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The ‘Christian Fortress of Hungary’ – The Anatomy of the Migration Crisis in Hungary

Abstract: *This paper discusses the unique phenomenon of what role the political debate about Islam, the construction of the temporary border barrier protecting the Hungarian national borders and altering the Hungarian Constitution played in the competitive communication of the national-radical Jobbik party and the centre-right governing parties Fidesz-KDNP which typically emphasise their Christian character. Furthermore this essay follows up the elements of political campaign related to the referendum on relocation quota between the end of 2014 and November 2016.*

Keywords: migration, crisis, Fidesz, Jobbik, party competition, campaign

Introduction

Since the early spring of 2015, an unprecedented wave of migration has reached the Balkans countries and Hungary. The flood of migrants appearing in Central Europe – and heading toward Western Europe – posed an almost unresolvable challenge to the asylum management systems at the national and the EU level. The critical state of European Union migration policy, as well as the obstacles in decision-making in Brussels signalled that this extremely complex issue divides European societies and also touches on deeply rooted issues, without European policies offering any effective treatment.

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The social and economic concerns related to the *migrant crisis* were very efficiently made a theme of primary importance by the Hungarian government, expressing statements and questions – almost unprecedented in Hungary – which led to an upheaval of discussions related to living together with Muslims, the relationship of Islam and Christianity, as well as the consequences of mixing different cultures. The crisis became another chapter in party competition, with the government constantly raising the political stakes and focusing entirely on this set of problems in its communication. Meanwhile, opposition parties – including the primary challenger, the radical nationalist Jobbik (Jobbik – Movement for a Better Hungary) – have been unable to gain political advantage from what happened. Therefore the governing Fidesz-KDNP could stabilise its position, and by the end of 2015 it increased its lead.

This paper presents the political communication and party competition built around the migrant crisis from late 2014 to November 2016, and seeks an answer to how the articulated statements impacted the Hungarian society. It also presents the main characteristics of the government's actions based on a '*civilisation*' narrative and the campaign, as well as the key elements of the referendum on the relocation quota held in October 2016.

1. From crisis to crisis

In Hungary, the political crisis has commenced already in 2006 and there has been a permanent campaign ever since. The governing Socialist/Free Democrat coalition successfully won again at the 2006 elections using a propaganda of success, however during the months following the elections, the public was practically shocked by the introduction of austerity measures. After the public disclosure of the speech of the socialist prime minister Ferenc Gyurcsány, held at a closed meeting and recognising lies and acts of fraud, street riots erupted in Budapest and major Hungarian cities. The anti-government protests continued all around the country until the 2010 elections. The major opposition party, the right-wing conservative Fidesz launched a powerful campaign calling the prime minister illegitimate and rejecting any type of cooperation with the government. A long political crisis began, contributing to a moral and ethical crisis. The financial and economic crisis of 2008 hit the country in this state, while unemployment and the prices of public utilities rose, and the country could only avoid financial collapse with an IMF loan taken out in October 2008. Simultaneously, Jobbik gained strength. It was originally established as a party in 2003, but could only become visible after 2006, while the crisis was deepening and the conflicts between the

majority Hungarians and the Gypsy (Romani) minority escalated. After hopelessness and misery surfaced, more and more people felt attracted to the party with anti-Semitic roots, vocalising antidemocratic, anti-EU, anti-globalisation and racist buzzwords.

The alliance of Fidesz and the Christian Democrats won the 2010 elections with a two-thirds majority, with the Hungarian Socialist Party and Jobbik finishing second and last (respectively) and delegating members to the legislative body. The mostly two-party system has been disbanded, the left-wing socialist and liberal bloc shrank, and Fidesz could start to transform the economic and social subsystems practically without an opposition.¹ System-level transformations impacts personal livelihoods, economic hinterlands of the political poles, the intelligentsia and turned social groups, professions and generations against each other, further straining the relationship of Hungary and the European Union, which has only been made worse by the migrant crisis commencing in 2015.

The pro-government polling institute, Századvég conducted a survey in January 2015,² and identified four key areas in which the success of the government was doubtful from 2010 to 2014. The international reputation of Hungary only improved according to a little more than half of the respondents. The permanent disputes with the European Union surely played a major role in this. It should also be emphasised that Hungarian-American relations gradually worsened as the foreign policy orientation of the Hungarian government changed: with the policy of Opening to the East and the improving ties with Russia.³

A similarly unfavourable action from the US point-of-view was when the NATO-member Hungary failed to condemn Russia for the annexation of Crimea and the military action in the eastern part of Ukraine.⁴ During the spring of 2014 it was reiterated that after the fall of Communism, the

¹ V. Glied, *From the Green movement into a party. Effect of the crisis and democratic movements in Hungary*, "Politeja" nr 28/2014, pp. 31–61.

² <http://szazadveg.hu/foundation/kutatas/piac-es-kozvelemeny-kutatas/tobben-tamogatjak-a-kormanyt-mint-tavaly-decemberben> (last visited 21.12.2016).

³ A key element thereof was the cooperation agreement signed in January 2014 in Moscow, stipulating that Russia is going to build to new nuclear power plant units in Paks and provide a 10 billion EUR credit for this purpose to Hungary. *Orbán–Putin: Az oroszok bővítik Paksot (Orbán–Putin: The Russians will expand Paks)*, 15.01.2014, HVG, http://hvg.hu/gazdasag/20140114_OrbanPutyin_megallapodtak_Paksrol (last visited 15.01.2016).

⁴ G. Pető, *A Krim-félsziget orosz annektálásának hatásai a NATO-ra, avagy válaszüton a Szövetség? (Impacts of the annexation of Crimea by Russia–NATO at crossroads?)*, 21.04.2014, <http://old.biztonsagpolitika.hu/?id=16&aid=1424&title=a-krim-felsziget-orosz-annektalasanak-hatasai-a-nato-ra-avagy-valaszuton-a-szovetseg> (last visited 22.12.2016).

competition of the great powers for preserving and expanding their zones of influence has not ended. In order to enforce its geostrategic interests, both the United States and Russia used their tools of 'soft and hard' political influence in the Central European countries, including Hungary. The case known as the 'entry ban scandal' was an emblematic step, when the United States banned six unidentified Hungarian public servants from entering the country.

According to the result of the aforementioned Századvég survey, respondents did not find the reform of major state social systems successful. After the regime change, each government favoured spending on infrastructural developments and welfare measures from the central budget, and spent less on education (required for building a knowledge-based society, as well as the development of competitive and high added value sectors) and healthcare. The Fidesz-cabinet also failed to rectify the state of healthcare and education.⁵ More and more apparent and perceptible social-economic problems culminated in the period following the repeated success of Fidesz at the 2014 elections, and by the autumn the communication of the government clearly ran out of ideas. Without a competitive opposition, in October 2014 Fidesz also won at the municipality elections, but then the party's popularity started to decline.

2. The breakthrough of Jobbik

During a brief century the society of Hungary has undergone eight revolutions and regime changes. Deeply rooted social and political conflicts could not be resolved, but they have kept adding up, and so the traumas of 20th century Hungarian history have still burdened the society in the 2000s. As an impact of the constant social crises, the soft elements of the social climate favourable for the far-right have been created during the years after the transition to democracy. Indeed, these changes can clearly facilitate the increasing popularity of parties communicating messages in which they urge radical solutions.⁶ Basically two facts hindered the expansion of the nationalist-radical Jobbik: their themes being

⁵ While in 2003 the budget spent 5.85% of the GDP on the healthcare system, in 2012 this figure was only 4.78%. The GDP in 2012 failed to reach the 2007 level, it could only return to the economic performance before the global financial crisis by the second half of 2015. In: Pénzkivonás az oktatásból és az egészségügyből: megint a szegényeken csattan (Education and healthcare budget shrinks: the poor will be badly hit) http://tenytar.hu/elemez/penzkivonas_az_oktatashol_es_az_egeszsegugybol_megint_szegenyeken_csattan#.WERzWfnhC00 (last visited 21.12.2016).

⁶ G. Csepeli, A. Örkény, *A magyar nacionalizmus változó arca* in: *TÁRKI – Társadalmi riport 1996*, Andorka, R. Kolosi, T. Vukovich, György (eds.), Budapest 1996.

rendered obsolete and the similarly populist approach of Fidesz-KDNP. When Viktor Orbán gained power, his government implemented the actions originally initiated by Jobbik (increasing public safety, accountability of former governments, introduction of a stricter Criminal Code) one by one, and Fidesz gradually started to strangle the opposition party's issues.⁷

To answer the problems of Hungarian economy and democracy, after 2010 Viktor Orbán was committed to establishing his own political system, economic hinterland and influence over public discourse. The intention of the prime minister is to leave behind the political rotation which failed to ensure catching up with Europe, and to provide powerful political stability to the country, even in time of crisis, under his own leadership. This considers the West a declining way of living and cultural environment, in which political conformity and correctness veils real problems, and therefore cannot provide any answers to them. However Hungary already follows a different path where national interest enjoys primacy compared to external expectation and EU demands (as well as promises). This framework ideology gives birth to the 'notion of Hungarians who are uniquely talented, but are suppressed by the overwhelming force of foreign powers, the betrayal of the left-wing elites and the excessive profit demand of foreign investors, banks and [...] traders'⁸. The following parties are responsible for the troubles: the Left, the EU, banks (global capital) and energy service providers wanting to exploit extra profit, as well as migrants. These topics have a strong national character, as well as a bias toward alter- and anti-globalisation, and thus they occupy the territory of Jobbik.⁹ The political credo and ideology of Jobbik is extremely diverse and contradictory. The radical party is constructed of different subcultures. It is political home to such distant groups as certain esoteric and Turanist groups, Hungarian Muslims,¹⁰ as well as Western-style far-

⁷ P. Bándy, *Nyolc lépés*, "Demokrata", 5.05.2010.

⁸ P. Tölgyessy, *Válság idején teremtett mozdíthatatlanság (Created immovability during crisis)*, "TÁRKI" – Társadalmi Riport, 2014, pp. 636–652.

⁹ *Unió zászlót égetett a Jobbik (Jobbik burnt an EU-flag)*. http://index.hu/belfold/2012/01/14/unios_zaszlot_egetett_a_jobbik/ (last visited 14.01.2015).

¹⁰ Regarding Islam, Hungary has a special and unique history in Europe. A minority of the Hungarians (Magyars) settling in the Carpathian Basin during the 10th century were the followers of Islam, which was preserved as a base of royal power for centuries (Pap et al 2014). Later on also, in the periods between specific instances of assimilation, Muslim communities have numerously appeared in the territory of the country. Sometimes co-existence has severe social and economic consequences, such as during the period of Ottoman occupation in the 16–17th century. The Battle of Mohács in 1526 lead to the demise of the Kingdom of Hungary in the Middle Ages. The 150-year Turkish occupa-

right groups such as skinheads, militant groups, such as *Magyar Gárda* (Hungarian Guard) or *Betyársereg* (Army of Outlaws).¹¹ Gábor Vona, the chairman of Jobbik has repeatedly expressed between 2010 and 2013 that he considers Islam – which builds on traditions, as opposed to globalisation and liberalism – the last hope of mankind.¹² From 2015, in alignment with the majority expectation of voters, Jobbik has also switched to an anti-migrant and anti-Muslim tone, apparently giving up their previous pro-Muslim approach.

After the defeat of Jobbik at the 2014 elections, Gábor Vona drew the conclusion that radical slogans and appearances are barriers of continued expansion. Since Vona made it clear that the objective of Jobbik was governing, he launched a new direction in late 2014. They toned down the most radical topics – such as anti-Semitism, ‘gypsy crime’, anti-EU sentiment, etc. – and rhetoric. Instead, they included issues on their agenda which face general discontent from the society, such as healthcare, the wages of school teachers, the failure of transformations in the education system and corruption.

The political bombshell called the ‘entry ban scandal’ in the press exploded in October 2014, after the municipality elections. Shock waves of

tion and then the destruction of the liberation wars resulted in a changing ethnic structure in the middle part of the Carpathian Basin, which is considered the primary reasons for the decline of the country according to the mainstream explanation of Hungarian history. However, Turanism, as an ideology linked to the Hungarian far-right, emphasises family and cultural ties to Turkish peoples, as well as cultural links, and it is sympathetic toward Muslims. The most significant Turanist group of our times is organised within Jobbik, which makes it clear why party leader Gábor Vona acted sympathetically toward the Muslim world on numerous occasions.

¹¹ In the Hungarian political system, Jobbik itself is not the most radical far-right group. The far-right is manifested in small Hungarian groups, including the most significant one, Magyar Nemzeti Arcvonal (Hungarian National Front). Hungarianism was developed in the interbellum period, and it is a radical nationalist ideology. Their messages are anti-Western sentiment, anti-Semitism, anti-capitalism and anti-democracy, but they also lay emphasis on sustaining military capabilities. There is no clear boundary between the ideology and representatives of Jobbik, and Hungarianism. There are synergies between the organisations and also common elements in the ideologies. The main difference lies in the fact that Jobbik is active in the framework of the parliament and sets out its vision therein, while Hungarian groups are against the regime and do not accept the constitutional political order at all. The radicalism of Jobbik has also been significantly tamed during the last few years, as they intend to act as a force ready to govern, and they want to make the impression of a modern, conservative political power that is committed to protecting national interests.

¹² Vona Gábor about the Islam, http://www.jobbik.com/vona_g%C3%A1bor_about_islam (last visited 12.12.2016).

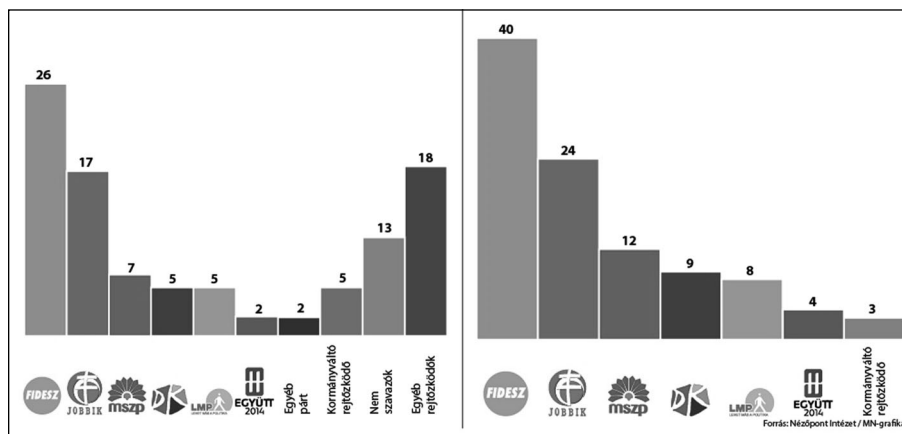
the scandal also reached the prime minister who had to comment on the matter. The US Embassy in Budapest did not provide the details of the banned persons to the Hungarian government, so the press started to speculate about American sanctions and a major corruption scandal that could have been the reason for them. On 5 November it was disclosed that one of the banned persons was Ildikó Vida, the president of the National Tax and Customs Administration who was accused of intentionally covering up tax fraud and corruption at the authority, and therefore being an accomplice. The theory of diplomatic pressure because of political reasons is also supported by the fact that a US official announced in August 2016 that the American authorities had no concrete evidence, they gathered information from the media and the internet, i.e. from public sources.¹³

Based on the analyses of the pro-government Nézőpont Intézet, the governing parties enjoyed the popular support of 32% in the entire population before the entry ban scandal, which shrank to 29% in November. Meanwhile, the popularity of Jobbik rose by 3%.¹⁴ The series of protests that had taken place in the country and foreign cities populated by Hungarians in late October and early November 2014 surely play a major role in this. On 26 October 2014, tens of thousands protested against the internet tax proposed by the government and other government policies. Because of the scandals, the popularity of Fidesz has decreased by 12% in merely a month, which is exceptional in the period after the regime change.¹⁵ MSZP was only able to benefit from the drop in the numbers of the governing party to a smaller extent, while Jobbik increased popularity more, but neither opposition party earned a permanent increase. The migrant crisis hit Hungary hard in April 2015, and it was able to stop and reverse the rapid loss of popularity.

¹³ *Új fordulat a kitiltási botrányban: megjött a válasz Amerikából (New development in the entry ban case: answer from the US)*, http://hvg.hu/gazdasag/20160928_Uj_fordulat_a_kitiltasi_botranynban_megjott_az_USA_valasza?utm_expid=1324304-9.JvgK46VJQ96PBmQcdWWPIQ.0&utm_referrer=http%3A%2F%2Fhvg.hu%2F (last visited 28.09.2016).

¹⁴ *Csökkent a Fidesz népszerűsége a kitiltási botrány óta (The popularity of Fidesz shrinks after the scandal)*, Index, http://index.hu/belfold/2014/11/10/csokkent_a_fidesz_nepszerusege_a_kitiltasi_botranyn_ota (last visited 10.11.2014).

¹⁵ *Medián: 16 százalékot esett Orbán népszerűsége egy hónap alatt, (Orbán's popularity falls 16 percent in one month)*, http://hvg.hu/itthon/201450_kiabrandulasrol_tanuskodo_partpreferenciak_ (last visited 10.12.2014).

Figure 1. December 2014: Popularity of the parties among the entire population and voters

Source: <https://mno.hu/belfold/nezopont-eros-tobbseggel-ujrazhatna-a-fideszkdnp-1266682>.

3. The Hungarian civilisation narrative and the anti-migrant fence

In the summer of 2015 Viktor Orbán reportedly said: the failed politics of Western Europe cannot protect the continent from migration, and therefore Hungary is going to protect its borders independently by *constructing a physical barrier* (a temporary barrier – fence).¹⁶ The communication of the government significantly built on the historic concepts of ‘Hungary, the Fortress of Christianity’ and the ‘Bastion of Europe’ as regards the fence and protecting the borders, as these are omnipresent in Hungarian political thinking.¹⁷

On 19 September 2015, the Hungarian premier attended the meeting of the state legislature group of the German conservative CSU party in the Banz abbey in Bavaria and argued in favour of this role: ‘because of the European Union and the Schengen Agreement the borders of Bavaria can currently be protected at the external border of the Schengen Area, which is currently the southern border of Hungary’. According to the remark of the prime minister, Hungary is currently the protector of the southern

¹⁶ Orbán Viktor: *Ha nem védjük meg a határainkat, újabb tízmilliók jönnek, és vége Európának* (If we can't protect our borders, tens of millions will come), Kossuth Rádió, 180 perc című adásában – <http://www.hirado.hu/2015/09/04/hallgassa-itt-eloben-a-miniszterelnoki-interjut/> (last visited 4.09.2015).

¹⁷ The anti-Turkish wars lasting for almost 300 years (till 1718) played a central role in the development of Hungarian identity during the Middle Ages, and Protestantism was born at the same time.

border of Europe, and therefore he is the fortress captain. Fortress captains are important parts of Hungarian historic thinking, since all Hungarians remember the heroic resistance of fortress soldiers in the 16–17th century against the Ottoman forces superior in number. They know the victorious protector of Belgrade, János Hunyadi, the men and women defending the fortress of Eger (and their captain, István Dobó) and the sacrificial sortie of Miklós Zrínyi, after holding the Szigetvár fortress till the last breath. The parallel with the struggle of the intruding Muslim 'forces' (refugees, illegal migrants) and the handful of Christian defenders (Hungarian police and army) is apparent. However combat around the border fortresses also meant suffering throughout history, it is no surprise that Viktor Orbán tried to neutralise the simile by adding that Hungary is not keen to fulfil the role, but discharges the obligation of protecting the southern border. The billboard campaign launched in mid-September also supported this, with the main message being centred around the word *protected*. 'People have decided: the country shall be protected.'

By the early autumn of 2015, discussions got a new interpretation. The messages highlighted the issues of co-existence with Muslims and the failure of multiculturalism in Europe. An extract from a book of Nobel laureate Hungarian writer Imre Kertész, published in 2014 has spread all over the internet. In the extract the author argues that based on the liberal immigration policy of Europe, Muslims spread all over, take over and destroy Europe with their own means.¹⁸

Lajos Kósa, head of Fidesz parliamentary group stated in October 2015 that Muslim culture is so radically different from European culture that integration is hopeless. This message resonated with what Gábor Vona said, i.e. that Islam was the last hope of mankind. Kósa contrasted hope with the hopelessness of integration policies, and therefore suggested that the solution underlies in stopping the migration wave, instead of co-existence. He claims that migrants are economic immigrants, who travel to Europe as especially in order to 'occupy territory' and the left in the West sees them as future voters.¹⁹ The messages of pro-government politicians and their proxies were in perfect alignment with the expectations of the majority of the society²⁰.

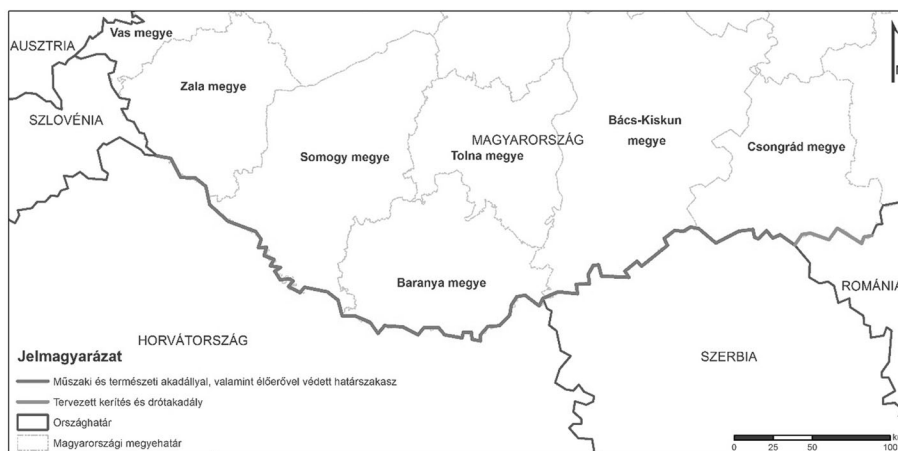
¹⁸ Numerous media outlets quoted this part of the turbulent work both in Hungary and abroad. I. Kertész, *A végső kocsma*, Budapest 2014.

¹⁹ Interview with Lajos Kósa, the head of the Fidesz parliamentary group, in the pro-government daily Magyar Idők, <http://magyaridok.hu/belfold/remenytelen-muszlim-bevandorlok-integralasa-29803/> (last visited 20.12.2016).

²⁰ While the issue of constructing the fence somewhat divided the public in the summer of 2015 (with the average of 60 to 65% of the entire population supporting it then), by

After the massacre in Paris in November 2015, the government ‘raised the stakes’ again. According to the Hungarian premier, the link between immigration and terrorism is undisputed, because all terrorists are migrants. The question remains ‘why did they come to Europe then?’ The West is at war with Islamists in the Middle East, so it is no surprise that the enemies send warriors among the arriving migrants. If we allow millions of people into Europe without identifying them, the danger of terror is going to increase. Therefore, according to him, external borders have to be secured, Schengen has to be protected, and finding alternatives to it will not work.²¹

Figure 2. The barrier at the southern border in 2015



Source: edited by Norbert Pap, Graphics: Bertalan Simon.

In addition to its practical role restricting migration, the temporary fence constructed at the southern borders of Hungary during the summer and autumn of 2015 has also appeared as a *defence and civilisation* metaphor in Hungarian and European public discourse. As a very expensive, but efficient, symbolic means, it perfectly served the purpose of intermediating

December, after the Paris terror attacks, 85% of all respondents thought that the physical barrier was a good decision. The communication of the governing party was successful which is clearly supported by the fact that the share of those who reject accepting refugees rose to 83% and almost half of the population thought that Hungary could also be affected by the terror.

²¹ *All the terrorists are migrants*, http://www.politico.eu/article/viktor-orban-interview-terrorists-migrants-eu-russia-putin-borders-schengen/?utm_source=mandiner&utm_medium=link&utm_campaign=mandiner_201512 (last visited 12.12.2016).

the important political messages of the government. However, it also involved serious contradictions, as Hungarians are also living on the other side of this border. Their national integration has long been a priority for the Hungarian right, and the construction of fence meant a complete U-turn in this policy.

The current southern border of Hungary is a product of the Trianon Peace Treaty of 1920. During the 20th century the Hungarian-Serbian, Hungarian-Croatian and Hungarian-Slovenian borders have changed on multiple occasions physically, regarding their role in linking the countries and symbolically as well, but the outline has not changed since 4 June 1920. The migration crisis of 2015 disrupted the relationships with the neighbouring countries temporarily, and the impacts, the duration of the relapse and its permanence are yet to be seen. However it is already clear that the quite complex issue of the border barrier has a negative impact on the European integration and the Hungarian national reintegration process.

The majority of the southern borders with Hungary are linked to (and divided from) territories of the (Romanian, Serbian and Croatian) nation states which the Hungarian public considers 'Balkans', i.e. belong to a different degree of civilisation. From the religious viewpoint, this civilisation difference used to mean Islam (for centuries, the Ottoman Empire was located on the other side of the border), then Orthodoxy (toward Serbia and Romania), against which Hungarians have played the role of the 'Bastion of Europe' for 'a thousand years.'

4. The anti-migrant campaign

In Central and Eastern Europe, immigration is not an everyday issue. Numerous studies support the notion that until 2015, Hungarian citizens did not consider the process particularly dangerous.²² There are no major immigrant groups in Hungary, religious citizens typically follow a Christian denomination and cultural identity is based on Judeo-Christian cultural cornerstones. After the transition to democracy, numerous studies have examined xenophobia and discrimination in Hungary. TÁRKI Institute has studied xenophobia since 1992, as well as the attitude of the Hungarian society toward foreigners and minorities. In summary, almost

²² Poverty, fear of an uncertain future, emigration all ranked higher in the polls than fear of immigration, however among other Central and Eastern European countries, the degree of xenophobia is extremely high in Hungary. This is also supported by the Eurobarometer surveys – Standard Eurobarometer 82, Autumn 2014, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb82/eb82_anx_en.pdf (last visited 20.05.2016).

half of all Hungarians, and since 2015 two-thirds of them basically express rejection, but at least prejudice toward immigrants from third countries. The higher rate of xenophobia compared to other countries in the region is partly caused by the problems of co-existence with the Romani minority, as well as the lack of information. Citizens project Western European problems to their own country, and the traditional approach that Hungarians – with their unique language, culture and history – are an island in Europe which have to protect their sovereignty also plays an important role. Among the voters of Jobbik, the rate of openly xenophobic people is above average, but according to surveys made in 2015–2016, the differences were very small based on party preferences, and therefore the migrant crisis and the anti-migrant government campaign caused rejection to become generally widespread.²³

The political discourse and communication space created in relation to the migrant crisis balanced on the verge of reality and semi-reality when it expressed and conveyed powerful messages to both the Hungarian citizens and the migrants. Initially, these caused a great divide in public opinion. The main semantic element of the discourse was the need to protect Hungary and its residents from the impacts of the migrant wave, utilising the people's need for safety, their instinctive fear and it also highlights the importance of preventive action, thus legitimising the measures taken by the acting party. Conscious of all the above, government political communication succeeded in deliberately linking refugees with immigrants, illegal migration with legal, as well as migrants and terrorism. The anti-migrant campaign was immediately launched after the attack on Paris offices of the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. The first step of the communication campaign was *raising awareness*, with three distinct elements:

1. As regards to increasing volume of migration in March-April 2015, the Hungarian citizens needed an explanation as to why hundreds of thousands of migrants with a different culture and religion cross Hungary to Western Europe. The main message was 'If you come to Hungary, you have to respect...'. The billboards and the television commercials launched in the early summer raised awareness in the Hungarian public through messages sent to migrants that the situation was severe, since the public had (and could not have had) any personal experience related to the phenomenon.

²³ B. Simonovits, B. Szalai, *Idegenellenesség és diszkrimináció a mai Magyarországon (Xenophobia and discrimination in Hungary)*, "Magyar Tudomány", 174. évf. 2013/3.

2. The government also launched a national consultation about immigration and terrorism via mail and the internet. The two expressions were thus linked.
3. The government's communication and its politicians attacked the sluggishness of EU decision-making, the permissive and liberal migration policy of Brussels, as well as its politically correct communication, and also Berlin's *Wilkommenskultur* approach based on unconditional acceptance.

By appropriating the word *protection*, the government could also support the coherence of its own communication, since it logically had the political, legal and policing means to halt the wave of migrants. The same was not available to the opposition parties, and they had also been hesitant when the crisis erupted, without adequate information to properly understand the process. Since Fidesz was very successful in constructing its communication, the opposition (including Jobbik) could only follow up on the government's communication after the summer of 2015, and failed to control it in any manner. Fidesz-KDNP gradually took over almost the entire communication space.

In the summer of 2015, political statements and messages on the failure of the migration policy quickly followed each other, in which leading politicians of the Balkans, Central and Western Europe blamed and criticised each other for the situation. Meanwhile, at the Keleti Railway Station of Budapest, thousands of refugees demand to be let to proceed to Austria without registering in Hungary. In addition to its practical role restricting migration, the fence constructed at the southern borders of Hungary during the summer and autumn of 2015 has also appeared as a defence and civilisation metaphor in Hungarian and European public discourse, involving significant contradictions at the same time.

The shocking terror attack in Paris brought to the surface the narrative already used by the government then, which claimed that there were many terrorists among the migrants who are responsible for the attacks in Western European cities. Based on this, the government has protected Hungary from terrorists, and at the same time it took the wind out of the sails of the 'far-right' Jobbik party, because it left no space for the party's opinion. Opposition powers kept their reactive stance, merely following up on the issues, without any suggested solutions, so all in all only one party was able to play an active and proactive role during the crisis, Fidesz-KDNP.

According to the surveys of TÁRKI and Závecz Research, the level of xenophobia has reached unprecedented heights. By October 2016 not

the Romani minority, but Arabs have become the most rejected ethnic group. 58% of the respondents considered themselves xenophobic, which is clearly a consequence of the anti-migrant political campaign, peaking at the referendum of 2 October 2016.²⁴

Viktor Orbán announced on 24 February 2016 that the government had decided to hold a referendum on the obligatory *relocation quota*. In 2016 Jobbik tried to take the initiative in finding solutions to the migrant crisis. The parliamentary group of Jobbik submitted a bill to amend the constitution in April 2016 on the relocation quota proposed by the EU, claiming that the party supports amending the Fundamental Law, which requires a two-thirds majority in the National Assembly. Therefore, apparently Jobbik would have consented to the proposal of Fidesz regarding discussing the amendment of the constitution, stating that the EU would have no powers relocating refugees to Hungary without the approval of the National Assembly. With this however, the anti-quota referendum proposed by Viktor Orbán (providing good communication opportunities) would have lost its meaning, and therefore the judicial committee of the National Assembly voted down the proposal.

The government basically built the referendum campaign on two narratives. The first one focused on the challenge of blaming Brussels, and thus the liberal European elite, unable to protect itself and to find real solution, for everything. The main statement in these rhetoric was 'Send a message to Brussels, to let them understand,' i.e. Hungarian shall pioneer efforts in making the leading politicians of Europe explicitly say that the previous migration policy (or the lack thereof) and multiculturalism have failed. Fidesz politicians said the following during the campaign²⁵:

'The position of the government is that instead of dangerous relocation plans, the reinforced protection of the borders is necessary.'

'The quota package of Brussels involves significant economic, cultural and safety risks.'

'What Brussels pursues is going to lead to a civilisation catastrophe.'

'There are more than 900 no-go zones in Europe.'

The other direction in the communication reinforces the civilisation narrative, aiming to support the already existing attitude towards the mostly Muslim migrants. This panel was based on the campaign element

²⁴ *Sosem látott mértékű a magyarországi idegenellenesség (Xenophobia at an all-time height)*, http://index.hu/tudomany/2016/11/17/soha_nem_latott_merteku_az_idegenellenesseg_magyarorszagon/ (last visited 17.11.2016).

²⁵ <http://nepszavazas2016.kormany.hu/> (last visited 17.11.2016).

'Did you know?' with questions on billboards, television and radio commercials that emphasised the risks of migration. Despite of these, Hungary was on the right track, since it was protecting the borders of the country and Europe.

'The government's foremost reason for rejecting the relocation quota is that it would significantly destruct the security of Europe. Events of the last few months have reassured us that there is a link between immigration and terrorism.'

'Protecting our communities, families, culture and everything that defines Hungary are all at stake.'

'If we fail to act, we will not be able to recognise Europe in a few decades.'

'In Europe, terror and violence have become a part of everyday life.'

The referendum on the quota was held on 2 October 2016. During the campaign Jobbik had a consistently anti-quota stance, like Fidesz. Still however the referendum was invalid, as less than 50% of those eligible to vote participated.²⁶ Despite of the invalidity, Fidesz has submitted its bill on the amendment of the constitution, but Jobbik did not support this, and therefore this proposal also failed. According to independent assessment, the government has suffered a defeat (although not too severe), as it failed to reach its declared objectives. It failed to reach a valid result at the referendum, and the amendment of the constitution was not approved by the National Assembly either.

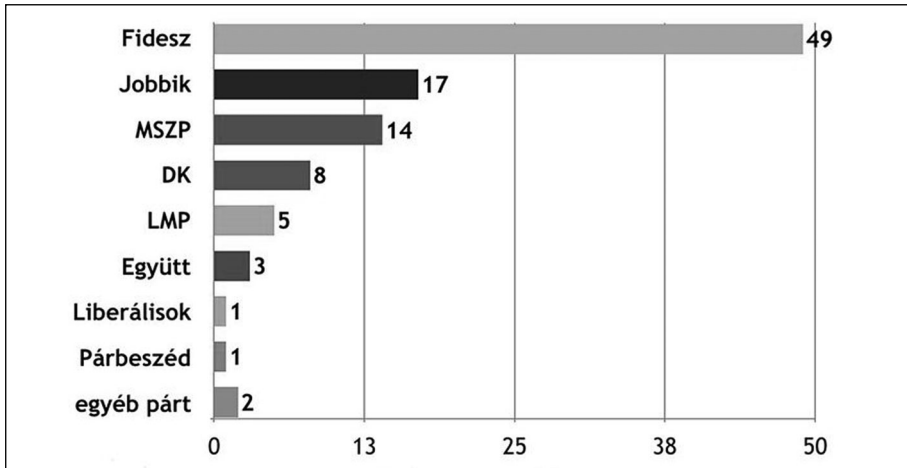
The government subscribed to the view that – although not legally – the referendum was successful in the political sense. 3.2 million voters (98% of all voters, with an opposition boycott) expressed their support for the actions recommended by the government, thus forming a 'new coalition' which means major support and strong legitimacy. Regardless of the result of the referendum, the government's politics succeeded in the sense that the opposition could not show any determined, characteristic alternative or even show the appearance of being capable of action, and these confirmed the legitimacy of the government.

Magyar Kétfarkú Kutya Párt (Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party) has earned the only significant success on the opposition side, as their campaign for invalid votes, financed by public donations was practically the

²⁶ The number of votes required for a valid referendum was 4.1 million, while in the end 3 418 387 valid votes were cast (41.32%). The share of 'no' votes was 98.36%, while 1.64% voted 'yes.' The high number of invalid votes shall also be highlighted (6.17%). http://valasztas.hu/hu/ref2016/1154/1154_0_index.html (last visited 11.12.2016).

only potent opponent of the government. Their cynical and ironic campaign messages reached voters and garnered support that exceeds the actual support for the party by far.

Figure 3. October 2016: Popularity of the parties among voters



Source: <http://www.zaveczezsresearch.hu/nepszavazas-aktivabbak-lettek-valasztopolgarok/>.

Conclusion

During the 2014–2016 period, the Hungarian government could perform adequately in managing the European migrant crisis according to the overwhelming majority of Hungarian citizens. It could remain potent and prevented the far-right Jobbik from appropriating and using the migration issue to gain significant strength. Its measures met the sympathy of the vast majority of Hungarians, which is not only because the traditional xenophobia, but also because it used the memory of anti-Turkish (anti-Muslims) fights in its communication which played a substantial role in the development of Hungarian national identity. The imagery of ‘Hungary, the Fortress of Christianity’ and the ‘Bastion of Europe’ had an impact and mobilised voters, especially the less educated and those living in rural areas. The government campaign was so successful and efficient that many of the traditionally rejected members of the Romani minority also supported it.

The government could fulfil its objectives of strengthening the support of Fidesz-KDNP and defining the themes of public discourse with topics that are favourable for the government. However, they failed in organising a legally valid referendum or making the National Assembly approve the amendment of the constitution that would have guaran-

teed efficient defence. Because of these political failures, the referendum lacked international impact, and these results were inadequate to provide efficient power for international actions. Meanwhile, European politics have also changed, the issue of the quota is no longer in the forefront and it has mostly lost its European political dimensions. In the future, the experiences of the campaign may become very significant, since the tested communication and propaganda elements will surely be applied in the upcoming campaigns by the political actors.

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