

Theatrics of Xenophobia: *Hungary and the 2015 Migration Crisis*

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**The Refugee Crisis and the Reaction of the
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Questions for our research

- Wide variety of reactions throughout the EU: is migration a security threat?
- Security frame used widely, but often interwoven with a humanitarian frame
- Hungary as a “pure case”
- Remarkable rise in xenophobic tendencies (Tarki) *without* first hand experience w/ migrants → what explains the Hungarian case?
- Problem of causal arguments
- Implications: possibilities of reversal, obstacles of a common EU position

Migration and Security: Securitization

- Copenhagen School: securitization as self-reflexive speech act, elevating an issue into the realm of emergency politics
- Non-objectivist/intersubjective security: security as a "label" enabling and limiting policy options, security as a process

Migration and Security: Securitization (Cont.'d)

- Role of the political elite
- State as referent object, state represents society (survival).
State/elite frequently conflated with society.
- Security detached from its positive connotations, security as a control mechanism

Critique: Securitization as practice

- Securitization contextual: importance of **socio-political context**
- Securitization is **audience-dependent** (cross-country and cross-issue variation)
- **Role of power**: who can do and undo security? (Media; Opposition; Judiciary)
- **Discursive and non-discursive aspects** coexist and mutually reinforce each other (securitization tools and instruments)

Is the Hungarian Case Unique?

Securitizing migrants in the EU

- **Western Europe:** Discourse shifts after 1989, migration completely politicized, anti-migration discourse develops
- **Three axes** present:
 - Economic (job loss and benefit seeking)
 - (Hard) Security (terrorism and crime)
 - Identity (Islamophobia)
- Multiculturalism, controlled migration, “historical responsibility” limit racialization
- Rise of extremism, critique of multiculturalism
- **Central and Eastern Europe:** transit countries, „white societies”, no „historical responsibility” → **adoption of existing frames w/o structural limitations**

Securitizing migration in Hungary

- rhetorical elements similar to Western discourse
 - „*bevándorlók*” (in-migrants), „*megélhetési migráció*” (rent seeking migration)
- **three axes** gradually appear (billboards): economy, hard security, identity
- clear racial and Islamophobic overtones
- elements borrowed from **anti-Roma discourse** (Bernáth-Messing 2015), e.g. migrants as unclean, uncultured, shifty etc.
- criminal migrant: „real” vs. „fake” refugees
- migration as the breakdown of social order

Securitizing Migration in Hungary (cont'd.)

- communicating the security frame: speeches, press releases, biased media reporting, “national consultation” and billboard campaign
- use of experts and talking heads
- securitizing tool: border fence
- securitizing instrument: penal code
- non-discursive elements: transit zones (?)

Poster Campaign

- Three axes
 - economic
 - security
 - cultural
- Continued until elections?



Non-discursive elements

- Symbolic securitization tool: border fence
- Non-policies as securitization tools:
 - Establishment of „transit zones”
 - Visibility of migration increases
 - Biased reporting
 - Provoking migrants: migrants violent, untidy, ungrateful, loud

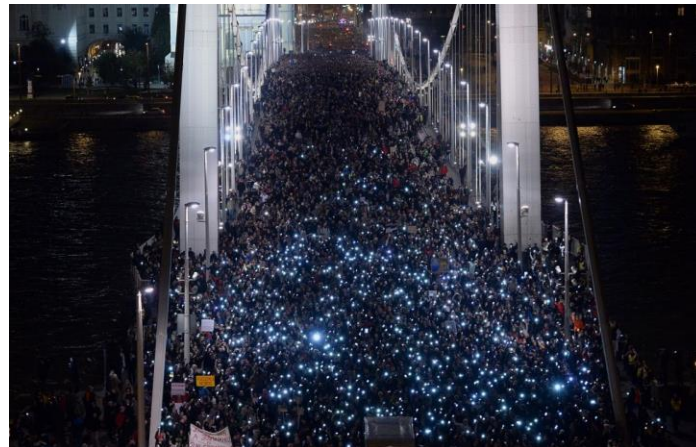


Context: Xenophobia in Hungary

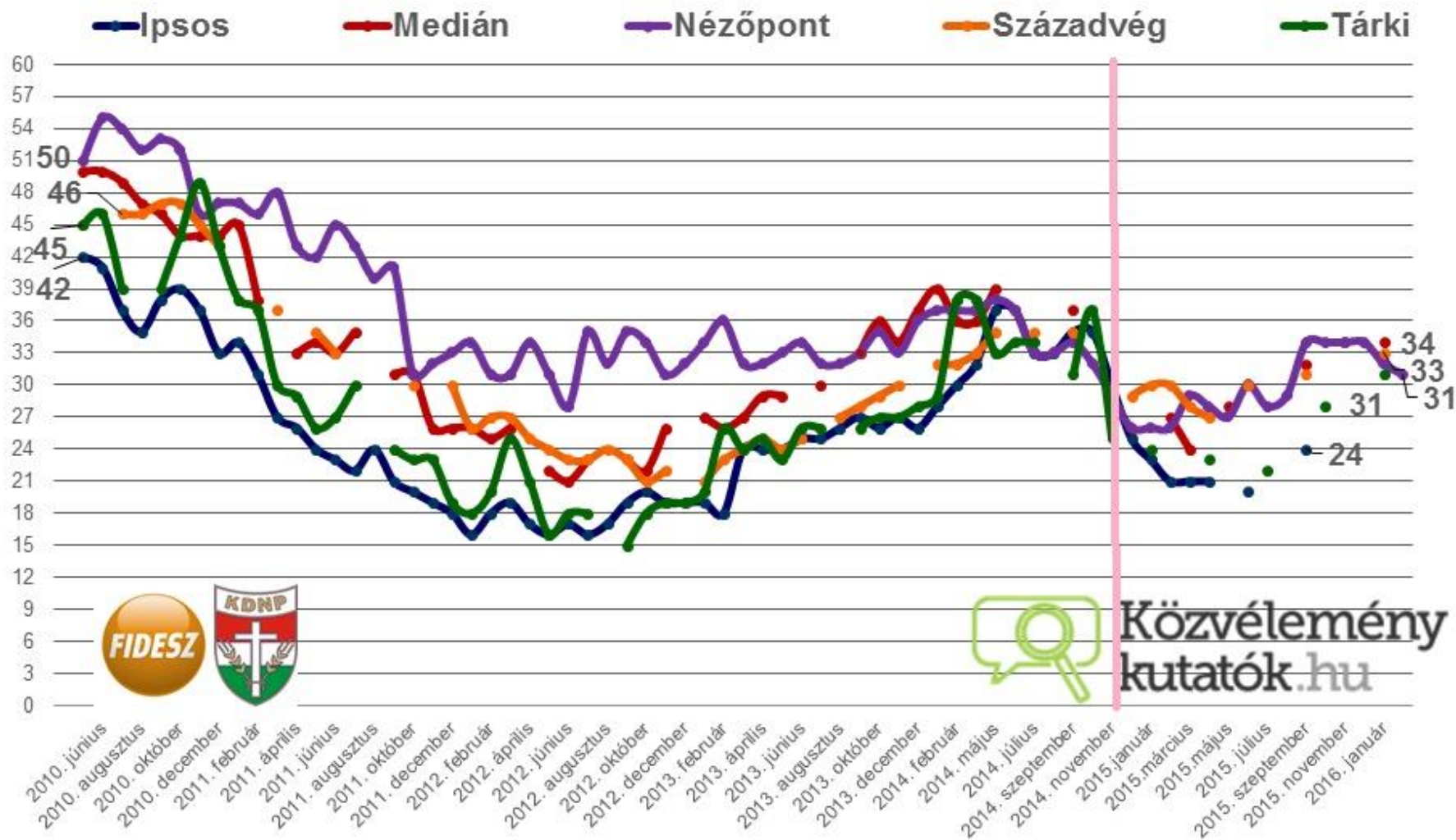
- xenophobia highest in the region (measured since the early 1990s)
- pre-2014: rate of respondents rejecting immigration more than 50%
- respondents even reject fictitious ethnicities
- studies suggest that xenophobia is tied to fears of the unknown (*not* coexistence)
- no first hand experience, views distorted by media reports about integration problems in Western Europe
- population susceptible to fearmongering

Domestic context

- 2010-2015: Changes to the political system („illiberal democracy”)
- Scandals, contentious policies, corruption
- Extreme right as main competitor
- Political apathy



Massive drop in support by late 2014



Context: FIDESZ's warlike rhetoric

- "political spectacle" (Huysmans, 2000)
 - politics as drama
 - crisis situations and political myths
 - conditions of belonging established
- "war on national debt", "war on utility costs", Brussels=Moscow, etc.
- **Migration as the „next war”, anti-migration rhetoric used for mobilization, as well as for *spinning scandals* (see recent events)**

The Role of Power: Desecuritizing migration

- traditional veto powers missing
- grassroot organizations take over the state's responsibilities
- non-traditional securitizing actors: individual non-violent resistance, civil society

Hungary's position: Framing the crisis

- migration as a threat (identity, terrorism)
- allegations of managed migration
- Europe as weak, European identity in danger
- European leaders disregard public opinion
- EU solutions misplaced, German mistakes lead to erroneous policies forced on member states
- Hungary as a role model

What's next on the international level?

- Erection of physical borders is presented as the “adoption of the Hungarian solution”
- Orbán will continue to oppose Merkel and support her opposition
- Common solution not seen in further integration, but in “a Europe of strong nation states” with closely controlled borders
- Domestic rhetoric still vilifies the EU

What's next on the international level? (Cont'd.)

- Hungary will continue to oppose—or offer token opposition to—any EU policy that involves the relocation of migrants to Hungary (“migration is a German problem”)
- Orbán will continue to look for allies within the EU, most notably in the Visegrad region, Austria, Slovenia, Croatia and Romania
- Since the securitization campaign is arguably for domestic consumption, this opposition will remain at least until the next elections in 2018



Thank you for your attention!

Current phase of the campaign

- target: quota system and the EU, same structure (culture, terrorism, costs)
- security frame shifts from identity questions to terrorism (Paris & Brussels attack)
- new legislation
- proposed constitutional amendment



Constitutional amendment proposal

- „terror emergency situation”
 - limit and influence media content,
 - limit the consumption of fuel and other basic goods,
 - introduce „special anti-terror policies” (vaguely defined),
 - introduce border control measures that violate international treaties,
 - control communication (phones, internet, postal service),
 - order a curfew, can ban public events,
 - decide to relocate/evacuate populations
 - ban contact with foreign nationals

„Referendum” on the quota system

- November 2015: government starts collecting signatures for a petition against the quota system
- December 2015-January 2016 media campaign against the quota system
 - “The mandatory quota system threatens our culture”
 - “The mandatory quota system increases the threat of terrorism”
- Planned „national consultation”

Migrant situation now

- asylum request rejection rate close to 98%, Serbian border crossing
- camps scheduled to be closed (total capacity around 1500, current numbers at around 700).
- camps for detainment (total capacity around 600)
- irregular entry at the Croatian border (authorities usually shuttle migrants to the Austrian border instead of detaining them)