc, non-institutionalized activist groups like *Segítsünk Együtt a Menekülteknek* (Let's Help Refugees in Hungary), Migration Aid, and the Migrant Solidarity Group of Hungary (Migsaw). These latter, non-institutionalized

organizations merit special attention: relying mainly on social media, they managed to attract media and public attention, as well as company and personal contributions in terms of know-how, working hours (activists, interpreters, drivers, cooks etc.), in-kind contributions (food, clothes, medicine). These contributions were all used transparently to assist migrants to reach transit zones, spend the minimum necessary time there and then move on to either a refugee camp or a train heading towards Western Europe. As their names suggest, these organizations sought to offer solidarity to migrants, irrespective of personal motivations. With a strong presence in the social media, active links to non-state and active media, they not only promoted solidarity for migrants, but also an image of Hungarians as a solidaristic people with bad leadership. By organizing the daily life of migrants at transit stations, these civilian organizations effectively took over the responsibilities of the state, from providing information, food and shelter to providing legal counsel about migration policies. Their continued efforts form the backbone of the desecuritization campaign as they continuously promote a counterframe that depicts migration as a humanitarian issue, not a question of security. Though unable to revert the government securitization efforts, these organizations helped to create an alternative frame that has received wide visibility in the capital and in the foreign press, but less so in the countryside. We suggest that the presence of an alternative frame can provide the basis of further desecuritization attempts. However, our initial research still suggests that NGOs and activist groups indeed lack the political power to mount a full desecuritization campaign on their own, without the assistance of traditional veto powers (judiciary, parliamentary opposition, media).T

The increase in xenophobia in Hungary stabilized in late September (according to recent polls)<sup>33</sup>, although it has reached record levels. This slowing down can partially be attributed into the rerouting of migration flow towards the countryside, and the resulting “disappearance” of migrants from frequented urban areas, as well as the government’s rhetorical turn towards European migration policy. However, with such a complex issue, a multi-causal explanation should not be excluded, wherein the promotion of counterframes through unconventional means plays a role in shifting the public perception of migrants away from a racialized, threat-based security frame. This issue will have to be in the focus of further research.

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<sup>33</sup> Citation needed

## **Preliminary conclusions**

“The People have chosen: The country needs to be defended”

*/Government-issued billboard slogan, first posted in late September 2015/*

At this juncture, we can only offer a set of tentative conclusions that will form the backbone of further research. First, it has to be stated that the logic of the Schengen Zone reinforces securitizing acts when it comes to migration, and elevates member states with external borders into a special role. With their importance to receiving states clear, these transit countries can capitalize on the current migration wave without bearing the same political costs their counterparts in Western Europe risk. Furthermore, since migration in the CEE states is only transitory, securitization in this particular realm of easy in-group/out-group dichotomies’ promises a relatively risk-free rhetorical tool to distract from politically more costly issues. Therefore—though the claim is as of now only based on the Hungarian case study—we would suggest that CEE states and transit states in general reflect strong domestic motivations when securitizing migration; motivations that are less about security than other topics. As we have demonstrated in this paper, the accompanying discourse, though more racialized due to the absence of political risk, is strikingly similar to pre-existing European discourses. With this superficial similarity, investigating the underlying context becomes crucial, lending further relevance to a practice-based interpretation of securitization.

It is here where the importance of the Hungarian securitization campaign lies, both in terms of theory and wider policy implications. As our research clearly shows, the intensity of the securitization campaign, as well as the increase in xenophobic tendencies, correlate with the increase of the popularity of the government. Meanwhile, the campaign was launched at a time when the government had experienced a massive drop in its popularity, giving rise to its main competitor on the extreme right. All these observations strongly suggest that there have been strong domestic motivations behind the campaign that have little to do with migration. This seeming success of the securitization campaign then becomes puzzling when we take into account that Hungarians already showed responsiveness to the government’s frame in the early weeks of the campaign when the country experienced limited migration.

This latter point led us to a deeper investigation of the context. A few points are in order: first, pre-existing xenophobia/racism in Hungary needs to be factored into any future analysis of

this campaign, especially when considering the heavy borrowing of negative frames from the anti-Roma discourse to *other* migrants. Apart from pre-existing xenophobia, the specific construction and rhetoric of the campaign also merited attention when questioning its success with the general population. Here the paper invoked the concept of the political spectacle, in order to highlight a remarkable consistency in FIDESZ's rhetorical treatment of any policy challenge. By framing any and almost every policy issue as a drama of crises and battles, the government elite can easily invoke support from the core electorate, and can more readily transmit its understanding of us and them, while maintaining an atmosphere of urgency and threat. Our use of the political spectacle framework feeds into the balzacqian claim that various national audiences are receptive to different kinds of securitization(s). Following on this point, we sought to expand the practice-based reimagining of securitization theory by throwing light on the importance of non-discursive tools in the Hungarian case, most notably the use of non-policies. We believe that this will represent a fruitful direction for further research as it underlies the importance of "moving beyond discourse".

Our final topic in this paper has crucial relevance for the future: how is migration desecuritized (if at all) in Hungary, and if not, how could it be? Hungary is interesting from the point of view of desecuritization as, due to the near-total government dominance of the political, the three traditional desecuritizing actors—the opposition, the judiciary and the media—are completely missing from the story. In fact, a number of non-traditional actors from civil society had to stepped in to present a valid counterframe. These efforts relied heavily on the same instruments the government is using—most notably billboards and social media—but have been unsuccessful due to low visibility. This observation on the one hand underlines the importance of support from more traditional actors, and on the other hand draws analytical attention to the importance of the European level as a source of desecuritization. The EU level is especially crucial as the Hungarian government discourse already shows signs of shifting of the referent object of security from a Hungarian national identity to a European identity.

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