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## Positional Insecurity and the Hegemony of Radical Nationalism. Migration and Justice in the Hungarian Media

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### ABSTRACT

The political language of radical nationalism, combined with the logic of justice as non-domination, has become hegemonic in the Hungarian press. The structural position and related discursive traditions of the country form the background against which migratory processes and their interpretations are examined in this article, making the analysis revealing also in regional terms. In the Hungarian case, alternative narrative frames and justice logics are linked to migration collapse in the face of a nationalist 'freedom fight' and efforts to create and preserve an ethnically and culturally homogenous nation – and Europe.

### KEYWORDS

migration; nationalism;  
positional insecurity; justice;  
Hungary

Hungary has proved to be one of the most interesting cases with respect to political language on migration and, most importantly, on asylum seekers. The observed radicalisation of nationalist discourses has received broad scholarly attention in analyses of both media and related institutional frameworks (Rajaram 2016, Kallius *et al.* 2016, Melegh 2016). Most see Hungary as a prime example of the renunciation of a liberal humanitarian framing based on a specific set of institutions and ideals, while venturing into discourses and themes of the radical right wing.

Scholars have put forward various reasons for the rise and mainstreaming of radical nationalism. They emphasize the changes in the political economy of Eastern Europe due to globalisation, and its social consequences (abandonment and insecurity of the former working classes), the perceived lack of social cohesion, the huge share of deprived people, the strength of ethno-nationalist discourses and the conscious use of moral panic and messages of security risks in government propaganda (Feischmidt-Hervik 2015; Kalb-Halmi 2011; Messing-Ságvári 2017; Bernát-Messing 2016). While these factors do play a role in the evolving hegemony of radical nationalism, explanations are lacking for why and how the non-nationalist, liberal-humanitarian framing and its justice claims have collapsed in the current public debates.

On the basis of our analysis, it seems that one of the key explanations may be that ideas of human rights and humanitarian policies can draw only on a narrow spectrum of themes in the current public discussions, while radicalising nationalism can find links to a large number of issues. Our key question then is what discursive logic or combination thereof makes certain claims of justices dominant and what weakens

others? Equally important is to show what structural-historical factors underlie this nascent hegemony (Cox 1982; Melegh 2018). As a result, our main focus is on those logics and especially on co-occurring themes and concepts and their relationship to the overall representation of justice in the media. The objective is to extract the underlying cognitive structures guiding the development of popular understandings of justice.

To this end, we identify key blocks of interlinked themes, concepts and frames in the texts analysed that allow for certain types of political arguments and ‘policy narratives’. We will call these frames ‘narrative frames’ or just ‘narratives’, which will then be linked to justice claims and violations, defined as either calling for the use and implementation of a certain principle of justice (justice claims) or calling for not using, neglecting or rejecting it (justice violation). First, we proceed by giving a brief overview of the country’s migration processes, with a focus on the time period set for the current analysis: the momentous years from 2014 to 2017. After having described our selection strategy, we provide basic information regarding the number and characteristics of the articles. Briefly, we also describe the key narrative frames and how we classify them. We are especially interested in how narrative frames of securitisation, internal problems of the EU and certain sovereignty concerns interact with each other in the Hungarian press, and how humanitarian narratives are marginalised.

## Historical background and mental maps

The fact that target countries in the West of Hungarian emigration have not really changed in the last 60 years shows how important historical links are in the country’s migration processes and explains how they can shape mental maps of human spatial mobility (Melegh 2018). Like the rest of the region, Hungary has recently become more Eurocentric in its emigrant relationships and more loosely connected to non-European emigration destinations. The key feature is that while sending very large numbers of migrants to the West, the whole region receives migrants only from its immediate proximity; further links are rare and relatively weak.

The lack of massive contact with non-Europeans does not change, even if we look at the refugee flows between 1989 and early 2015: the cyclical inflows were initially made up of incoming Hungarians (in the early years), then Bosnians (1994-95) and Kosovars (2013-14) (18,895 and 42,775 respectively), while Afghans, Pakistanis and Iraqis played a lesser role. A very high number of non-European immigrants appeared in 2015, with a total of 177,135 registered asylum seekers mainly from Western Asia, who left immediately for Western Europe. Thus, with the exception of 2015, when hundreds of thousands of asylum-seekers crossed Hungary, the country has never faced massive immigration and has no integration experience of larger flows of incomers from outside the neighbouring region.<sup>1</sup>

Beyond the Eurocentric migratory mental map, the institutional framework for handling refugee flows established during the EU accession process was only partially

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<sup>1</sup>According to the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, between 2000 and 2017, 320,298 people came to Hungary (in 2015 alone, 177,135), out of which 9,427 received some form of (mainly temporary) protection (KSH Statat 2018).

integrated into Hungary's legal system, and could thus be easily changed. In parallel to the larger inflows, the government, in a series of legislative acts in 2015 and 2016, changed the legal status of Serbia and various other countries to safe countries and, following the examples of Bulgaria, Spain and France, built a border fence along the Hungarian-Serbian and later Hungarian-Croatian border), criminalised illegal border crossing attempts that damaged the fence, declared a 'crisis situation' due to extreme migratory pressure, and limited many of the rights of people who were seeking international protection.

At the same time, it undertook a (largely symbolic) battle against the dominance of the European Union, 'pressing for forced settlement' of immigrants, which ended in an inconclusive referendum in October 2016 and a failed attempt to change the constitution. Later, legislative acts were extended to oppose civic groups 'supporting immigration': first, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) had to declare foreign donation above a certain limit as 'supported from abroad' (2017) and, very recently, an anti-Soros package of three draft laws against supporting 'illegal migration' (2018) was introduced. This dramatic series of radical acts has increasingly been justified by the need for cultural homogeneity and the refusal to get 'mixed up', showing that nationalism has been radicalised in order to improve the country's 'self-defence'. As a result, in the long run, the inherited and recreated mental and institutional frames have had a huge influence on narratives.

### **Media representation of the 'refugee crisis' based on previous analyses**

The clash between global and national (anti-global) narratives in the Hungarian case has already been well identified. Nemesi (2015) found that the linguistic elements and symbols used by Hungarian public discourses can be interpreted as part of a conflict between essentialist, monocultural discourse and multiethnic and multicultural discourse, in which multiculturalism is interpreted as being against nation states. András Szalai and Gabriella Göbl (2015) show how various linkages can be interwoven into anti-global narratives: "initially, migration was securitized primarily as an economic threat", while later the "fear of job losses due to migration" frame was dropped for an identity-based threat; in these narratives, "migrants therefore now threaten Hungarian culture, but also European civilisation at large" (Szalai and Göbl 2015, 21).

The shift to a general civilisational level with a complex set of interlinkages has also been identified by research focusing on the media representation of Islam in the context of the migration crisis in Hungary. Zsuzsanna Vidra (2017) points to the dominance of securitisation narratives, as well as the "identitarian and civilisational dimension" of the crisis. According to her, these two main narratives combined smaller 'sub-narratives', for example linking economic threats to migration and terrorism, or presenting Europe's identity and culture (democratic, Christian, etc.) as threatened by Islam which is incapable of integration into European culture.

In another comparative study of Hungarian and Austrian media, Gábor Bernáth and Vera Messing (2016) reveal that liberal-humanitarian narratives had already disappeared in Hungary, as opposed to Austria, by 2015. The humanitarian framing was gradually deconstructed and replaced by a dominant frame, securitisation, which emphasizes the threat to national security, whether as an abstract threat (embodiment of different cultures), a health threat (epidemic), a criminal threat (violent, aggressive crowds) or a security threat (invasion of Hungary and Europe).

Drawing on existing literature, we see that Hungarian public discourses tend to see migration as a part of global vs anti-global and West vs East civilisational frames. As shown above, institutional and structural factors already gave some impetus to creating Central Europeanist anti-Western and nationalist discourses. Little explanation is given, however as to why the anti-global, anti-Western nationalist frames are so powerful. What gives them strength, and how could they become truly hegemonic? By looking at the articles of four major dailies during four specific periods, this is what we investigate in this contribution, including the aspects and the interplay of adopted or rejected norms and justice claims.

## Methodology

Four influential printed daily newspapers were chosen from both the political left and right, representing moderate as well as more radical positions. *Magyar Nemzet* (Hungarian Nation) was our choice of moderate right which, during this period, became an anti-governmental organ. *Magyar Hírlap* (Hungarian Gazette) was chosen as a more radical but still influential right-wing daily supporting the government. From the left spectrum, it was almost natural to select *Népszabadság* (People's Freedom), which was the most influential daily in Hungary until its sudden closure in 2016 – a development that forced us to choose another newspaper to replace it. We selected *Index*, which is an outlier as it is an online news portal, operational since 1999 but more influential since the mid-2000s. The daily representing a more anti-governmental leftist orientation is *Népszava* (Voice of the People).

Altogether, we selected 255 articles for analysis, as shown in Table 1. Following the guidelines used for this group of articles, we made the selection based on keywords of migration; the search was then further refined for four periods: 1) the European Parliament elections, 8 May – 4 June 2014; 2) the EU-Turkish Statement, 4 – 25 March 2016; 3) the country-specific case, the Hungarian 'quota referendum' on the 'forced settlement/settling' of migrants (not on asylum applications as initially conceived) in the country supposedly planned and enacted by the EU17 in September 2016 – 8 October 2016;<sup>2</sup> and 4) an 'eventless' week (17 – 22 July 2017), in which no specific political event influenced public discourse. As a first step after selection, with open coding, blocks of interlinked themes and concepts appearing in the articles were identified, and grouped into frames, via thematic and conceptual linkages (see also Ceccorulli and Lucarelli 2017).

<sup>2</sup>The referendum was held on 2 October 2016. It was a highly politicized event which later became an important reference in government discourses, as it asked the following question on the ballot: Do you want the European Union to be able to mandate the obligatory resettlement of non-Hungarian citizens into Hungary even without the approval of the National Assembly? The turnout was too low to make the poll valid, although the government repeatedly claimed its 'political validity' as 98% of the valid votes were 'no'.

**Table 1.** Data overview per time period and newspaper

	1) European Parliamentary elections	2) EU-Turkey Statement	3) Hungarian 'quota referendum'	4) Eventless week
<i>Magyar Hírlap</i>	6	31	17	19
<i>Népszava</i>	11	13	13	17
<i>Magyar Nemzet</i>	14	21	13	21
<i>Népszabadság</i>	13	18	13	-
<i>Index</i>	-	-	-	15
	44	83	56	72
				Total: 255

**Table 2.** Share of narratives in Hungarian newspapers, all periods, 2014-17

	Total	<i>Magyar Nemzet</i>	<i>Magyar Hírlap</i>	<i>Népszabadság</i>	<i>Népszava</i>	<i>Index</i>
Securitisation	310 26.8%	56 23.4%	139 34.8%	30 24.4%	75 22.5%	10 16.4%
Humanitarian	107 9.3%	23 9.6%	29 7.3%	19 15.4%	31 9.3%	5 8.2%
Biopolitical	99 8.6%	22 9.2%	39 9.8%	8 6.5%	28 8.4%	2 3.3%
Reflecting on public discussions	135 11.7%	31 13.0%	23 5.8%	13 10.6%	57 17.1%	11 18.0%
Political risk of nationalism	60 5.2%	15 6.3%	11 2.8%	10 8.1%	21 6.3%	3 4.9%
Evaluating EU integration	207 17.9%	48 20.1%	65 16.3%	27 22.0%	53 15.9%	14 23.0%
Westphalian sovereignty	69 6.0%	7 2.9%	33 8.3%	4 3.3%	17 5.1%	8 13.1%
Normativity	169 14.6%	37 15.5%	61 15.3%	12 9.8%	51 15.3%	8 13.1%
Total		239 100%	400 100%	123 100%	333 100%	61 100%

In our analysis, we identified eight major narrative frames that shape specific policies (Melegh *et al.* 2018). We relied on methods of critical discourse analysis, combined with the approach outlined in the Introduction to focus on the links to representations of justice in the texts (Wodak and Meyer 2001; Fairclough 2001; Glózer 2007; Boswell 2011, Boswell-Scholten 2011). It is important to note that one article can and generally does contain multiple narrative frames. The following narratives illustrate the substantial variation in the way different arguments and reasoning can be contextualized by means of linkages between themes:

- 1: **Securitisation:** migration and related processes are presented as a physical or social threat harming societies.
- 2: **Humanitarian:** migration issues and processes are embedded in a context of war and related suffering and presented as a phenomenon that might or might not require humanitarian action and a human rights-based approach.
- 3: **Biopolitical:** migration is seen primarily in a biopolitical framework, focusing on conscious demographic policies, population management, the selection and control of various 'populations'.
- 4: **Reflections on public discussions:** critical attitudes toward and distancing from the main migration discourses.
- 5: **Political risk of nationalism:** evaluations of the rise of the extreme right wing as a threat.
- 6: **Evaluations of EU integration:** a variety of subjects interpreting the nature, capacity, intentions and performance of the EU.
- 7: **Westphalian sovereignty:** interpretations of the nature, control capacity, intentions and performance of nation states, most importantly Hungary. As the

counterpart of the previous category, they revolve around the idea of a static, unaltered Westphalian type of sovereignty.

**8: Normativity:** evaluation of the political and discursive behaviour of various groups and actors as normal or abnormal.

The ‘GLOBUS approach’ to justice (Fassi and Lucarelli 2017, Eriksen 2016) has been used to classify forms of justice in the Hungarian media. Three concepts of justice were coded in the newspaper articles:

- *justice as non-domination*: refers to not being subject to any kind of control. It can be perceived on the individual level as well as on the state level, where non-domination prevents the power of another state from controlling and/or affecting the freedom of a state’s citizens (Eriksen 2016);
- *justice as impartiality*: recalls an idea of ‘equal basic rights and liberties’ and considers the exercise of free choice to be non-arbitrary and with the mutual independence of interacting parties;
- *justice as mutual recognition*: emphasizes the reciprocity and the right of each subject (individual, group or polity) to be recognised in their specific identity, ruling out the possibility of determining ‘a priori’ what is normatively right and fair (Fassi 2017).

These forms of justice are presented as being ‘violated’, or ‘claimed’ as a norm by the actors appearing in the articles.

## Narratives in the Hungarian press since 2014

Looking at all periods, we can see that certain narratives and especially combinations of narratives are very dominant in the Hungarian media.

Overall, securitisation and evaluation of EU integration are the most prevalent narratives (45 percent): this means that the Hungarian press is more interested in covering migration as related to EU decision-making and security, than as a national issue in itself. This focus is clearly in line with the attitudes of Hungarian respondents in the 2016 Eurobarometer surveys, in which migration and terrorism were regarded as top European issues, regardless of the low numbers of asylum seekers in the country (Eurobarometer 2016). Overall, the orientation toward securitisation of the European Union has been guiding policy narratives (building border fences, externalising the asylum-seeking process, launching a referendum against proposals of the European Council).

László Kövér, Speaker of the Hungarian Parliament, provided a telling example of the combination of ‘defending Christian Europe’ and ‘European democracy’ by strengthening ‘Central Europe’ during the so-called quota referendum: “Today, it seems, that the Central European identity has been renewed, and has become sharper, more vivid as compared to the European one. ... Certain people misuse migration on purpose, thus destroying European democracy, stability and culture” (Baranya 2016).

If we combine these narratives with those emphasizing control and protection of the ‘nation’ (biopolitics, Westphalian sovereignty), we see an unfolding hegemony with little thematic ‘dissidence’. The various and strongly intertwined combinations of

‘control’ narratives (e.g. EU is not protecting Hungary, it is imposing values and approaches on the country and thus harming the Hungarian authorities’ ability to control while it is really trying to defend Europe) are very important in marginalising humanitarian themes and reflective approaches, which could have been counterpoints to securitisation and control.

The dominance of control narratives as opposed to humanitarian ones does not depend on the newspapers’ political orientation. Articles related to EU level decision-making and the handling of migration in this framework (the category of EU integration) was the most prevalent in the oppositional portal *Index*. Political and biopolitical risks narratives were the least prevalent in the whole period, although the fear of population replacement is used more frequently by the right-wing than the left-wing media. Meanwhile, the reflective critique of migration discourses and the argument that “this is just a cover-up topic” was prevalent in left-wing media, especially in *Népszava* and *Index*, as a strategy to cope with the rising hegemony of the pro-government media agenda. An example of this is provided by Lajos Bokros, previous Liberal Finance Minister and head of a small party during the period of the EU-Turkey Statement:

Seeing the decline in public education, health care, the Hungarian National Bank and the transparency of public finances, it would be legitimate to speak of a crisis, but what do refugees have to do with this? ... The government’s move is simply to divert attention, and stir up an egoistic and entirely wicked hysteria. We have a crisis because the government has gone crazy (Fazekas 2016).

All in all, we can see that the so-called opposition media had no real counterposition, beyond downplaying biopolitical topics and reflecting more on media discussions. There were sporadic attempts to criticise the current economic system, wars and the government’s anti-European claims, but those subjects – mainly under the pressure of negative public opinion and the government’s massive hate campaigns – did not prove to be successful. This largely explains why the governmental side was able to lead the public discourse.

It is very important to see how the various discursive frames developed and how historical events interacted with them. In the first period analysed, the week of the EP election in 2014, neither the dominance of the security theme, nor migration as an issue was observed. The latter, when it appeared, was rather connected to emigration from Hungary to other EU member states, and was framed as a problem of EU integration and the unequal position of Central/Eastern European member states that it reproduced and reinforced. This was exemplified by various articles not only on the emigration of professionals, but also on the comments of British politician, Nigel Farage, at that time head of UKIP, saying that he wanted no Romanians living in his neighbourhood. Thus, the ‘migration panic’ was preceded by topics like intra-European inequality and the rejection of East European migrants within the EU. This strengthened previous analyses arguing that the unequal exchange within the EU and the demographic emptying of Eastern Europe is a key structural factor behind the radicalisation of nationalist discourse in Hungary (Melegh 2016 and 2018; Melegh *et al.* 2017).

The claimed “normalcy” of Hungary and Hungarian perspectives, as opposed to the “hegemonic” West “giving up its identity”, was also widely discussed. This attempt to build a counter-Western hegemony was identified as another key factor behind the



‘revolt’ of Hungary and Eastern Europe against the key Western powers of the European Union (Melegh 2016 and 2018; Melegh *et al.* 2017).

The subject of “following a Hungarian path” to be protected from the West contained several elements of biopolitical approaches, such as the idea that Hungary’s (and very importantly Europe’s) demographic problems should be solved by demographic interventions motivating the local middle class to have more children, instead of accepting immigrants. Even before the massive appearance of asylum seekers in 2015 this was highlighted in one of the Prime Minister’s speeches shortly after he was sworn in after the second consecutive electoral victory in 2014:

We want a Europe that clearly sees that a community that cannot maintain itself biologically is doomed to disappear. We do not want pro-immigration policies and we do not want masses of migrants causing tensions that cannot be handled. However, we do want to support having children and we want to stop the decrease in the population in a natural way. We want recognition of families, and we refuse the weakening of our marriage and family values, as well as the opening up and the emptying out of their concepts (*Magyar Nemzet* 2014).

This biopolitical perspective was also supported by articles focusing on ethnic Hungarians living in neighbouring countries and receiving extraterritorial Hungarian citizenship, as introduced in 2010. They are seen as a boon, as some of them have moved to Hungary to counterbalance the above mentioned population losses and thus strengthen Hungary in the global competition. Nationalist topics and arguments could then be linked to biopolitical narratives.

By the time the EU-Turkey Statement was enacted, securitisation had become the most dominant narrative, while topics related to EU integration, interestingly, lost strength. The humanitarian perspective gained some influence in this period, due to discussions of the humanitarian aspects of the refugee flows along the Balkan route and in Turkey itself. A similar humanitarian turn was observed in French and Italian newspapers (see the cases presented in this issue – D’Amato and Lavvizari 2019; Ceccorulli 2019).

In this period, the securitisation narrative covered two interrelated issues: risks related to the West Balkan migration route and possible solutions (legitimising the border fence between Hungary and Serbia; and Greek and Macedonian border control), and the security consequences of the EU-Turkish Statement. The terrorist attack in Brussels on 22 March 2016 offered an opportunity to link migration to terrorism and strengthened the emphasis on physical threats resulting from immigration. The dominance of securitisation was further boosted by the biopolitical approaches which mainly contextualised the allegedly unfavourable change in population composition brought about by so-called unwanted elements causing security risks.

This was also the period when the frame of EU integration and post-sovereignty frames incorporated the debate of resettling Syrian asylum seekers. Interestingly, the criticism of claimed EU dominance over member states received less coverage here, most probably because the acknowledged ‘positive’ and active role played by the European Union in keeping asylum seekers away was able to tame critiques. Right-wing newspapers widely quoted remarks by members of the Orbán government that the “EU finally moved toward the Hungarian position” (*Magyar Hírlap* 2017). Even

concerns such as the political risks of nationalism and the more reflective approaches moved into the background. We could also observe a slight boost in humanitarian arguments when certain helpful measures were actively undertaken outside EU territory, meaning that humanitarian steps are approved only if European territories are untouched. This inherent exclusion is thus a key engine in suppressing and isolating humanitarianism. Control and exclusion narratives come before humanitarian ones.

By October 2016, during the referendum campaign, the most visible narrative was again securitisation, clearly connected to the problems of EU level policymaking. A massive anti-EU campaign was launched by the government, claiming that setting quotas for reviewing asylum applications harms national sovereignty. Humanitarian concerns were almost completely marginalised. Once again, no counter position could be launched successfully. There was no real opposing agenda; the so-called counter-governmental media could only make an issue out of the claimed lack of objectivity of the political discussions on migration. For instance, there were articles in the still existing, left-liberal *Népszabadság* (2016), that protested against “dangerous manipulation by linking anti-Semitism and migration”. Thus they did not oppose exclusion per se, but simply pointed out another type of exclusion as being harmful. In terms of effects on concrete policy narratives, we see that this ‘silencing’ led only to calls for abstention and boycotting by the opposition instead of confronting government narratives.

Ironically the political right also used the topic of not being able to voice concerns to criticise the EU for marginalising and labelling ‘non-liberal’ answers as being abnormal. Antal Rogán, head of government communications, formulated this critique as follows: “Because they [the opposition, Western press and politicians] subordinate their statements to political correctness, this means some kind of censorship, which serves the purpose of not speaking about important things” (Pindroch 2016).

Statistically the occurrence of the different narratives in this period is in line with the overall shares, which also shows that this was the period when the most dominant narratives could be “cooked” and normalised.

During the eventless week in which no major migration event took place, securitisation and normativity narratives became less important for migration-related topics, but framing migration via humanitarian concerns was even more marginalised. Instead the reflective critique of migration discussions versus normativity gained momentum politically, with a fierce debate between (as seen by a critical media) a “barbarian”, anti-Western country (due to its approach to migration) and (as seen by the government media) the “decadent West” – the stakes being to define the “true” Europe, to be preserved. Thus, the discussion used the historically well-established narratives in an East-West civilisational discourse in which the claimed civilisational hegemony of the West was to be either strengthened or questioned (Melegh 2006).

By this time, the securitisation of migration-related issues could survive without any major migration event, and it was present in large part due to references to a growing anti-Semitic threat “caused by migration”. This framing, again, was not counterbalanced by the opposition media, which only raised a debate concerning the veiled anti-Semitism of the anti-Soros billboards put up by the government which were appearing at the time.

## The representation of justice claims and violations in the Hungarian press

Narratives provide the context in which various forms of justice claims are shaped and interlinked. They can take on a variety of forms and interlinkages, with some typical patterns. For example, justice as non-domination can be related to the fear that the European Union will take decisions that allegedly ‘impose’ quotas on Hungary, thereby ‘violating’ its ability to defend itself against asylum seekers (categorised as migrants in general) and to maintain its special culture and ethnic composition (to be mutually recognised by others), and offering grounds for not respecting human rights (violation of impartiality) and the cultural needs of immigrants (violation of mutual recognition). There are certainly such patterns and latent theories concerning ideas of justice, but we offer a somewhat different and more elementary approach. Namely, our analysis identifies how the various elements in the text coexist within the thematic fields identified above, which allows us to see what probabilities of co-occurrences are created among the various thematic fields, narrative frames and forms of justice. Before we look at how the various narratives interact with ideas of justice and, more importantly, how this interplay strengthens the marginalisation of certain ideas of justice and *vice versa*, it is important to see the overall picture and how it evolved during the analysed period.

In the Hungarian press, Eastern European states like Hungary are mainly presented as being dominated by other states and supranational organisations, most importantly the European Union, led by powerful member states. Justice claims and violations related to non-domination (claim and violation together) are thus the most prevalent forms of justice in all periods analysed. The fear revealed by this form of justice claim is closely related to Hungary’s ‘positional insecurity’, that is, its sense of being a smaller, marginal state in Europe (even though it feels ‘superior’ to all other non-Western parts of the world). Thus, the collaborative systems of refugee protection based on human and civil rights obligations are discursively identified with the West and presented as an interference undermining Hungary’s sovereignty (Melegh *et al* 2018, Melegh 2006).

This perception is expressed well in *Magyar Hírlap*, but very importantly, also in the opposition press. The following text is a good example of this generalised claim of non-domination toward the West and the previous ‘coloniser’, the Soviet Union:

The antidote to the increasingly obvious conspiracy could be the peaceful, but strong protest of the citizens in the East/Central European countries. The democratically elected leaders and prime ministers of the V4 know very well that their nations lived under colonial rule for forty years after the Second World War. They were handed over to the Soviet Union as booty, because the peace of the West was bought at our expense. Our regained liberty is a precious value, the preservation of our national autonomy of primary importance. From this point on, the sovereignty and identity of Europe also has to be defended. (Csizmadia 2016)

The pro-government media seemed very keen on this idea, leaving all other justice types relatively poorly represented, while left-wing media were somewhat more diverse in this respect. *Népszava* was the most balanced.

Claims and violations of impartiality were the second most prevalent form with their overall 26 percent share. This form, however, cannot be treated as a counter-idea to non-domination, as not just justice claims but also violations of impartiality were advocated. Thus support for the breach of such norms of impartiality could be taken

as defending non-domination. The representation of impartiality also varied across the various periods. It appeared mainly during the week of the EU-Turkey Statement, and became important again only during the so-called eventless week. Here, the humanitarian framing of this justice claim was strengthened as asylum seekers were stopped outside the European Union (thus no “threat” was perceived), and because the issue of protecting the human rights of asylum seekers (for instance *non-refoulement*) became vital in the debates.

The distribution of claims of mutual recognition was diverse over time: during the period of the EP elections and the eventless week, the need to take into account the identity and culture of the people involved was presented. By contrast, in the other periods, the reporting and even support for the violation of mutual recognition came up regularly, as a need to defend cultural hegemony.

All told, non-domination is in a hegemonic position with respect to the other forms of justice envisaged. Readers thus received a clear basic narrative of a national fight against domination by the EU, subordinating other forms of justice. This powerful linkage among the various narratives and forms of justice appearing in the press has to be discussed as it may provide some insight into why non-domination wins out over all other forms of justice and why alternative narratives were marginalised.

A glance at Table 3 shows that non-domination is the only type of justice claim with links to all narratives. Indeed, justice as impartiality is present almost only in the humanitarian narrative (4.8 percent) and hardly at all in the other ones. The idea of

**Table 3.** Share of justice claims by narrative in Hungarian media in all periods, 2014-17

	impartiality claim		impartiality violation		non-domination claim		non-domination violation		mutual recognition claim		mutual recognition violation	
<i>Securitisation</i>	9	1.6%	14	2.5%	43	7.6%	16	2.8%	20	3.5%	29	5.1%
<i>Humanitarian</i>	36	6.4%	27	4.8%	3	0.5%	3	0.5%	4	0.7%	8	1.4%
<i>Biopolitical</i>	5	0.9%	1	0.2%	8	1.4%	6	1.1%	5	0.9%	10	1.8%
<i>Reflecting on public discussions</i>	6	1.1%	5	0.9%	22	3.9%	3	0.5%	6	1.1%	3	0.5%
<i>Political risk of nationalism</i>	4	0.7%	3	0.5%	10	1.8%	1	0.2%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%
<i>Evaluating EU integration</i>	13	2.3%	9	1.6%	58	10.2%	25	4.4%	10	1.8%	7	1.2%
<i>Westphalian sovereignty</i>	1	0.2%	0	0.0%	42	7.4%	9	1.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
<i>Normativity</i>	10	1.8%	5	0.9%	32	5.7%	6	1.1%	21	3.7%	4	0.7%
Total	84	14.8%	64	11.3%	218	38.5%	69	12.2%	68	12.0%	63	11.1%
							Total:		566		100%	

**Table 4.** Share of justice claims by narratives in the Hungarian media, EP election period, 8 May – 4 June 2014.

	impartiality claim		impartiality violation		non-domination claim		non-domination violation		mutual recognition claim		mutual recognition violation	
<i>Securitisation</i>	2	1.4%	2	1.4%	7	4.8%	5	3.4%	9	6.1%	1	0.7%
<i>Humanitarian</i>	0	0.0%	1	0.7%	1	0.7%	1	0.7%	3	2.0%	1	0.7%
<i>Biopolitical</i>	1	0.7%	0	0.0%	2	1.4%	5	3.4%	5	3.4%	3	2.0%
<i>Reflecting on public discussions</i>	0	0.0%	2	1.4%	1	0.7%	3	2.0%	1	0.7%	0	0.0%
<i>Political risk of nationalism</i>	1	0.7%	0	0.0%	9	6.1%	1	0.7%	1	0.7%	0	0.0%
<i>Evaluating EU integration</i>	1	0.7%	3	2.0%	15	10.2%	5	3.4%	7	4.8%	6	4.1%
<i>Westphalian sovereignty</i>	1	0.7%	0	0.0%	8	5.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
<i>Normativity</i>	1	0.7%	2	1.4%	16	10.9%	3	2.0%	8	5.4%	3	2.0%
Total	7	4.8%	10	6.8%	59	40.1%	23	15.6%	34	23.1%	14	9.5%
							Total:		147		100%	

**Table 5.** Share of justice claims by narratives in the Hungarian media, EU-Turkish Statement period, 4 – 25 March 2016

	impartiality claim		impartiality violation		non-domination claim		non-domination violation		mutual recognition claim		mutual recognition violation	
<i>Securitisation</i>	0	0,0%	5	4,0%	11	8,7%	7	5,6%	2	1,6%	14	11,1%
<i>Humanitarian</i>	19	15,1%	22	17,5%	1	0,8%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	2	1,6%
<i>Biopolitical</i>	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	2	1,6%	1	0,8%	0	0,0%	2	1,6%
<i>Reflecting on public discussions</i>	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%
<i>Political risk of nationalism</i>	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	1	0,8%
<i>Evaluating EU integration</i>	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	8	6,3%	8	6,3%	0	0,0%	1	0,8%
<i>Westphalian sovereignty</i>	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	10	7,9%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%
<i>Normativity</i>	2	1,6%	0	0,0%	6	4,8%	1	0,8%	0	0,0%	1	0,8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>16,7%</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>21,4%</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>30,2%</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>13,5%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1,6%</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>16,7%</b>
							<b>Total:</b>		<b>126</b>		<b>100%</b>	

**Table 6.** Share of justice claims by narratives in the Hungarian media, Hungarian 'quota referendum' period, 17 September – 8 October 2016.

	impartiality claim		impartiality violation		non-domination claim		non-domination violation		mutual recognition claim		mutual recognition violation	
<i>Securitisation</i>	1	0,8%	3	2,5%	14	11,7%	4	3,3%	0	0,0%	11	9,2%
<i>Humanitarian</i>	3	2,5%	1	0,8%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	1	0,8%	5	4,2%
<i>Biopolitical</i>	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	4	3,3%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	5	4,2%
<i>Reflecting on public discussions</i>	0	0,0%	2	1,7%	5	4,2%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	2	1,7%
<i>Political risk of nationalism</i>	0	0,0%	1	0,8%	1	0,8%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	1	0,8%
<i>Evaluating EU integration</i>	2	1,7%	2	1,7%	12	10,0%	12	10,0%	1	0,8%	0	0,0%
<i>Westphalian sovereignty</i>	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	11	9,2%	9	7,5%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%
<i>Normativity</i>	0	0,0%	2	1,7%	3	2,5%	2	1,7%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5,0%</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9,2%</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>41,7%</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>22,5%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1,7%</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>20,0%</b>
							<b>Total:</b>		<b>120</b>		<b>100%</b>	

**Table 7.** Share of justice claims by narratives in the Hungarian media, 'eventless week' 17 – 22 July 2017.

	impartiality claim		impartiality violation		non-domination claim		non-domination violation		mutual recognition claim		mutual recognition violation	
<i>Securitisation</i>	6	3,5%	4	2,3%	11	6,4%	0	0,0%	9	5,2%	3	1,7%
<i>Humanitarian</i>	14	8,1%	3	1,7%	1	0,6%	2	1,2%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%
<i>Biopolitical</i>	4	2,3%	1	0,6%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%
<i>Reflecting on public discussions</i>	6	3,5%	1	0,6%	16	9,2%	0	0,0%	5	2,9%	1	0,6%
<i>Political risk of nationalism</i>	3	1,7%	2	1,2%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	1	0,6%	0	0,0%
<i>Evaluating EU integration</i>	10	5,8%	4	2,3%	23	13,3%	0	0,0%	2	1,2%	0	0,0%
<i>Westphalian sovereignty</i>	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	13	7,5%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%
<i>Normativity</i>	7	4,0%	1	0,6%	7	4,0%	0	0,0%	13	7,5%	0	0,0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>28,9%</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>9,2%</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>41,0%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1,2%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>17,3%</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2,3%</b>
							<b>Total:</b>		<b>173</b>		<b>100%</b>	

mutual recognition (and, more importantly, its violation) had an intermediate role within several narratives, mainly securitisation and biopolitics, showing that it was mainly seen in negative terms, and that there was an active delegitimisation of such claims. This strengthens the hypothesis that the strict exclusion and stigmatisation of migrants, and the negation of the right to having cultural differences served as an important tool in fighting the alleged domination of the EU – actually becoming a driver for defending, as they claimed, national-cultural integrity. Thus, there was

a hegemony in the sense that the idea of being dominated overshadowed all other forms of justice and even led to supporting their violation and *vice versa*.

Discussions about whether Hungary was representing the right or wrong ‘norms’ relating to migration also focused quite often on mutual recognition claims. Most of the time, this was taken to mean not that the perspectives of immigrants should be taken into account, but that ‘liberals’ do not accept Hungarians and their opinions as legitimate. Mutual recognition of the cultural perspectives of immigrants was not linked, as might otherwise have been rather obvious, to impartiality and human rights, clearly a loss for both this form of justice and the humanitarian narrative. Instead, the negative side of it, denial of the right to mutual recognition (often ‘requesting’ violation of it) was linked to the justice claim of non-domination mainly through topics related to security issues. A clear example of this linkage is the following ‘argument’ on how the right of mutual recognition is actually a ‘trick’ of those who ‘impose’ migration on Europeans:

The FIDESZ [governing party] politician, ... referring to a campaign film advertising migration shown on Swedish Public Television and made by liberals, argued among other things that it is outrageous that, according to certain Western opinion leaders, it is not those who come here who should accept our culture and laws but the other way round. In the meantime, they finance migrants to come over (*Magyar Hírlap* 2016).

We can observe an interesting dynamic when we look at how linkages develop over time. The relation between narratives and justice claims in the first period shows a somewhat special scenario, which might have opened up alternative developments historically. In the beginning, biopolitical narratives were not linked to the idea of non-domination, and such articles even made mutual recognition claims. Biopolitical (migration and population management) discussions focused mainly on the situation of ethnic Hungarians in neighbouring states, living especially in non-EU countries, a theme that was very important in the Hungarian national election campaign before the European Parliament elections. The co-ethnic communities living outside the Schengen zone were shown to be in need of mutual recognition in order to have their special needs (e.g. cultural proximity) taken into account. Eventually, institutionally and mentally inbuilt hierarchies and racism toward non-European groups prevented the possible extension of such claims to non-Hungarian groups (Melegh *et al.* 2018).<sup>3</sup>

The questions about normativity (whether Hungary and Hungarian political discussions are ‘normal’ or ‘abnormal’, as compared to the West) also dominated the press coverage. This controversy, together with the already ongoing debates on EU integration could have been preludes to the hegemony of non-domination. Thus, in some way, this focus on non-domination and sovereignty between 2015 and 2017 was originally coming from the narratives on normativity (where do we stand and what is our status in intra-European hierarchies) and EU integration. These narratives have always been concerned with issues of inequality, hierarchies within Europe, or being seen as unequal partners in the EU. This again shows that one factor behind the Hungarian and East

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<sup>3</sup>ESS surveys since 2002 show that, with regard to the question of whether poor non-Europeans should or should not be allowed to enter the EU, Hungary has always been among the top three European countries responding no (Messing-Ságvári 2017).

European revolt against so-called EU dictates could be the desire of the new right-wing elites to strengthen their power by reformulating the centre-left topics on inequalities.

An equally important possibility arose during the week of the EU-Turkey Statement, where the linkage between humanitarian narratives and the justice claim of impartiality (migrants' human rights) was powerful. This means that there may have been a moment when alternative narratives could have developed, engendering a shift away from the hegemonic perspective of national sovereignty. It is important to note that the majority of impartiality claims were concerned with humanitarian problems and solutions in the Balkans and outside of Europe, thus they were still subordinated to Orientalising exclusions. While the violations of impartiality present were mainly linked to Turkish authorities' and the EU's non-compliance with human rights, in some cases this linkage and narrative was also used against the Hungarian government, revealing some emerging opposition based on humanitarian perspectives.

During the period of the quota referendum in 2016, the linking of EU decision-making and securitisation with the non-domination justice claim became very visible, and even opposition papers could not find ways out of this grip. Interestingly, while in the right-wing press, the Hungarian government criticizes the EU for violating the justice of non-domination, there is little reference to this when the need to create a huge refugee camp in Libya is raised. Once again, this shows that the fight against non-domination and for mutual recognition is only valid for 'European' Hungarians and East Europeans, and not for non-Europeans and thus it is linked to perceived global hierarchies.

In the discussions on securitisation, there is a strong emphasis on mutual recognition, the violation of which is extensively demanded in order to protect Europe, seen as the homogenous home of a certain civilisation. The negative image of migrants presented as an uncontrolled mass and a source of threat – in contrast to other migrants (co-ethnic Hungarians or immigrants with commercially bought residency bonds) – is strongly represented, while there is hardly any critique of this simplified image and only in some oppositional articles. The dichotomy of 'us' vs 'them' is sharpened in the governmental media in order to discredit any form of mutual recognition, apparent in EU policy discussions. The dominance of perspectives focusing on national sovereignty and its defence, biopolitics and securitisation is not counter-balanced by any other narrative entailing a complex set of justice claims. The lack of any alternative narratives besides some reflective moves ("this is not the right type of discussion") is obvious.

The eventless week confirms that the hegemony of nationalist narratives is strong and consolidated, meaning there is no need for migration as a topic to spur these cognitive structures anymore. The nationalist counter-hegemony has become dominant and migration has most probably been the lynchpin allowing the various narratives to be combined into one huge block. Seeing this from the angle of forms of global justice, as in the previous period, non-domination (both claims and violations) was the form of justice that allied itself with the widest array of narratives. Less often, violation of the impartiality claim also had multiple links, but this could not counterbalance the dominant linkages. Mutual recognition and, most importantly, its violation, were mainly presented in securitisation, humanitarian and biopolitical narratives.

## Concluding remarks: positional insecurity and justice in Hungary

The foregoing shows that the focus of discussions on migration has been framed by a narrative on defending national sovereignty with Hungary as a somewhat subordinated actor in opposition to the European Union, and thus the rejection of non-European asylum seekers in the name of the new/old Europe. This has not only produced a hegemonic block of narratives – even in the oppositional media – but also incorporated issues of demographic development and control, the securitisation of the European Union and, transferring this discussion into realms of defending a claimed cultural, religious and civilisational homogeneity, prepared the ground for a complex right-wing authoritarian turn. These narratives have also found and dominated links toward justice claims, mainly in relation to the defence of national sovereignty and the fight against domination and, in a negative way, opposition to human rights and the cultural recognition of ‘other’ cultures, which has become an engine of change in public discourses.

In a way, Hungarian public discussions were built on a fabricated anger against certain forms of global justice in the name of a fight for non-domination, seizing on those principles to ask why migrants can ask for mutual recognition when it is actually the local East European population who should be receiving this from “migrant loving”, “deluded” Westerners.

With the exception of a few minor opportunities for alternatives to develop in 2014 and during the EU-Turkey Statement, the hate and/or defence campaign in this tragicomical farce was not counterbalanced by another any alternative narrative block able to combine diverse justice claims and narratives in a complex manner. Most importantly, humanitarian perspectives, already marginal at the beginning of the periods observed, were further weakened after the EU-Turkey Statement, with few possibilities of strengthening them beyond some sporadic justice claims of impartiality and human rights. The humanitarian narrative thus became suppressed by the suffocating hegemony of the fight against Western domination, which could even justify violations of a wide array of justices.

Crucially, we found little difference in the narratives of the so-called oppositional media. They either tried simply to weaken the strength of the government narrative by counterbalancing it with some additional stress on humanitarian concerns and the risks of radical nationalism or launched campaigns against the ‘abnormal’ (that is, non-European) government, without really proposing any alternative way to handle migration (an opposing policy narrative) or suggesting other substantive changes with the aim of managing migration more effectively.

Beyond the historically evolving mental maps, linked to longer-term migratory scenarios as crucial structural factors, we can also observe a familiar mechanism: when territorial boundaries become uncertain (and people crossing borders, often in an uncontrolled way, definitely create such a situation) identity falters and community becomes insecure. An immediate reaction in keeping with a Westphalian logic is to strengthen control, limiting contingencies and hazards, especially toward people seen as culturally inferior. This proved to be even stronger in the case of Hungary, which imagines itself in some kind of in-between position, leading to its positional insecurity.



In the Hungarian press, the migration crisis played a role in consolidating the powerful merging of narratives with justice claims of non-domination – a key factor in the nationalist tide in Hungary. The discursive foundation behind the fear of being dominated had already been laid by 2014, through such local structural factors and related perceptions as intra-EU inequality and population loss due to large-scale emigration from Eastern Europe. Thus, the perceived crisis did not create, it just radicalised the sense of being ‘suppressed’ by the West and the fear of a too open, market-driven society and the consequent unequal population and cultural exchanges with other regions, most importantly the West.

The so-called normativity narratives (being considered normal or abnormal in Western eyes) also exacerbated the sense of positional insecurity within imagined hierarchies. This provided grounds for reclaiming the normalcy of Hungary and Hungarian perspectives as opposed to the West, creating a sense of ‘emancipation’ as a key factor behind the revolt in Hungary and Eastern Europe against their fellow EU partners. The migration wave of 2015 combined a very powerful amalgam of the EU integration narrative with others, such as securitisation and the biopolitical, under the umbrella of non-domination as a common justice claim. This shows how a nationalist radicalisation process was activated and, in a certain way, had a moment of ‘creativity’, finding new links to a wide range of issues in the overall period analysed. Alone, none of the narratives could have achieved this hegemony. Yet, seeing the failure of possible alternatives and the collapse of the humanitarian block, it seems that inbuilt hierarchies of self-perception as a nation and the cultural distancing with respect to different migrant groups within a competitive scenario acted as factors leading to a perverse game of fighting for emancipation by denying such possibilities to others.

Seeing the outcome, it seems that we need to take a closer look at the structural conditions and their representation, as well as the chances ‘lost’ or possible alternatives that could have emerged in a debate between liberal-humanitarian political groups and the nationalist actors. The first one was when the debate on promoting a special status for co-ethnics living outside Hungary was not directed also at possibly extending solidarity beyond the country’s immediate ethnic borders, especially given the population losses due to unequal development and wage hierarchies. The second one was during the EU-Turkey Statement period, when humanitarian perspectives could have mobilised impartiality type justice claims. The EU’s ‘activity’ and concrete steps made it possible to see clearly the problems of mobile individuals and their rights, albeit with inbuilt racist exclusions.

It seems that in Eastern Europe, due to its special structural position in becoming a labour reservoir for the richer parts of Europe, the related, historically inherited and evolving sensitivities and mental maps will continue to feed nationalism and anti-immigrant policy narratives, if new narratives cannot be found to act as magnets in reorganising the current cognitive structures.

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