

## **Securitizing Migration in Contemporary Hungary: From Discourse to Practice**

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### **Abstract**

This chapter renarrates the ongoing Hungarian anti-migration campaign launched in 2015 as a case of securitization. It departs from observations claiming that the current Hungarian discourse on migration bears a striking resemblance to Western European discursive structures of the 1990s and early 2000s. Rather, despite its liberal borrowing of tried and tested frames, this chapter claims that the securitization campaign is unique due the conditions underlying its inception and evolution. To highlight this crucial gap between discourse and context, this chapter relies on a refined version of securitization theory—one popularized by Thierry Balzacq—that moves beyond the narrow speech act focus of the Copenhagen School, 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; context-dependent; and power-laden. This approach is used to highlight that, despite discursive similarities, various European societies are receptive to different constructions of security, which also include non-discursive elements. Through a case study, this chapter draws theoretical attention to the potential role of non-traditional desecuritization actors and to the role of non-policies as securitization tools, i.e. the elite's deliberate neglect of an issue for the purposes of securitization.

The migration crisis in the European Union (EU) serves as a meta-issue which links various policy problems, from fear 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 has received increased media attention internationally and was often

accused of misconduct with regards to the treatment of migrants/refugees. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán 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, well-funded media campaign that has demonized migrants as a threat to national security, irrespective of the latter's personal motivations. The Hungarian government's strong anti-immigration rhetoric and policies that have followed—most importantly the construction of a border fence in the South of the country—have shocked many observers, begging the question of what made such a swift shift possible and how it came about.

Xenophobic tendencies in Hungary have been steadily growing since the introduction of the campaign, and the discourse is by now clearly dominated by the security frame. Though the precise mechanisms of persuasion and their effectiveness are still under investigation, this chapter is based on the assumption that the increase in hostility towards migrants in Hungary can be linked to the government's ongoing securitization campaign. The success of the campaign is puzzling as its launch predates the summer 2015 wave of refugees, meaning that at the time of its launch, the everyday Hungarian had no real experience with mass migration. Thus, the rapid securitization of migration and the resulting increase in xenophobia cannot simply be attributed to societal shock and feelings of insecurity at the sight of massive migrant waves (cf. Karyotis 2012).

This chapter renarrates the story of this 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 aspects 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 (Watson 2009; Huysmans 2000; Wæver et al. 1993; Karyotis 2007). 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. Nevertheless, this

chapter argues that, despite the liberal borrowing of tried and tested frames, the Hungarian securitization campaign is unique due to the context of its inception and its rapid evolution.

In order to highlight this crucial gap between discourse and underlying conditions, the chapter relies on a refined version of securitization theory—one popularized by Thierry Balzacq (2005b, 2011)—that moves beyond the narrow speech act focus of the Copenhagen School (Wæver 1995; Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998) 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; context-dependent; and power-laden. For the purposes of this chapter, the approach is used to highlight that, despite similarities in discursive structures, various European societies are receptive to different constructions of security. Therefore, this chapter will draw focus, on the one hand, on structural aspects, such as prevailing xenophobic tendencies among the population (i.e. the audience), and the state of the political-institutional environment in contemporary Hungary. On the other hand, the chapter will also seek to highlight agential aspects of the context—drawing on the concept of power used by Balzacq—and deconstruct the government campaign. Crucially, the latter does not only focus on discourse, but also includes an investigation of non-discursive components (securitization tools and instruments). Finally, in an attempt to improve on Balzacq's framework, this chapter draws attention to the role non-traditional desecuritization 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 chapter 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, it then presents the Hungarian securitizing campaign as a case study. By highlighting its core elements, I 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 chapter identifies the specificities of the Hungarian case in terms of its socio-political context, which in turn leads me to a set of preliminary conclusions about the future of the Hungarian situation, as well as its implications for a joint European migration policy framework.

## Speech acts and practices

In its original formulation by the Copenhagen School (CS), securitization is the process by which 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 between normal and emergency politics. Put simply, its underlying assumption is that the word “security” has a performative character, but there is disagreement on whether this act is independent of an audience (self-reference) or only acquires its performativity when used by particular actors in specific contexts (intersubjectivity) (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998).

Another definition, one that this chapter adopts, draws less of a strict distinction 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, and Ruzicka 2015, 2, emphasis added)

In standard securitization, the utterance of the word 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, 4) notes, the discursive action of security thereby 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, 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, Leonard, and Ruzicka 2015, 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, including power relations among securitizing actor and audiences. Its key components are, therefore, the securitizing actor, the referent subject (that which is threatening), the audience, the context and the 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. Waever 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 other tools 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 it delegates 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 and “functional actors” (Buzan et al. 1998),

among which 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 (Williams 2003; Vultee 2011; Bourbeau 2011). 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, 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—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 frames, but selects from those available, the power relations among securitizing actors and those that present counterframes influence the media image. In addition, it has to be noted that the media often focuses on the dramatic and 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 take precedence. For these reasons, the analysis of media coverage is essential to any understanding of the securitization of migration.

Apart from seeing securitization as 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, that is, 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, 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, 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 they 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, 81). Within this chapter, I 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, I seek to introduce the concept of non-policy as a securitization tool: by only offering limited solutions to a problem, the securitizing actor can present both their 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, from this perspective, 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 within 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 and Tsoukala 2002, 22). These public fears were arguably only exacerbated by the 9/11 terrorist attacks (Guild 2003; Karyotis 2007; Huysmans and Buonfino 2008). 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 away from economics and socio-cultural analyses into the realm of security under the 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 (Mistri and Orcalli 2014; Huysmans 2000; Wæver et al. 1993; Léonard 2011; 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 than, for instance, intra-EU migrants, which in turn diminishes their economic value for the host society.

The securitization of migration is achieved through the use of 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 on 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.

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 sides. Now, 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 has so far led to inefficient control measures because of a fear of political costs, and it has also justified a more radical and racialized perception of migration along the extremes of the political spectrum (see e.g. Dover 2008; Mistri and Orcalli 2014).

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—reveals 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—they show high levels of xenophobia (understood as a fear of the unknown) and elite attempts at securitizing the current migration wave have been very effective, and nowhere more so than in Hungary. With similarities in the discourse, but also in terms of policy choices, the discourse on migration in contemporary Hungary constitutes a clear case of securitization. Hungary is not an innovative new player in the European discourse, but more of an implementer and adapter of 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 sections, I will present and analyze the securitization dynamics underlying the current discourse on migration in Hungary by relying on Balzacq's framework. I 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.

### **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, they seek 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 and 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 the opposition. The easier an issue is to mitigate, the more likely such a shift in support becomes. 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>i</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 voters (Scheppelle 2014). The resulting institutional changes, coupled with near-total control over the media define Hungary's illiberal democracy, famously popularized in Prime Minister Orbán's 2014 speech in Băile Tușnad, Romania (Orbán 2016).

These changes were only met with limited opposition, while 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 (BBC 2014). 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<sup>ii</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 in the 2014 national election results). In an attempt to stop disillusioned voters gravitating towards Jobbik, FIDESZ had been taking over some of the extremist party's most symbolic program points since 2010. 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>iii</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 toward 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. Namely, FIDESZ's monopoly over Hungarian politics 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.

The turn towards migration as a security challenge, which forms part of the political spectacle of FIDESZ's governing style—to be discussed further in this chapter —has once again mobilized supporters, drawn in extremist voters due to its hard stance on aliens, divided up the population along familiar lines, and crucially avoided political costs traditionally associated with securitizing migration in Western Europe. This latter point merits further 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 and Tsoukala 2002, 30), while a more radical 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, a crisis script applied on migration evokes feelings of danger and insecurity, which 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>iv</sup>

But every campaign needs an audience, and the Hungarian population was already predisposed towards a more radical stance on migration. Polls conducted by polling company TÁRKI since the 1990s show high levels of xenophobia even in regional terms, and respondents even reject fictional ethnicities. This xenophobia, however, differs from its Western counterpart, as without real life experience in coexistence, Hungarians' xenophobia is more a fear of the unknown, than a fear of the different (Szalai and Göbl 2015).

#### *Discursive elements of the security frame*

[The growing number of economic migrants] represents a new type of threat – a threat which we must stop in its tracks. As Brussels has failed to address immigration appropriately, Hungary must follow its own path. We shall not allow economic migrants to jeopardize the jobs and livelihoods of Hungarians. We must make a decision on how Hungary should defend itself against illegal immigrants.

Viktor Orbán's Preface to the "National Consultation on Migration and Terrorism" poll (Hungarian Prime Minister's Office 2015a)

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 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). This dramatic interpretation of politics on behalf of the governing party is traced 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 held about 51% of the votes, securing it a shaky majority in parliament. Shocked by these results, FIDESZ supporters called the elections? a fraud, and Orbán gave a series of speeches calling 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) and lent FIDESZ’ time in opposition a war-like tone, wherein “retreat was impossible” (Orbán 2006). This rhetoric followed the party throughout the 2000s.

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 as the referent object of the ‘attacks’. Again, the group of foes is very diverse, ranging from the EU on various occasions (Euractiv 2011), through foreign multinational corporations, the Western press (‘a liberal conspiracy against Hungarians’), Western liberals to Hungarian watchdog NGOs (Nielsen 2014), and his domestic opposition (‘the fight against Communism’). This constant rhetoric of war forces the government into a role of the tough warrior, justifying restrictive domestic policies and the refusal to compromise on even the most

minor of issues. Though the 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.

The analysis of the official discourse from January 2015 onwards reveals a strong, hostile 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 have dominated public discussions and have led to a shift in public opinion towards xenophobia<sup>v</sup>. The official discourse—including the above collection of regulations, similar 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 has been 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 relevant 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 towards the question of migration after the January 2015 Charlie Hebdo attacks, when Orbán 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 position” (Quest 2015). 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 others). It has identified migration as a threat to the Hungarian state (terrorism) and, due to assumed cultural and religious differences, has dubbed migration as the main threat to ethnic homogeneity (influx and higher birth rates) as well as the national tradition (Islam). As in many other cases, it has been reified as a threat to the survival of, firstly, the national community, and, more recently, European civilization, defined as exclusively Christian. Not only has this discourse excluded the migrant from society, but has also framed them as dangers to said society: they are uncivilized, unclean, and unorderedly, 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 has been 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).

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 and Tsoukala 2002, 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 on their way to 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 the distinction between migrants and asylum seekers/refugees. This, as in other EU countries with similar discourses, can be seen in the reduced number of asylum seekers granted refugee status. With migrants criminalized, all of them become subject to suspicion by the host population, which, in its turn, shifts 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’.

As mentioned, migration was initially 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 the Hungarian society had been a homogeneous one, 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 (Watson 2009; see Huysmans 1995). 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”, Orbán stated in September 2015, “but this historic role of protecting the external borders has now fallen to Hungary” (Hungarian Prime Minister’s Office 2015b). In recent interviews, this notion of ‘historic role’ here alludes to the now commonly used analogy drawn between current migration influx and 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 move back to Hungary can be seen as betrayal.

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

As the practice-based interpretation of securitization highlights, 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 border fence is an obvious candidate for policy tools. It sends clear signals about government intentions and reflects the promoted frame of danger from an impending invasion by 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, but migrants still travel through Hungary. Nevertheless, as a symbolic tool, the fence garnered wide support.



The other non-discursive element, which I term “non-policy”, on the other hand, lies outside the framework promoted by Balzacq: the conscious neglect of a policy issue for short term benefits in terms of securitization. Balzacq and his colleagues 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, but it also 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 FRONTEX about the size and composition of each wave (Rácz 2015).

For months 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>vi</sup>. Following their registration, they received a document about their registration (in Hungarian), a temporary railway/bus ticket, and had 36/48 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 move between railway stations. Finally, refugees received no information about their rights, obligations, or travel routes.

The lack of government policy solutions (securitizing instruments) is surprising at a first glance, given that, as mentioned, there was ample information on both the changing composition of migration as well as increases in volume. Not only were no real domestic answers presented, but help from the EU was not sought either. This spectacular failure of the Hungarian government and the poor setup of transit zones arguably represent a particular form of securitization tools,

which we call non-policies. As reports of FIDESZ's mid-September 2015 party meeting suggest, PM Orbán clearly did not seek real solutions, but wanted to use migration to divert attention from problematic domestic issues. By forcing migrants 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. Apart from impelling migrant-citizen interaction under unfavorable circumstances, the chaotic images of these zones also presented ammunition for the ongoing media campaign. For instance, media coverage on state television usually showed government officials wearing medical masks when interacting with migrants.

Thus, instead of provoking citizen opposition due to government neglect, transit zones overcrowded with refugees offered a non-discursive tool for the government securitization campaign in the form of a stage on which 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 under-researched. Therefore they will have to be a key focus of 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 (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 in 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

loyalists, other, traditional veto powers also lacked the necessary political power to mount a desecuritization campaign.<sup>vii</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 efforts 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 peoples with a xenophobic government, a peoples that is willing to help refugees in need.

The purpose 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 an illusion of influence to supporters of the government. These questionnaires are little more than propaganda pieces with questionable methodology, biased and suggestive questions. They serve the purpose of communication between the government and its supporters, issued by the former, and 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 campaign—which could also draw on Western examples—is equally hostile and reflects the image of the criminal/alien, with slogans like "if you come to Hungary, you need to abide by our laws/respect our culture" and "you cannot take away the jobs of Hungarians." The billboards were clearly not targeting migrants, but the general population, as they were all in Hungarian.

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 (Migszol). 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, skills and time (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 suggests, these organizations sought to offer solidarity to migrants, irrespective of the latter's personal motivations. With a strong presence in the social media and 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. I 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).

## **Conclusion**

Countries of the Visegrad region have been converging on their hostile stance on migration since the second half of 2015. This change alone would render the Hungarian case less unique than this chapter suggested. However, once we look closer into the country-specific context of securitization dynamics, Hungary once again becomes a sort of an outlier—a pure case where

securitization discourses are largely unchallenged. The empirical fact that the campaign at the core of government reactions was launched prior to the crisis further draws critical attention to the specificities of the context, despite obvious parallels with neighboring states both in terms of discourse and policies. Using Thierry Balzacq's critique of securitization theory, this chapter highlighted a number of elements of the Hungarian case that explain recent trends. Firstly, securitization is audience-dependent and Hungarian voters show consistently high levels of xenophobia and have also been conditioned by government rhetoric to think in terms of emergencies and clear and present dangers. Secondly, securitization is power-laden. In the case of Hungary, power relations are extremely skewed with the government holding control over the media, the opposition and the judiciary. Therefore, desecuritization attempts have been restricted to civil society actors—among them issue-specific, nontraditional grassroots—which have been using nonconventional techniques to counteract the government master frame. However, without the aforementioned veto powers present, these desecuritization attempts have only received limited visibility. To these two elements, the chapter added non-discursive tools termed non-policies. These, within the practice-based approach of Balzacq, demonstrate that a focus on discourse is insufficient for understanding securitization. As its own contribution to this revision, this chapter suggested that non-policies are important precisely because they appear to be products of chance and circumstance, so they usually fall outside the analysis of practices targeted at securitizing certain issues, such as migration. With this more nuanced understanding of securitization dynamics in Hungary, cross-country variance within the European Union can hopefully be better understood.

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## APPENDIX

<b>Chronology of events: January 2015 – September 2015</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>2014:</b> Orbán’s “illiberal democracy” speech is delivered in Băile Tuşnad, 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. He further 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 Rogan, 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>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>May:</b> First major poll on xenophobia since Orbán’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>viii</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> Orbán 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 suggests a sense of urgency and impending doom. Orbán 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 are first mentioned.<sup>ix</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 issues billboard campaign to support the “national consultation.” The billboards are 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).</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.</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>
<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. Government 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.</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</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 response 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.</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.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>September 14:</b> First stage of border fence completed.</li> </ul>

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| <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.</li></ul> |

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

<sup>ii</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>iii</sup> FIDESZ later lost its supermajority in parliament due to lost early elections in a number of rural electoral districts, leading to the governing party occasionally relying on Jobbik's votes in parliament until the supermajority was regained.

<sup>iv</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>v</sup> The TÁRKI Social Research Institute publishes regular reports on xenophobia in Hungary. For 2015-16 data, see Simonovits et al. 2016.

<sup>vi</sup> The framework renders the country where the asylum seeker enters the Schengen Zone responsible for the refugee until his/her claim is processed.

<sup>vii</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.

<sup>viii</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>ix</sup> Full text of Orbán'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).