

Fear of the Other as Electoral Strategies in Italy and Hungary

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Abstract

European politics has recently witnessed an increasing trend towards securitisation of migration. There are various aspects of the issue, however, this study specifically concentrates on how anti-immigration political parties construct fear of the Other – namely, asylum seekers, refugees and/or migrants – as part of their electoral strategy to gain more support in European elections. Drawing upon the premises and strategies of critical discourse analysis, this study analyses anti-immigration discourses delivered particularly by the leaders of League in Italy and Fidesz-KNDP in Hungary during the electioneering period of the 2019 European Parliament elections. It uses online data from 1 January 2019 to 31 May 2019, and mainly argues that the parties in question discursively construct the fear of the Other in the public discourse and public mind as a means to achieve success in elections. By doing so, this study bridges a gap in the literature by revealing which type of threat is more dominant in the discourses of the parties in question.

Keywords: European politics, League, Fidesz-KNDP, anti-immigration, critical discourse analysis

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Introduction

Migration is one of the hot topics of European politics in the 21st century, and the politicians who are expected to solve the issue are not always willing to do so. Contrary to expectations, in order to gain more votes in the elections, some political parties strive to securitise migration in the public discourse and mind by spreading the fear of the Other, i.e., migrants, asylum seekers and/or refugees in this study. In the 2019 European Parliament (EP) elections, these anti-immigration political parties got 122 of the 751 seats, compared to 89 of 751 seats in the 2014 European elections (See Table 1). In comparison to previous elections, Alternative for Germany, League, Law and Justice, and Sweden Democrats considerably increased their votes and seats whereas Freedom Party of Austria, New Flemish Alliance, the Finns Party, National Rally, and Fidesz-KNDP remained stable in the 2019 EP elections. While Freedom and Direct Democracy, Estonian Conservative People's Party, Greek Solution, People's Party Our Slovakia, and Vox were represented in the EP for the first time as a result of the 2019 European elections, Danish People's Party, Jobbik, and Freedom Party were unable to repeat the success of the previous elections.

Table 1. Anti-Immigration Parties in the EP as a Result of the 2014 and/or 2019 Elections

Country	Party	2014		2019		Political Group
		Seats	%	Seats	%	
Austria	Freedom Party of Austria	4	19.72	3	17.20	NI, ID
Belgium	New Flemish Alliance	4	16.79	3	13.73	ECR, ECR
Czechia	Freedom and Direct Democracy	-	-	2	9.14	ID
Denmark	Danish People's Party	4	26.60	1	10.76	ECR, ID
Estonia	Estonian Conservative People's Party	-	-	1	12.70	ID
Finland	The Finns Party	2	12.90	2	13.80	ECR, ID
France	National Rally	23	24.86	22	23.34	NI, ID
Germany	Alternative for Germany	7	7.10	11	11.00	ECR, ID
Greece	Greek Solution	-	-	1	4.18	ECR
Hungary	Fidesz-KNDP	12	51.48	13	52.56	EPP, EPP
Hungary	Jobbik	3	14.67	1	6.34	NI, NI
Italy	League	5	6.15	28	34.26	NI, ID
Italy	Fratelli d'Italia	-	-	5	6.44	ECR
Netherlands	Freedom Party	4	13.32	0	3.53	NI, -
Poland	Law and Justice	19	31.78	26	45.38	ECR
Slovakia	People's Party Our Slovakia	-	-	2	12.07	NI
Spain	Vox	-	-	3	6.28	ECR
Sweden	Sweden Democrats	2	9.67	3	15.34	EFDD, ECR

Source: Author's own elaboration based on information provided by the EP (n.d.).

In line with the scope of this study, it should also be noted that Fidesz-KNDP has relatively maintained its power in the EP with 11 seats as a result of the 2024 EP elections (European Parliament n.d.). On the other hand, Lega Salvini Premier, informal successor of League, gained only 8 seats by losing its advantage to the emerging anti-immigration party of Italy, i.e. *Fratelli d'Italia*, which increased its seats from 5 to 24 in the elections. These results mean that the anti-immigration trend still continues in a similar way in these two countries although there may be some differences in political discourse due to Ukrainian refugees resulting from the Russian aggression in Ukraine. In this context, Sipahioğlu (2023) argues that the European Union (EU) countries do not offer Syrian refugees the same rights as Ukrainian refugees, emphasising that refugees are labelled and subjected to discrimination based on their race and ethnicity. It reminds us that securitisation may involve dimensions beyond the traditional approach (Küçük 2021; Kösen and Gezer 2025).

In Italy and Hungary, the securitisation of migration has increased significantly, especially after the mass migration to Europe in 2015. This resulted in the emergence of

new studies on relevant countries in the context of securitisation in the migration literature. In the Italian case, there are some studies on the issue within various frameworks (Castelli Gattinara 2017; Geddes and Pettrachin 2020; Ceccorulli 2024). As for Hungary, in a recent study, Stivas (2023) reveals the securitisation audience of Fidesz-KNDP and its role in the securitisation process. Futák-Campbell (2022) deals with the issue within the framework of national referendum in Hungary, covering the discourses between May 2015 and October 2016. Trauner and Stutz (2021) focus on Fidesz-KNDP's anti-immigration agenda aimed at controlling the EU's migration policies and politics. However, this study mainly differs from the existing literature in that it examines the discourses delivered just before the 2019 European elections, so directly affecting the election results. Moreover, though these political parties' anti-immigration stance is evident as shown in the literature, the number of studies that deal with answering the question of how they discursively securitise migration is limited. Last but not least, this study fills the gap in the literature by revealing what kind of threat is more dominant in the discourses of the parties in question.

The factors contributing to the recent electoral success and growing political influence of anti-immigration parties have been largely discussed from various aspects in the literature (Harmel and Robertson 1985; Ruzza and Schmidtke 1993; Widfeldt 2000; Golder 2003; Heinisch 2003; Coffé 2005; Arzheimer and Carter 2006; Halikiopoulou and Vlandas 2016; Stockemer 2017). Some believe that one of the salient reasons for political success is having a charismatic leader (Pedahzur and Brichta 2002; Poguntke and Webb 2005; McAllister 2007; van der Brug and Mughan 2007) while others think that it is mostly related to the media coverage of these parties (Statham 1996; Ellinas 2007). The protest votes against failed mainstream political parties are also claimed to be the main reason for success in elections (Rydgren 2004; Meguid 2005; Bale et al. 2010).

However, this study centres its attention on how anti-immigration political parties construct fear of the Other as a key factor in their significant electoral achievements. In simpler terms, the research question can be framed as follows: How do these anti-immigration political parties discursively construct the fear of the Other for more votes in European elections? The main argument of the study is that the parties in question construct the fear of the Other through discourses in the public discourse and mind, with the aim of achieving electoral success. In pursuit of this objective, the study examines and analyses the discourses of League and Fidesz-KNDP, which were delivered and covered in online newspapers and an official website throughout the campaign for the 2019 European elections. This analysis is conducted through the application of critical discourse analysis (CDA) strategies, as explained in the forthcoming section.

Theoretical and Methodological Framework

The study primarily relies on van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach of CDA. Fairclough (1992: 64) defines discourse as more than just a way to represent the world; it is a means of signifying the world, creating meaning, and shaping our understanding of the world. As for

the relationship between discourse and power, “discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized” (Foucault 1981: 52–53). Similarly, “power is control of action, which requires control of personal and social cognitions, which presupposes control of public discourse” (van Dijk 1997a: 22). In this context, the political texts and talks of politicians serve a purpose beyond being only a form of political discourse; they actively shape the public agenda and, consequently, influence public opinion (van Dijk 1997c: 39–40). Put differently, “who controls public discourse, at least partly controls the public mind”, and this is why examining control over discourse through discourse analysis inherently constitutes a type of political analysis (van Dijk 1997b: 44). To provide further clarity, “CDA is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (van Dijk 2001: 352).

For the analysis, this study employs the subsequent overall and specific strategies of CDA: positive Self-presentation, negative Other-presentation, fairness, top-down transfer, justification; and, implications, presuppositions, denomination, predication, reversal, numbers game (van Dijk 1997b: 36–55; 2011: 396–398). While the group refers to its own members with positive attributes such as hospitality, tolerance, equality and democracy, it adopts a negative stance towards the Other, or the out-group, depicting them as opponent, competitor, enemy, illegal, economic, and hence, fake refugee or foreigner (van Dijk 1997b: 36–37; 2011: 397). Fairness implies that the group members prioritise values such as humanism, tolerance, and equality, but the demands of political reality occasionally compel them to make difficult choices; that is, they are “firm but fair”. Whereas top-down transfer is actually employed to describe in-group members’ holding some poor or average citizens responsible for the prejudice, discrimination or racism against migrants or minorities, this study handles all such references to these citizens within the strategy of top-down transfer. Justification is a sort of excuse based on factors like the global situation, agreements, financial challenges, and the volume of asylum seekers or refugees. Implications concern statements that convey negative connotations about the Other whereas presuppositions involve negative propositions that are not confirmed to be true. Denomination involves the act of labelling out-group members as strangers, adversaries, foes, and so on, while predication encompasses the assignment of unfavourable qualities to these people. Reversal implies that not “we” but “they” do this or that. Finally, numbers game refers to the manipulation of numerical data concerning the Other.

Data Collection and Categorisation

The unit analysis of this study are two political parties of two countries: League of Italy and Fidesz-KNDP of Hungary. Both Italy and Hungary are prominent transit countries, neighbouring Austria which is not only a destination for refugees and migrants but also

serves as another transit country for some who are eager to reach Germany or other Northern European countries. Apart from being leading anti-immigration political parties in their countries as a result of the 2019 elections, League and Fidesz-KNDP are chosen as the case of the study mainly because of their geographical differences, established political backgrounds and positions as a part of the government or as the government itself. Furthermore, both political party leaders use similar anti-immigration discourses to construct the fear of the Other despite differences in their emphasis. This is probably why they merged into the anti-immigration political group of the EP, Patriots for Europe (PfE), following the 2024 elections.

The study used online data from 1 January 2019 to 31 May 2019 covering five-month campaign period for the 2019 European elections. As given in Table 2, it made use of two prominent online newspapers for Italy. As for Hungary, taking into consideration the fact that Victor Orbán of Fidesz-KNDP is also the Prime Minister of the country, the study got data from the official website of Prime Ministry of Hungary as well as pro-government Hungary Today in English (Table 2). The keywords such as “migration”, “migrant”, “asylum”, “asylum seeker” and “refugee” in original language and in English as well as the names of the relevant political figures were used to find the proper discourses for the study. The discourses were translated from the original language to English literally as much as possible, if required, and the most relevant ones were analysed critically in terms of construction of the fear of the Other as an electoral strategy in European politics.

Table 2. Political Orientation of the Online Newspapers

	Political Orientation
Italy	
<i>La Repubblica</i>	Left
<i>Corriere Della Sera</i>	Right
Hungary	
<i>Hungary Today</i>	Right
<i>Prime Ministry of Hungary</i>	—

The excerpts in the study are categorised within the discourse topics of immigration as a security threat, an economic threat or a cultural threat depending on their main emphasis. It should also be noted that there is not always a clear line between the excerpts in terms of the kind of threat. Therefore, an excerpt categorised within one of the discourse topics of immigration can also involve some elements regarding the other. In the study, the security threat mainly refers to the so-called threat of immigration that brings terrorism, crime, rape, etc. to the relevant countries and Europe whereas the economic threat is supposed to threaten their welfare and the cultural threat is the assumption of anti-immigration politicians that migration is against Christian identity and European culture.

Analysis and Discussion

Italy: “There are Potential Terrorists, Indeed Certain Terrorists”

In Italy, the Other is mostly the people fleeing the chaos in Libya or the ones usually coming from other parts of Africa and trying to arrive in Italy via Libya. And, Matteo Salvini, leader of League and then Minister of Interior as well as Deputy Prime Minister of Italy, is seen delivering delegitimising discourses against the non-governmental organisations (NGOs), some mayors and even judges when they act or even intend to act in favour of these people. He does so by correlating the deaths “again” in the Mediterranean Sea with the return of the “NGO ships” to the sea (Ziniti 2019f), referring to the “left mayor” not dealing with the problems in his own city but thinking of “disobeying immigrants” (Sarzanini 2019), telling the judges to “stand as a candidate with the left” if they want to “play politics” and “help immigrants” (Giusberti 2019), respectively. In addition to some disagreements with other ministers of the coalition government, it is also possible to see Salvini making a mockery of some migration-related initiatives suggested by other political parties as follows: “The Democratic Party in the Piedmont Region offers yoga lessons to immigrants “affected” by the Security Decree. Oh yes, these are the priorities.” (Giacosa 2019). Within another context concerning migration again, Salvini looks down on the issue like this: “Women and children refuse to get off the ship. We just have to wish you a good trip to Berlin” (Ziniti 2019d).

The research also reveals that Salvini does not avoid delivering threatening discourses such as “[t]hose who make mistakes pay” (Ruta and Ziniti 2019), “those nostalgic for the open ports present in Parliament” (Ziniti 2019e) or “[t]he mayors who refuse to apply the security decree will respond personally, legally, criminally and civilly” (Sarzanini 2019). Sometimes, his discourses go much further and can be categorised as much more than just anti-immigration. They also contain overtones of xenophobia or hate speech involving implied racism as seen in this following discourse delivered for a dinghy carrying people and adrift with an engine out of order in the Mediterranean: “I don’t want to see it even with a telescope” (Ziniti 2019c).

The following excerpts are analysed to understand and expose such discourses that often result in production and reproduction of anti-immigration language in the public discourse and mind, and eventually contribute to or increase the social inequality in society. In this framework, the excerpts are discursively analysed in terms of portrayal of immigration as a security threat, an economic threat and a cultural threat, respectively.

“It is clear that there are potential terrorists, indeed certain terrorists, ready to leave in the direction of Italy, so even more those who say ‘open ports’ at a time like this do harm to Italy and Europe” (Matteo Salvini, League, 18 April 2019 – Ziniti 2019b).

Most probably because Salvini delivered these discourses as Minister of Interior, most of them can be categorised within the context of portrayal of immigration as a security

threat rather than an economic or cultural one. On the other hand, this research ascertains that the excerpt above is not rare in Salvini's anti-immigration language. The denominations of "potential terrorists" and "certain terrorists" in this excerpt are used to marginalise and problematise immigration. And, the emphasis on "in the direction of Italy" is part of his efforts to reproduce the fear of the Other in the public mind as well as to justify his anti-immigration discourses and acts as Minister of Interior. With these words, Salvini implies and presupposes that these people, who are actually victims of "unimaginable horrors" according to a report of Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR),¹ mostly do not flee the chaos in Libya but try to arrive in "Italy" or "Europe" in order to carry out terrorist acts. In the excerpt, he also endeavours to discredit "those who say 'open ports'", i.e., mostly the NGOs struggling to rescue migrants in waters, "do harm to Italy and Europe". In other words, they damage the "good order and security of the Italian State" (Ziniti and Ruta 2019). Additionally, Salvini often resorts to negative connotations with a strong language when it comes to migration, which can be exemplified as follows: "zero tolerance for illegal immigrants and criminals", "problems, waste and illegality" (*La Repubblica* 2019a) or "imminent danger" (Ziniti 2019a). It is also possible to see him using the strategy of numbers game accompanied with another denomination in a similar context like this: "hundreds of Islamic terrorists" (Ziniti 2019a). Furthermore, Salvini mostly makes use of his position as Minister of Interior to justify his anti-immigration discourses in the framework of a security threat, which can easily be seen in such discourses as follows: "I protect public order in this country and I take the honour and the burdens of it, so anyone who enters Italy must have my permission" (Ziniti 2019e) or "as long as I am the Minister the ports in Italy remain closed" (*La Repubblica* 2019b).

"Let's rewind the film of a year: last year Gentiloni in government, small, indebted, invaded Italy. It seems as if a century has passed, not just a year. Now we have started to change things, starting with pensions. Now let's go ahead with self-defence, not to be more evil, but because property is sacred" (Matteo Salvini, League, 1 January 2019 – *Corriere Della Sera* 2019).

Compared to the anti-immigration discourses categorised under the topic of security threat and examined above, Salvini delivers fewer discourses that can be considered as a portrayal of immigration as an economic threat. In the excerpt above, not exceptionally, he does so by discrediting not only migrants but also the previous government. To this end, Salvini uses the words "small, indebted, invaded Italy", implying that Italy was invaded by migrants during the Gentiloni government but not anymore, which also involves the specific strategies of denomination and predication. At this point, he gives reference to "pensions" as a means of top-down transfer strategy, and similarly in another speech, he announces that "[w]e will use the money saved [from returning migrants] to help the Italians or anyone in need"

1 "Migrants and refugees suffer unimaginable horrors during their transit through and stay in Libya. From the moment they step onto Libyan soil, they become vulnerable to unlawful killings, torture and other ill-treatment, arbitrary detention and unlawful deprivation of liberty, rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence, slavery and forced labour, extortion and exploitation by both State and non-State actors" (OHCHR 2018: 4).

(Bisso 2019). The word “self-defence” and the discourse “[w]e have regained our borders on migrants” (*Corriere Della Sera* 2019) are followed by the discourse “because property is sacred” and the words “[m]ore safety, more work” (*Corriere Della Sera* 2019), respectively, which reveals that security and economic elements intertwine with each other in these anti-immigration discourses. While trying to justify his anti-immigration discourses in the eyes of public opinion in this manner, he also aspires to show it as a “firm but fair” act by saying “not to be more evil, but”.

Salvini emphasises the economic aspect of the issue on other occasions as well through some overall and specific strategies to marginalise immigration. Within a positive Self-presentation context, he asserts that “[i]n Italy we have already welcomed and spent too much” (Ziniti 2019g). In other words, immigration is an economic threat or burden against welcoming Italy, which largely contributes to convince the Italian voters who have experienced an economic crisis for a long time. In another speech, he goes further: “The Italian ports are closed, we have already welcomed too many fake refugees, we have already enriched too many smugglers! Left-wing mayors should think of their citizens in distress, not illegal immigrants” (Serafini 2019). The denomination of “fake refugee” is a common strategy among anti-immigration political party members to discredit the people who flee the wars, conflicts or persecutions in their countries, and whose rights are protected under international treaties.² In the relevant quotation, this denomination as well as references to “smugglers” and “[our] citizens in distress” as a top-down transfer strategy are used to justify closing the ports against these internationally protected people. Furthermore, the emphasis on “[our] citizens in distress, not illegal migrants” can be accepted as the use of the reversal strategy; that is, “not illegal migrants” but “[our] citizens in distress” actually need help. Lastly, the words “too many” are a part of the strategy of numbers game resorted by Salvini to problematise migration in the public discourse and public mind. According to British historian Donald Sassoon, this is not more than “vote hunting” and migrants cannot be seen as the source or reason of economic crisis: “It is necessary to understand and make it clear that even if there were a massive drop in emigration to Europe, the economic crisis would still exist and that its reasons must be sought elsewhere” (De Luca 2019).

“An important mission to support Italian companies, for a different European future that controls borders, protects security, relaunches work, family and the Christian identity of our continent” (Matteo Salvini, League, 2 May 2019 – Lopapa 2019).

Though the excerpt above is chosen for analysis within the context of portrayal of immigration as a cultural threat, it also includes some clear elements regarding security and economy. In other words, for Salvini, migration is not only a cultural threat but also a threat in terms of security and economy against Italy in particular and Europe in general as

2 Such people are called “refugee”, which is a status protected under the *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees* (UNHCR 2010).

detailed above. He implies that they should control “borders” against “migrants” (*Corriere Della Sera* 2019), protect “security” against “Islamic terrorists” (Ziniti 2019a), and relaunch “work” despite “fake refugees” (Serafini 2019). Last but not least, Salvini tries to convince the potential voters on the eve of European elections on that Europe should take these steps for the sake of “family and the Christian identity of our continent” against the threat of these “migrants”, “Islamic terrorists” and “fake refugees”. In another discourse delivered by Gianantonio Da Re, member of League and elected for the EP in 2019, League’s anti-immigration stance is much more explicit, given as follows: “We will build barriers, we will not allow immigrants to access the citizenship income. We are for ‘Italians first’, for everything.” (Sarzanini 2019).

Salvini’s campaign technique especially on migration is described with these words: “Identify the enemy on duty, point him to the mockery of social media, unleash the insult” (Vitale 2019). Considering the outstanding results of the 2019 EP elections, this technique seems to have mostly worked for Salvini and his political party, League. However, this is much more than an increase in votes of the party during these elections. Such anti-immigration discourses easily become part of the daily language of public opinion particularly through social media, sometimes going so far as denominating intellectuals in favour of immigration as “the parasites of society” (Vitale 2019). And thus, xenophobia, discrimination and anti-immigration are normalised or taken for granted in the society. That is, these politicians achieve to make use of the fear of the Other for their own electoral goals, mostly far from universal values, by controlling the public discourse, and hence, public mind.

Hungary: “We Should Preserve Our Christian Culture”

Who is the Other in Hungary? Considering the excerpts examined and analysed for this research paper, from the perspective of Hungarian government, Fidesz-KNDP, the main Other is mostly migrants of Islamic origin who are assumed to threaten Hungarian security, economy, and culture in various ways. Orbán, as the leader of the party and government, also strives to marginalise or discredit some other individuals, groups, institutions and even agreements in the eyes of the public opinion in order to strengthen his political party’s anti-immigration position during election campaigns. These can be given as follows: George Soros, some EU bureaucrats such as Jean-Claude Juncker, Frans Timmermans and Manfred Weber, the EU institutions including the EP, Commission and sometimes Council as well as European People’s Party (EPP) and some left-wing political groups in the EP, some other institutions such as the Central European University and Academy of Sciences, Jobbik,³ other opposition political parties and civil societies, sometimes Hungarian Gypsies, and also the UN Global Migration Compact. Orbán and his government members often refer to these individuals, groups or institutions

³ Jobbik, another anti-immigration political party in Hungary, changed its name to Jobbik-Conservatives in 2023, announcing that “conservative politics must be redefined” (Gábor 2023). Unlike Eurosceptic Fidesz-KNDP’s growing anti-immigration, pro-European Jobbik seems to have recently become moderate on migration to some extent (Borbáth and Gessler 2023).

using direct or indirect negative connotations during their public speeches with an effort to control the public mind in terms of portrayal of immigration as a threat (Prime Ministry of Hungary 2019a).

Moreover, on almost every occasion, Orbán persistently tries to keep migration on the agenda to feed the fear of the Other in people's minds by emphasising that migration will "clearly and inescapably be the main issue in the upcoming European election", and "transform the whole of European politics from the foundations up" (Prime Ministry of Hungary 2019c). In other words of Orbán, "[a] seven-point action plan with which they seek to transform the whole of Europe into an immigrant continent has already been completed in Brussels, and is ready to be deployed" (Prime Ministry of Hungary 2019a). Lastly, for Orbán, migration "reveals all the problems of Europe today" such as identity crisis, crisis of political leadership, demographic problems, declining competitiveness, and the antagonism between Western and Central Europe (Prime Ministry of Hungary 2019b).

As also seen in the previous country case, the first excerpt deals with the portrayal of immigration as a security threat, and then, is followed by the ones analysed in the context of migration as an economic and a cultural threat, respectively.

"Migration boosts crime – in particular, crimes against women – and spreads the disease of terrorism among us. But we must not get bogged down in our fears. We must see beyond our fears. We must understand that the European peoples have come to a historic crossroads" (Victor Orbán, Fidesz-KNDP, 19 February 2019 – *Prime Ministry of Hungary* 2019a).

In the excerpt above, as in most of them in this paper, Orbán strives to strengthen his position as a political actor and the leader of the Hungarian ruling party, Fidesz-KNDP, in the public discourse and public mind at the level of not only Hungary but also Europe. To note, Orbán also does not avoid revealing his desire and "goal for anti-immigration forces to be in the majority in every institution within the European Union's institutional system" (Prime Ministry of Hungary 2019c), and for him, "[t]he EU is not the aim for Hungarians, only a means" (Hungary Today 2019d). To this end, he resorts to construct, and then, make use of the fear of the Other as an electoral strategy through his anti-immigration discourses in various political platforms. This excerpt is one of them, and can be categorised within the discourse topic of security threat. To consider migration as the source of "crime" or a driving force for "crime" is a common strategy of negative Other-presentation used by anti-immigration political party members. The predication of "[m]igration boosts crime" supported by the discourse of "disease of terrorism" implies and presupposes the well-known "migration = terrorism" equation (Güler 2019). Orbán also tries to base and justify his anti-immigration stance with the "crimes against women", which can also be regarded as the strategy of top-down transfer. On the other hand, the emphasis on the pronouns of "us, we, our, our, [w]e", respectively, is not only the use of top-down strategy but also a way to glorify "us" or "European people" against the Other, i.e., migrants in this case. Within such

a positive Self-presentation accompanied by an overall negative Other-presentation, Orbán cognitively reproduces “our fears” in the public mind through his discourses. Thus, he hopes to overwhelmingly win the 2019 European elections to which he insistently refers as “a historic crossroads” in public opinion.

“Hundreds of large international companies are settling in Hungary, and they are creating thousands of jobs. Hungarian businesses are also strengthening, and they also welcome you with open arms. Even if you only glance at the news, you will also know that wages in Hungary are increasing dynamically. We are ready to help you in creating a home and starting a family. Perhaps at the moment that seems to be on the distant horizon, but you ought to know that the state will offer you substantial support to help you buy your first home or build the house you want to live in; and we will also support you when you decide to have children. Hungary is one of Europe’s safest countries: here there are no migrants and no terrorism; but we have jobs, homes and security. If you work, you’ll have the chance to continuously prosper: no one and nothing will endanger that” (Victor Orbán, Fidesz-KNDP, 12 March 2019 – Prime Ministry of Hungary 2019d).

Before analysing the excerpt above, it should be noted that Orbán’s Fidesz-KNDP is not the only anti-immigration political party in Hungary. Though they mostly deliver anti-immigration discourses on different aspects and ways, Jobbik and Momentum Movement also endeavour to contribute to the production and reproduction of the fear of the Other to increase their votes in the 2019 European elections. What is more, these three political parties seem to compete with each other to be a more anti-immigration or anti-immigrant political party so as to gain more of the votes in the elections. It can be claimed that the economic context of migration is one of the common points of their anti-immigration discourses (Hungary Today 2019a; 2019b; 2019c). As this paper mainly deals with anti-immigration discourses of specific political parties in specific countries, it should be noted that a detailed analysis of such third parties’ positions is not in the scope of the paper.

Migration seems to be something Fidesz-KNDP makes use of for its own political interests, and Orbán seems to wish that it never ended or the fear of the Other continued forever. The excerpt above can be accepted as a sign of such wishes. Almost in all occasions, Orbán seeks for a way to marginalise or radicalise immigration in the eyes of the public opinion by presenting it as a threat. In this excerpt, he explicitly glorifies his country and implicitly his own government through the overall strategy of positive Self-presentation as well as the strategy of numbers game by using the words “hundreds of large international companies”, “thousands of jobs” or dynamically increasing “wages in Hungary”. The use of the pronoun “you” so frequently is complementary for the anti-immigration discourses at the end of the excerpt, which is a sort of top-down transfer strategy. To get the support of public opinion in the elections, Orbán tries to polarise society between the Hungarians and migrants and offers “substantial support” to the former for “creating a home”, “starting a family” or

“hav[ing] children” in “one of Europe’s safest countries”, where there are “no migrants and no terrorism”, instead, “jobs, homes and security”. When he says “no one and nothing will endanger that”, he implies the so-called threat of immigration and denominates “migrants” as the source of “terrorism”. As seen in some discourses delivered by Orbán and other members of Fidesz-KNDP, this excerpt includes the portrayal of immigration not only as an economic threat but also a security threat.

“The majority of the people in the EU continue to fear a massive influx of migrants from Africa into Europe over the coming decade. Europeans are facing a real threat: that Europe will no longer be European. Therefore, they’re saying something that at first sight is surprising: the majority are saying that we should preserve our Christian culture and traditions. It’s true that in Western Europe this is the opinion of only 55 per cent, but in the West migrants are also being polled. In Central and Eastern Europe, on the other hand, the proportion of people who consider it important to protect Christian culture is 70 per cent – and in our country, Ladies and Gentlemen, the figure is 80 per cent. In a country like Hungary . . . nearly 80 per cent of people, regardless of their personal faith, say that Christian culture must be protected. This is a firm and clear mandate, a direction to the Government” (Victor Orbán, Fidesz-KNDP, 5 April 2019 – *Prime Ministry of Hungary* 2019b).

Compared to the anti-immigration discourses within the context of security and economic threats, ones delivered in terms of migration as a cultural threat are quite a bit more in the speeches of Fidesz-KNDP. In an interview, Gergely Gulyás, Minister of Prime Minister’s Office, refers to the 2019 European elections as follows: “This will be the first election with a truly enormous, communal political debate concerning all European voters. This isn’t merely a security or social question, but rather one of basic values. It’s about what kind of Europe we want in the future.” (Nagy-Vargha 2019). And, as two basic parts of identity, emphasis of religion seems to be more dominant than emphasis of nation in portraying immigration as a cultural threat to Hungary in particular and Europe as a whole through discourses. It should also be noted that the government’s anti-immigration discourses within this context mingle with the ones in the context of migration as a security threat.

To analyse the excerpt above, it starts with a top-down strategy and numbers game to justify Orbán’s following anti-immigration discourses in the public mind: “the majority of the people in the EU” and “a massive influx of migrants”. The word “influx” is another common connotation used negatively to present migration as a threat. More importantly, the emphasis of “fear” in the first sentence should be noted. It is used intentionally to reproduce or reinforce the fear of the Other as an electoral strategy for the 2019 EP elections in the near future, just one and half month after the speech delivered. This is why Orbán denominates migrants as a “real threat” in his following sentence, as a part of his negative Other-presentation strategy. Furthermore, he presupposes that “Europe will no longer be European” because of this “threat” of migration. In other words, migration is a “threat” against which “we should preserve our

Christian culture and traditions”, which are glorified and seen superior than the Other’s culture and traditions. This use of positive Self-presentation is followed by another numbers game regarding a poll carried out to see how many people, *unfortunately* including “migrants” as well in the West unlike Central and Eastern Europe, believe that “Christian culture must be protected” against “massive influx of migrants”. The “majority” saying “yes” increases from the West to the Central and Eastern Europe by the rates of “55 per cent”, “70 per cent” and “80 per cent”, to which Orbán willingly resorts to justify and legitimate his negative stance on immigration. For him, this is “a firm and clear mandate, a direction” that should be realised to the utmost by the government as a unique opportunity to increase their votes in the elections. Furthermore, considering the results of the relevant poll, it seems that construction or reproduction of an anti-immigration Europe in the public discourse and mind works well for the populist anti-immigration political parties in the European politics, which mostly brought results in some EU countries during the 2019 EP elections.

Conclusion

The electioneering period of the 2019 EP elections witnessed the construction of the fear of the Other for the electoral success by anti-immigration political parties. League and Fidesz-KNDP were two of these parties, which discursively securitised immigration in the public discourse and mind within three discourse topics: immigration as a security threat, as an economic threat, and as a cultural threat. Consequently, League achieved to significantly increase its votes while Fidesz-KNDP maintained its place in the elections. Fidesz-KNDP’s consistent success in the last three European elections may be considered an indication of rigidity or institutionalisation of anti-immigration in Hungary whereas League’s inconsistency in these elections can be explained with the new emerging anti-immigration party of Italy, *Fratelli d’Italia*. The study concludes that League primarily depicts immigration as a security threat rather than portraying it as an economic or a cultural threat. This is most probably because of Salvini’s position as Minister of Interior in the government, so, his delivering discourses mostly related to security as a requirement of his position. League generally resorts to the strategies of implications and denomination while it is also possible to see the traces of negative Other-presentation and justification in many discourses. As for Fidesz-KNDP, securitisation of migration as a cultural threat is more dominant in the discourses compared to the ones related to security and economy. The main emphasis in the discourse topic of immigration as a cultural threat is religion, not nation. The strategies of top-down transfer and numbers game are commonly used in the discourses while positive Self-presentation is not less than negative Other-presentation. Fidesz-KNDP refers to the third parties as much as League while securitising immigration, and both political parties seem to consider migration an opportunity for their political career and winning the elections. Finally, discursive construction of the fear of the Other as an electoral strategy is becoming increasingly prevalent in European politics, and poses a significant threat not only to immigrants but also to fundamental European principles.

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