

## Realistic and Symbolic Threats

# The Social Basis of Mass-Migration Related Fear in Contemporary Hungary

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**Abstract** This paper describes the different components of mass-migration-related fear based on the theoretical framework of integrated threat theory developed by Stephan et al. (1999) and reveals the social basis of fear in relation to the recent migration crisis that has been affecting Europe since 2015. The paper uses survey data from the research entitled *The Social Aspects of the 2015 Migration Crisis in Hungary* implemented in 2016 by TÁRKI Social Research Institute. Results show that the majority of respondents worried a lot about *both* the realistic and the symbolic threat of migration (around 60% of respondents perceive intense migration related threats). We identified only a small subsample of people who worried more about the *realistic* than the *symbolic* threat of mass migration (15% of respondents), and only a tiny subsample of respondents who worried more about the *symbolic* than *realistic* the threat of mass migration. Regarding the socio-demographic predictors, respondents' age as well as their place of residence played important roles in the perception of threat, but not exactly in the same way as in case of xenophobic attitudes. On the other hand, respondents' level of educational and political activity did not predict perceptions of threat, in contrast to our hypothesis based on the literature about predictors of xenophobia. In addition, personal contact with migrants, social trust, political activity and affiliation are also directly associated with the perceived threat towards mass migration, both in the European and the national context.

**Keywords:** anti-immigrant sentiments, fear, integrated threat, asylum seekers

## Introduction and contextual background

Intergroup relations between the majority population and immigrant minorities are inevitably a hot issue in the European context. Based on a very recent survey on xenophobic attitudes—carried out by TÁRKI—in October 2016 the level of xenophobia had reached an all-time high (58% of the total population), and xenophilia had practically disappeared in Hungary since January 2016 (INDEX 2016). Most European countries are experiencing some kind of social change brought about by international migration, and are faced with the serious challenge of integrating first-, second-

and third-generation migrants. Moreover, the migration crisis of recent years has increasingly affected Europe, raising further policy questions and provoking security dilemmas related to the integration of third-country national migrants and refugees. The Hungarian context is distinct from that of most other European countries which have experienced huge migration flows in the past years, both in terms of the political context (the government's extreme anti-immigration politics) and in terms of the radical change in the volume of migration in 2015. Since the legal and physical closure of the borders in autumn 2015,<sup>1</sup> hardly any asylum seekers have entered Hungary (as opposed to the period from 1 April - 15 September 2015 when at least 170 thousand migrants and asylum seekers crossed the Hungarian borders<sup>2</sup>).

As far as the political context is concerned, the official communication of the Hungarian government refrained purposefully from using the words 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees', and preferred to use the terms 'illegal migrants' and 'economic migrants' during the 2015 crisis in order to frame public discourse. In opposition to this, certain left-wing political parties, as well as certain research institutes (e.g. Publicus Research), intentionally used the term 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' for this heterogeneous group of people to frame the public discourse the other way around.

Even though we avoid a thorough discussion of the political context and focus on the social aspects of the migration crisis in this paper, in order to better understand xenophobic attitudes and migration-related fear in Hungary the concept of moral panic is briefly described here. The original concept was developed by Cohen in the early 1970s; for the Hungarian application and contextual background, see, for example, Kitzinger (2000). Moral panic is the process of arousing social concern over an issue, usually through the work of moral entrepreneurs (i.e. the one initiating the panic creates a clear message and sets the agenda) and the mass media. This process can be described as intensive fear and a high level of anxiety raised by news transmitted by the mass media that is responded to by governmental measures; therefore it has a special relevance to our subject matter. Well-known scholars (Róna-Tas, Á. 2016 and Erős, F. 2016) have used this term recently in Hungarian public discourse to contextualise the social effects of the migration crisis which started in 2015. Both Erős and Róna-Tas argued that moral panic was stoked by the Hungarian government, relying on strong national feelings, xenophobic attitudes closely related to welfare chauvinism, and scapegoating.

To sum up, there has been increasing public and scientific attention to the different aspects of the migration crisis that has affected Europe since 2015. On the media discourse, see Bernáth-Messing (2015); for the public polls and surveys, see the recent results of Publicus (2016), Századvég (2016) and TÁRKI (2016), and for relevant literature using survey experiments, see Bognár and Janky (2016). In this

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1 16 October 2015.

2 "After Hungary completed a fence on its border with Serbia in September, the flow of migrants shifted to Croatia. In all of 2015, the region recorded 764 000 detections, a 16-fold rise from 2014. The top-ranking nationality was Syrian, followed by Iraqis and Afghans." Source: FRONTEX <http://fronterx.europa.eu/trends-and-routes/western-balkan-route/>

paper<sup>3</sup> we aim to assess different components of mass-migration related fear based on the theoretical framework of integrated threat theory developed by Stephan et al. (1993 and 1999) and to reveal the social basis of fear in relation to the recent migration crisis that has affected Europe since the beginning of 2015.

This paper is structured in the following way: the first chapter presents the theoretical framework and aims to introduce the concepts of integrated threat theory; chapter two reviews the most relevant research that has been done in this field. This is followed by the formulation of the hypotheses in chapter 3 and a short methodological note about the survey instrument and the specific questions used in our analysis (chapter 4). Results are presented in chapter 5. Finally, in the conclusions we reflect on the most relevant findings from the data analysis and the limitations of our research (chapter 6).

## The theoretical and conceptual framework

the integrated threat theory (originally developed by Stephan and Stephan 1993 and 1996) is a widely used theoretical framework to examine anti-immigrant sentiments in European societies (see for example Velasco-Gonzalez et al., 2008) as well as in the USA (see for example Croucher et al., 2013) The theory –incorporating several theoretical perspectives on stereotypes and prejudices– suggests that four basic types of perceived threat may lead to prejudice.

(i) *Realistic threats* can be understood at the material, economic and political level, and the focus is on the competition over material and economic group interests. This concept is closely related to the idea welfare-chauvinism, as both concepts focusing on the perceived competition of the scarce resources (such as labour market positions and social services) and the majority's perception is that these resources are threatened by outsiders, e.g. immigrants. (ii) *Symbolic threats* are based on perceived group differences in values, norms, and beliefs (Stephan and Stephan, 1993). The basis of this perception is that out-groups (e.g. immigrants) often have differing worldviews than dominant groups. (iii) *Negative stereotyping* are expectations of how a member of an out-group will behave and often related to feelings of threat and fear. (Verkuyten, 1997). The fourth type is (iv) *intergroup anxiety* that is a feeling of being personally threatened during interactions with out-group members. An important difference between threats and negative stereotyping on the one hand and intergroup anxiety on the other, is that the former three are mostly understood at the group level, while the later one is primarily understood at the individual level. A limitation of our analysis that the used data did not contain specific questions either on stereotypes, or on intergroup anxiety, or on prejudices, therefore our analysis is only focusing on the identification of the social

<sup>3</sup> Here I want to thank Professor Joseph P. Forgas for consulting with us during the formulation of hypotheses and operationalising the specific questions, as well as Professor Endre Sik for helping me to structure the analytical framework. I also want to thank for the important remarks gained from the Editorial Board of the Review of Sociology and from the peer reviewers of my manuscript.

basis of the realistic and symbolic threats perceived at the individual level. *Scapegoating* and *welfare chauvinism* are also central elements of anti-immigrant sentiment, as well as being closely related to migration-related threats. Welfare chauvinism refers to the idea that welfare benefits should be restricted to certain groups, particularly to the natives of a country, as opposed to immigrants.<sup>4</sup> The idea that 'welfare services should be restricted to our own' has had a great impact on public opinion and on asylum policy as well (for earlier research on that in the Hungarian context see for example Enyedi, Fábián and Sik, 2004). As a part of the current research, in October 2015 a set of items was developed to measure the different elements of fear in four Central Eastern countries, as well as the perception that immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees pose a serious danger to the country's welfare system. Migration-related fear and scapegoating was found to be at very high level in Hungary, as well as in countries neighbouring Hungary, despite the low proportion of migrants in these countries compared to those of Western Europe. Focusing on migration-related cultural and realistic fears (certain forms of welfare chauvinism), the two extreme cases in this regard are, interestingly, Slovakia and the Czech Republic (among the four Visegrad countries), the two countries that have not been affected by the recent migration crisis at all (Bernát et al. 2015).

## Previous relevant research in the field

Previous research has confirmed both in the European (see Bizman and Yinon, 2001; González et al., 2008; Stephan and Stephan, 1993, 1996) and in the US context (Croucher et al., 2013) that Muslim immigrants are perceived both as a realistic and as a symbolic threat to the dominant—mostly Christian–Western cultures. Moreover, realistic and symbolic threats from immigrant groups are not only closely related to each other, but are also linked to negative stereotypes towards minority groups. Recent empirical evidence—both in the international and in the Hungarian context—underlined that asylum-seekers of Christian background are more welcomed compared to the ones with Muslim background (for international results see Hainmuller et al. (2016) and for Hungarian results see Boda and Simonovits 2016).

Hainmuller and Hopkins (2012) and Hainmuller et al. (2016) have recently devoted special attention to testing empirically how economic, humanitarian, and religious concerns affect attitudes towards asylum seekers and play a significant role in shaping respondents' attitudes to asylum-seekers and migrants in the US and in certain European societies. Both pieces of research were based on a conjoint research design and tested for the influence of an extended list of randomized attributes of immigrants on generating support for admitting immigrants. Both results from the US and Europe demonstrate that host societies prefer immigrants of higher social

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<sup>4</sup> The term was first used by Jørgen Goul Andersen and Tor Bjørklund in Denmark and Norway in the 1990s.

status (more highly educated immigrants in high-status jobs), while they view those who do not plan to work, have entered without authorization, or do not speak English, unfavourably. As far as the religion of the asylum seekers is concerned, a high level of anti-Muslim sentiment was measured (in comparison to Christians or Agnostic asylum seekers). Boda and Simonovits (2016) confirmed on Hungarian data that respondents tend to accept asylum seekers being persecuted due to belonging to a Christian denomination twice as likely as asylum seekers who were being persecuted due to belonging to a persecuted Islam sect (23% vs 9%).

Regarding the socio-economic predictors of perceived mass-migration related threat we could hardly find any research evidence, as this indicator is primarily used as a background variable in the analysis of prejudice. Therefore, we are presenting the results of the most recent empirical studies on anti-immigrant sentiments (with a special focus on the asylum seekers) as well as on the socio-demographic background of welfare chauvinism and general xenophobic attitudes instead.

Remarkably, both European and American preferences were rather similar across basic sociodemographic subgroups. According to Hainmuller et al (2016) respondents' attitudes varied only little by age and social status (measured by labour market position, education level or income level). Political preferences, in contrast, played a more important role: left-wing party preferences were correlated positively with stronger humanitarian concerns and weaker anti-Muslim bias in all examined European countries (but not in the USA, where, somewhat strikingly, immigrants were assessed in similar ways by Democrats and Republicans). Cross-country comparison of the proportions of those who would accept asylum-seekers reveals that Hungary is among the most unaccepting countries (together with the Czech Republic, the UK and France), while Germany, Italy and Spain are at the other end of the refusal-acceptance scale.

Focusing on the Hungarian research on xenophobia, descriptive analysis suggests that generally xenophobic attitudes are strongly correlated with social status and personal contact with immigrants. Respondents who are excluded from the labour market, have lower levels of education and are in a bad financial situation, as well those who do not know any immigrants personally, tend to demonstrate greater xenophobia (Dencső and Sik, 2007; Simonovits and Szalai 2013). Political activity and party preferences are also considered to be important predictors of xenophobic attitudes: Voters of the extreme right-wing party Jobbik and also politically inactive respondents (i.e. those not planning to participate in the next governmental election) tend to be more xenophobic than left-wing party supporters (Simonovits and Szalai 2013). However, multivariate models also reveal that among the socio-demographic predictors included in the regression model (gender, age, place of residence and education level) only having a high level of education decreased significantly overtly xenophobic attitudes. Moreover, having personal contact with refugees and/or asylum seekers was also partially negatively correlated to overt xenophobia in

2007 in Hungary (Dencső and Sik, 2007). Furthermore, multivariate models that examined a large Hungarian database from 2011 (N=3000) also underlined the fact that personal contact significantly decreased anti-immigrant sentiment as measured through perceived social distance (Simonovits and Szalai, 2012).

Freshly published research findings about anti-immigrant attitudes based on data from the European Social Survey reinforce the fact that the level of education and subjectively perceived financial status correlate negatively, while age correlates positively with dismissive attitudes towards immigrants. Party preference is also an important factor in anti-immigrant attitudes: being a Jobbik supporter significantly increases the likelihood of having a dismissive attitude (Messing, V. and Ságvári, B. 2016).

According to our latest research (implemented in late 2015), migration-related welfare chauvinism and scapegoating both seem to be predicted by a similar set of socio-demographic variables as the above mentioned indicators of xenophobia: party preferences and the level of education play an important role in all examined forms of xenophobic attitudes, including the level of fear and welfare chauvinism. Furthermore, personal contact with refugees, asylum seekers or migrants has a significant effect on the level of fear and welfare chauvinism, whereas gender and the subjectively perceived financial situation of the respondents do not play a significant role in these attitudes (Bernát et al. 2015).

## Research Hypotheses

Based on the review of the theoretical literature and the research evidence in previous sections we formulated four hypotheses for our research.

Scholars argue (Velasco Gonzalez et al., 2008) that it is worth differentiating between symbolic and realistic threats in relation to migration-related attitudes. The main idea of the concept of *symbolic threat* is that the out-group (in our case, migrants in Europe) has a different worldview that can be seen as threatening the cultural identity of the in-group (in this case, 'European culture'). On the basis of this reasoning our first hypothesis is as follows:

*H1: Even though there is a strong positive correlation between the perception of realistic and symbolic threats, these factors might be separable in people' minds.*

As far as the socio-economic background variables are concerned, educational attainment seems to be the most important predictor (among age, gender and place of residence), based on previous empirical studies. Low educational attainment has also been generally found to predict negative sentiments towards immigrants (Bizman and Yinon, 2001; Stephan and Stephan, 1996, for Hungarian results see: Messing and Ságvári, 2016., Dencső and Sik, 2007., and Sik, 2016). Therefore we might expect that respondents with higher educational levels would perceive less threat from immigrants.

*H2: Among socio-demographic predictors educational attainment is the most important one. We expect a negative correlation between the level of education and the perceived level of threat.*

Interpersonal contact and communication with immigrant and/or minority groups has also been found to have negative affect with prejudice and threats (Bizman and Yinon, 2001; González et al., 2008; Stephan and Stephan, 1993, 1996; and for Hungarian research evidence see Dencső and Sik, 2007 and Simonovits and Szalai, 2012). Therefore, we suppose that the more contacts between the majority society and the immigrants, the less likely they perceive threats.

*H3: There should be a negative correlation between the perceived threats (both realistic and symbolic) and interpersonal contact with immigrants.*

Furthermore, –as shown by previous empirical evidence– political activity and party preferences may also be important predictors of the perceived threats, (for international results see Hainmuller et al. 2016., and for Hungarian results see Simonovits and Szalai, 2013 and Messing-Ságvári, 2016).

*H4: Politically inactive respondents (operationalised as not planning to vote in the next election) are supposed to perceive higher levels of threats. Supporters of right wing parties might perceive higher levels of threats than left wingers.*

## Data and methods

According to our best knowledge, relatively little attention has been paid to examining attitudes to refugees and asylum seekers, but much more to attitudes towards migrants, even though these two groups raise different concerns, especially in today's European context. The questions we used in our survey–carried out in Hungary in early 2016–addressed both groups, as the increased flow included various kinds of migrants, best labelled as a 'mixed flow' (see UNHCR's definition of this term).

The data analysed in this paper are derived from data collection carried out in mid-January 2016, two month after the Paris terror attack<sup>5</sup> and right after the series of sexual assaults in several German cities on New Year's Eve. Due to these dramatic events, we devoted a separate block of questions to migration-related threats in our survey. The survey block on migration-related attitudes–a part of TÁRKI's regular Omnibus survey–was used on a sample of 1000 adult respondents; the weighted data represent the Hungarian adult population by age, level of education, place of residence and gender.

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<sup>5</sup> 13 November 2015.

In line with our first hypothesis, we aimed to distinguish between the two types of threats mentioned above by using a simple set of anxiety-related questions (as summarised in Table 1.):

**(1) Realistic threat:** we used two interrelated questions to measure the majority's perceived anxiety related to the volume and 'irregularity' (i.e. undocumented status) of the current migration flow arriving to (i) Hungary and (ii) Europe. As these two components (volume and irregularity) were addressed in combination, their partial effects cannot be measured here.

**(2) Symbolic threat:** we also used two questions to assess perceived anxiety related to the different cultural and religious backgrounds of migrants arriving to (i) Hungary and (ii) Europe.

The set of questions analysed in this paper from the January 2016 survey is summarized below (Table 1). Responses in each case were coded on a four-point scale (agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, disagree).

Table 1: Elements of mass-migration-related threats

Realistic threats	Symbolic threats
Seeing the <b>great number of undocumented refugees and migrants entering Hungary without control</b> makes me worried.	Seeing the arrival of refugees and migrants to <b>Hungary of cultures and religions that are different from ours</b> makes me worried.
Seeing the <b>great number of undocumented refugees and migrants entering Europe without control</b> makes me worried.	Seeing the arrival of refugees and migrants to <b>Europe of cultures and religions that are different from ours</b> makes me worried.

To investigate hypotheses 2,3 and 4 the following main explanatory variables are used in our multivariate analysis (categories of the variables are listed in brackets).

**Highest level of education attained** has four categories: elementary school at most, vocational school, high school, college degree. As indicators of **political attitudes** we included political activity (would definitely vote at the next elections, probably would vote in the next election, probably would not vote in the next election, definitely would not vote in the next election) and party preference (only MSZP<sup>6</sup>, FIDESZ and Jobbik voters are included, due to the low number of cases for other parties). We identify those having **interpersonal contact with immigrants** as those who personally know foreigners living in Hungary (Chinese, Arab or African origin) and those who have met asylum-seekers, refugees or migrants in Hungary in the past 12 months (dichotomous variables).

<sup>6</sup> MSZP is the acronym of Hungarian Socialist Party, FIDESZ is the right-wing party of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. Jobbik is a radical nationalist party.

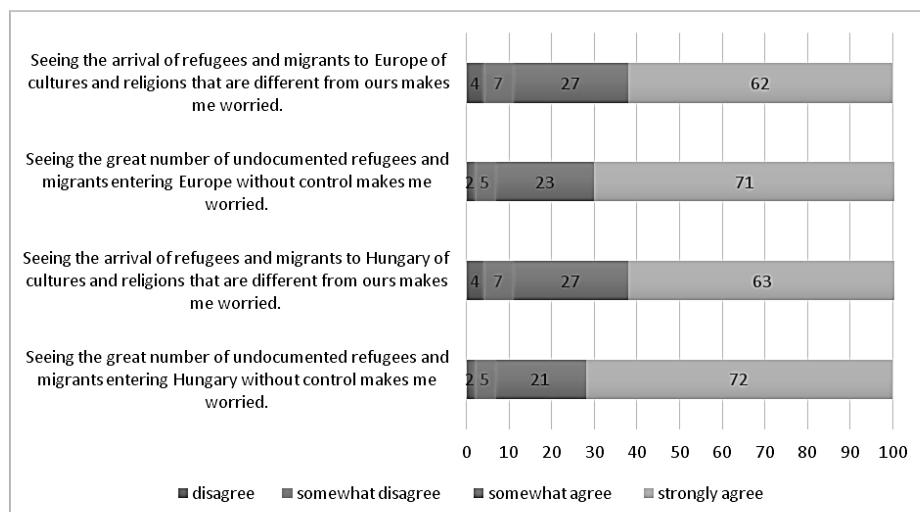
Respondents' age (measured in age-groups), gender, place of residence—measured by region and type of settlement—were used as control variables in order to cover the basic demographic characteristics of the respondents. Selected indicators of social capital were also included in our models as control variables, namely general trust (trusting people in general) and institutional trust (trusting the Hungarian police and religious organisations and churches<sup>7</sup>)<sup>8</sup>. Finally, intention to emigrate<sup>9</sup> and migration-related experience (having someone in the household who spent at least 12 months abroad in the past 10 years) were also included as control variables in our analysis.

## Results

### *How strong is the correlation between perceived realistic and symbolic threat?*

Chart 1 indicates that (i) the level of perceived threat is very high in all areas measured, and (ii) that levels of fear are somewhat higher about the irregularity and volume of the current migration flow (realistic threat: 92-93%) than the level of fear related to the different cultural and religious background of the migrants (level of symbolic threat: 89-90%).

**Chart 1** Different components of the perceived threat from the current migration flow into Europe and Hungary (in percent, cca. N=980)



7 Frequency of visiting church was omitted as well, due to the strong correlation with trust in church.

8 'Trust the Hungarian government' was eliminated from the explanatory variables due to the strong correlation of this variable with Fidesz voters.

9 Two other indicators of migration potential (short-term and long-term migration potential) were both omitted from the model due to their strong correlation with each other, and with intention to emigrate.

As the overwhelming majority of the respondents perceived high level of threat (both symbolic and realistic), we have checked whether these items measure similar social attitudes. In the next step we checked how these items are correlated in order to test our first hypothesis. The correlation matrix presented in the Appendix (Table A1) summarises the two-way correlations among the four anxiety items. First of all, it is obvious that there is a strong two-way correlation among all the components of mass-migration related anxiety that were examined. Secondly, and not surprisingly, we measured an even stronger correlation between items more closely connected with each other (differing only in their territorial dimension) compared to those that measure the different components of anxiety towards mass migration (indicated by dark shading in the correlation matrix).

Principal component analysis underlined that the two types of mass-migration-related threats are strongly related (results are presented in the Appendix, Table A2.). To sum up, based on the correlation and principal component analysis, we can conclude that our first hypothesis was only partly confirmed by the data analysis, namely strong two-way correlations among all the components of mass-migration related anxiety were revealed. Moreover, as all the items showed high factor scores on a single principal component, with a very high explained variance (78%) we might conclude that these symbolic and realistic fears are seldom separable in people's minds. Despite the high correlation between these items there are respondents who perceive different levels of realistic and symbolic threat. In order to identify individuals perceiving different types of threats a cross-tabulation of these variables is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Possible combinations of perception of symbolic and realistic threat in relation to Hungary (N=982, total percentages)

		Symbolic threats (different culture and religion) in relation to Hungary				
Realistic threats (irregularity and volume) in relation to Hungary		disagree	somewhat disagree	somewhat agree	strongly agree	total
disagree	1,3	0,1	0,1	0,0	1,5	
somewhat disagree	0,5	2,6	1,2	0,3	4,7	
somewhat agree	0,2	1,8	16,3	2,7	21,1	
strongly agree	1,5	2,1	9,2	59,9	72,7	
total	3,6	6,7	26,8	62,9	100,0	

Table 2 summarises the possible combinations of symbolic and realistic threats perceived in relation to Hungary. Table 2 shows that most of the respondents think in a similar way concerning the perceived cultural and symbolic threats in relation

to Hungary (80% of the respondents can be found on the diagonal of the table). Among the rest of the respondents the majority is more afraid of the volume and irregularity of mass migration and less from the cultural aspect. Only a small group of respondents perceive stronger symbolic mass migration related threat than realistic threat. The same relationships are valid in the European context (see Table A3 in the Appendix). For our further analysis the following three types of respondents can be identified:

- Type 1: worried more about *irregularity and volume* than about the *cultural or religious aspect* of the current flow of mass migration related to Hungary (marked with dark grey in Table 2 and consisting of 15% of the total population).
- Type 2: worried more about the *cultural or religious aspect* than about the *irregularity and volume* of the current flow of mass migration related to Hungary (marked with light grey in Table 2 and consisting of 4% the total population).
- Type 3 and Type 4: Worried about the *irregularity and volume* and the *cultural or religious aspect* of the current flow of mass migration to the same extent. These respondents can be found on the diagonal of Table 2 (marked with bold), consisting of 80% of the total population. The majority of this group (60% of all respondents) worry a lot about both the realistic and symbolic threat of migration related to Hungary- this subtype is called Type 4 (while the rest is Type 3).

As the number of respondents in Type 2 is not enough for multivariate analysis and people perceiving similar level of realistic and symbolic threat are considerably heterogeneous, we limit our further multivariate analysis to Type 1 and 4.

### *The social basis of realistic and symbolic threats*

Here we present results of multivariate models explaining the two interrelated components of mass-migration-related anxiety. The aim of constructing these models was to examine our second, third and fourth hypotheses—controlling for other predictors included in the models. As we already demonstrated that opinions about the impact of mass migration to Hungary and to Europe seem to be overlapping to a large extent, we focus our attention on the Hungarian context. The models on the European context are presented in the Appendix, in Table A4.

The two dichotomous dependent variables of our logistic regression models are:

- **Stronger perception of realistic threat:** 1– those who worry more strongly about the realistic threat than the symbolic threat of migration into Hungary (Type 1); 0– others.
- **Perception of intense threat:** 1– those who worry a lot both about the realistic and symbolic threat of migration into Hungary (Type 4); 0– others.

As far as the explanatory variables are concerned, we included the predictors mentioned above in our model, making sure that we did not include variables which are correlated to each other to a great extent (to avoid multicollinearity). We found that the predictors' overall effect is higher in case of the model predicting intense

perception of threat (adjusted R-square are around 0,19) and somewhat lower in case of the model predicting perception of stronger realistic threat, which might partly be due to the different distribution of these indicators in the sample. The significant relationships that emerge from the multivariate models of threat are marked with bold in Table 3. The most important findings from these models are summarised below, reflecting on the hypotheses formulated above.

### *Social demographic predictors*

Contradicting our second hypothesis the level of education is not significantly related to mass-migration related anxiety. Significant relationship was found neither for the intensity nor for the type of perceived threat. Somewhat unexpectedly, being older—especially in certain age groups—decreases the probability of perceiving intense threats of the current flow of mass migration related both to Hungary and Europe. In contrast, age does not have a significant effect on perceiving stronger realistic than symbolic threat. In line with previous research evidence, gender does not have an impact on any of the examined threat variables.

Regional differences have a strong impact on both domains (Hungary and Europe) as regards extreme anxiety about the effect of mass migration: More precisely, compared to Central Hungary, being an inhabitant of Southern Trans-Danubia or the Northern part of Hungary (Northern Hungary and Northern Great Plain) increases the likelihood of perceiving intense threat about the effects of mass migration to both Hungary and Europe. On the other hand, regional differences do not explain significantly the type of threat perceived, except for living in Southern Trans-Danubia, which decreases the likelihood of having stronger realistic than symbolic concerns related to migration to Hungary. Type of settlement did not explain any of the measured anxiety type.

**Table 3** Multivariate models of threat related to Hungary: Types 1 and 4 - logistic regression models (N=830)

	<b>The perceived threat is rather realistic than symbolic</b>		<b>Both realistic and symbolic threats are strongly perceived –</b>	
	Odds ratio	Level of significance	Odds ratio	Level of significance
<i>Level of education (reference: elementary school at most)</i>				
Vocational education	0,725	0,270	1,576	0,053
High school	0,692	0,227	1,272	0,327
College degree	0,995	0,988	0,684	0,180
<i>Age group (reference: 18-27 years)</i>				
28-37 years old	1,348	0,415	<b>0,531</b>	<b>0,035</b>
38-47 years old	1,009	0,983	0,790	0,465

	The perceived threat is rather realistic than symbolic	Both realistic and symbolic threats are strongly perceived -		
	Odds ratio	Level of significance	Odds ratio	Level of significance
48-57 years old	0,956	0,910	0,666	0,206
58-67 years old	0,928	0,853	<b>0,512</b>	<b>0,038</b>
68-77 years old	1,061	0,889	<b>0,444</b>	<b>0,020</b>
77 years old or older	1,378	0,629	<b>0,301</b>	<b>0,029</b>
Gender (female)	1,044	0,834	0,734	0,055
<i>Region (reference: Central Hungary)</i>				
Central Trans-Danubia	0,549	0,153	1,687	0,125
Western Trans-Danubia	0,879	0,758	0,742	0,405
Southern Trans-Danubia	<b>0,120</b>	<b>0,002</b>	<b>3,601</b>	<b>0,001</b>
Northern Hungary	0,797	0,567	<b>3,354</b>	<b>0,000</b>
Northern Great Plain	0,766	0,501	<b>1,941</b>	<b>0,044</b>
Southern Great Plain	0,834	0,635	1,424	0,268
<i>Type of settlement (reference: county seat)</i>				
City	0,884	0,689	0,916	0,727
Small settlement	0,858	0,635	1,329	0,274
Budapest	0,385	0,054	1,977	0,080
<i>Party preference (reference: other)</i>				
Jobbik voters	<b>0,457</b>	<b>0,025</b>	<b>1,739</b>	<b>0,041</b>
FIDESZ voters	<b>0,406</b>	<b>0,001</b>	<b>2,153</b>	<b>0,000</b>
MSZP voters	0,666	0,315	<b>0,525</b>	<b>0,047</b>
<i>Political activity (reference: would definitely vote in the next elections)</i>				
probably would vote	0,971	0,900	<b>0,499</b>	<b>0,000</b>
probably would not vote	0,422	0,091	0,951	0,880
definitely would not vote	0,72	0,280	1,366	0,213
<i>Contact with migrants (dichotomous variables)</i>				
Personally knows foreigners living in Hungary (Chinese, Arab or African origin)	1,312	0,281	<b>0,597</b>	<b>0,010</b>
Has met asylum-seekers, refugees or migrants in Hungary in the past 12 months	<b>0,501</b>	<b>0,010</b>	<b>2,989</b>	<b>0,000</b>
<i>Trust and migration experience (dichotomous variables)</i>				
Trust in people in general	1,03	0,893	1,167	0,380
Trust the churches/religious organisations	<b>0,471</b>	<b>0,004</b>	<b>1,632</b>	<b>0,012</b>
Trust the police	1,468	0,090	0,679	0,034
Does not intend to emigrate	0,61	0,275	0,872	0,676
Someone in household spent at least 12 months abroad in the past 10 years	1,631	0,153	1,269	0,426
Constant	0,644	0,483	0,995	0,992
Adjusted R-square		0,078		0,190

Note: Significant relationships at p=0,05 level are marked bold.

### *Migration-related experience and personal contact*

As we have already argued (see Simonovits et al. 2016) personal contact seems to be a very important factor in understanding interaction between a minority and the majority population (see Allport 1954 on the original idea of Intergroup Contact Theory<sup>10</sup>, and a comprehensive review of more than 200 empirical studies examining contact hypothesis carried out by Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006). Many studies have found that intergroup contact decreases negative stereotyping, and scholars draw attention to the effect that the quantity of intergroup contact has on reducing prejudice. Frequency of contact helps to de-categorize out-group members and diminishes stereotypical ways of thinking (Velasco Gonzalez et al., 2008).

Using the survey instruments described earlier we measured whether respondents had come into contact with migrants in two ways. One instrument measures real personal relationship with immigrants (personally knowing a migrant who lives in Hungary), while the other instrument measures occasional contact. In line with what we had found in earlier studies (see Simonovits et al., 2016, Chapter 1.2 and 1.4), and similarly to the related literature already quoted, we found strong effects of contact with immigrants on mass-migration-related anxiety. Moreover, we see the same tendency both in relation to migration to Europe and Hungary: the “quality type” of personal contact significantly decreases the chance of being extremely anxious, while having met some kind of migrant in the past 12 months increases the chance of being extremely anxious about both the realistic and the symbolic threats. As far as the type of perceived threat is concerned, only meeting asylum seekers has a significant effect: those who have met any kind of migrants in the past 12 months have lower chances of perceiving stronger realistic than symbolic threat in relation to Hungary.

### *Political preferences and anxiety*

Political affiliation has a strong impact on attitudes toward mass migration related to Hungary. Being a potential supporter (voter) of a right-wing party (both FIDESZ and Jobbik) increases the likelihood of perceiving intense threats in relation to Hungary. FIDESZ sympathizers are also more likely to perceive intense threats in relation to Europe. Being a potential supporter (voter) of a left-wing party (MSZP) has a less pronounced but still significant impact: MSZP sympathizers are less likely to perceive intense threats related to mass migration to Hungary. Political preference also affects the type of threat perceived: right-wingers (both FIDESZ and Jobbik party supporters) are less likely to perceive stronger realistic threat than symbolic threat. Political activity predicts anxiety only weakly: those who would probably vote in the next elections are less likely to perceive intense threats compared to those who would definitely vote, but non-voters are not significantly different from those who would definitely vote. It has to be added, that non-voters did not differ significantly from voters in terms of the perceived type of anxiety either.

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<sup>10</sup> The basic idea of Allport's Intergroup Contact Theory is that, under appropriate conditions, interpersonal contact is one of the most effective ways of reducing prejudice between majority and minority group members.

Among control variables we can see that the level of institutional trust affects mass-migration related anxiety, while general trust in people did not play a significant role in the models. The effect of institutional trust could be identified only in relation to Hungary, not in the European context. Trusting the church increases the likelihood of perceiving intense threats related to migration in Hungary. Trusting the church, however, decreases the chance of being more anxious about the realistic aspects of mass migration, both in relation to Hungary and Europe. Finally, migration related experience only affects the type of threat perceived in the European context. Respondents having a household member with migration experience (who spent at least 12 months abroad in the past 10 years) are more likely to perceive mass migration as a realistic rather than a symbolic threat.

## Discussion and conclusion

Our research underlined that the different types of perceived threats connected to asylum-seekers and migrants are worth analysing in today's Hungary, especially in the light of the recent terrorist attacks and other incidents. The findings of this study have confirmed to a large extent previous findings on anti-immigrant sentiments, but in case of certain socio-demographic predictors we found different results than expected.

As far as our initial hypothesis (H1) is concerned we found a very strong positive correlation between realistic and symbolic threats, and we found that the majority of the respondents worry a lot about both the realistic and the symbolic threat of migration (around 59-60% of our sample). The research found the perceived level of threat to be equally and extremely high both in the European and the Hungarian context, with perceived levels of realistic threats somewhat higher than levels of symbolic threats. Principal component analysis also underlined that the two types of mass-migration-related threats are strongly related and are seldom separable in people's minds. Based on the strongly interrelated indicators of symbolic and realistic threats we constructed four types of threat patterns, but due to limited number of cases we focused our multivariate analysis to understand the socio-demographic basis of two kinds of anxiety patterns: the perception of high levels of both symbolic and realistic threats and the perception of stronger realistic than symbolic threats.

Regarding the second Hypothesis (H2) about the effect of socio-demographic predictors, data confirmed our expectations only partly. Especially, educational attainment and age worked differently than expected- highlighting that fear has different working mechanism than other aspects of anti-immigrant sentiments. On the one hand level of education did not have a statistically significant effect on any aspects of mass migration related threat. On the other hand, age also worked differently than expected, as according to our multivariate model, older age groups seemed to be less anxious than the youngest one, controlling for other factors. In line with earlier results, gender had no significant effects on the perceived level of threat.

In case of our third hypothesis (H3) we found that interpersonal contacts worked as expected based on previous research evidence. Those who have had *real personal contact* with any kind of migrants seem to be less anxious about the cultural aspects of mass migration than about its irregularity and volume. Also in line with our previous research evidence on the same database (see Simonovits et al 2016) “superficial type” of contact (only *seeing* any types of migrants in Hungary) increases level of fear: those who have met any kind of refugees or migrant in the past 12 months prior to the interview tend to perceive intense threats more likely compared to those who did not. Finally, political affiliation played an important role in the level of perceived threat, as it was expected based on international and national research evidence. Right wing voters are more likely to perceive intense threats compared to leftists. Political activity, on the other hand, did not have a clear effect on the perceived threats, in contrast to our fourth hypothesis (H4) about the effect of political activity.

Trust in institutions affected perception of mass-migration related threats in a complex way. Whereas trusting churches increased the likelihood of perceiving intense threats concerning Hungary, trust in police had a negative effect on perceived threat. The former might be explained with the ambiguous role of the official Hungarian churches in the 2015 refugee crisis, while the latter one might be explained simply by trusting the police might decrease people’s migration-related fears, as the official communication was that “the razor wire fence and our strong police would be able to defend Hungary from the irregular migrants”. Overall, we might conclude that mass migration related fear (at least the ones we operationalised and measured by symbolic and realistic threats) work slightly differently from other indicators of anti-immigrant sentiments, most importantly xenophobia.

Finally, there are some limitations to our research. Most importantly it should be born in mind that in the analysed survey the perception of realistic and symbolic threat where only measured with one item. This seemed to be a problem especially in case of the realistic threat, where only anxiety about the volume and irregularity of mass-migration was assessed and the labour market aspects were left out. Based on the correlations presented, distinguishing Hungary and Europe did not make much sense, which suggests that in most of the cases this territorial aspect was not separated in respondents’ mind. However, comparing the multivariate models built separately for the Hungarian and the European contexts, we found certain differences in the effects of the explanatory variables. We might quote here the problem of relevance as well, as migration policy related questions are not that relevant to an average respondent in Hungary. Consequently respondents tend to form their opinions on the basis of their feelings without thinking through the different consequences of mass migration in the European and Hungarian context.

Based on our findings, the perception of both symbolic and realistic threats were measured to be extremely high in contemporary Hungary and these perceptions of

threat may lead to negative prejudices towards ethnic minorities. Therefore, in the future, investigating the level and working mechanisms of the different aspects of threat perceptions would be crucial in the research of anti-immigrant sentiments. That is why, national governments and public speakers have a serious responsibility how migration-related news and information are contextualized and framed, as the moral panic may also have an effect on social norms; and as a result, of the moral panic such views may become incorporated into the beliefs of a society.

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## Appendix

**Table A1.** Pearson correlation coefficients of different aspects of fear (N= min 919)

	Perception of realistic threat- Hungary	Perception of realistic threat- Europe	Perception of symbolic threat- Hungary	Perception of symbolic threat- Europe
Perception of realistic threat- Hungary	1	,806**	,640**	,626**
Perception of realistic threat- Europe	,806**	1	,635**	,688**
Perception of symbolic threat- Hungary	,640**	,635**	1	,808**
Perception of symbolic threat- Europe	,626**	,688**	,808**	1

Note: Significant relationships are marked with \* at p=0,05 level

**Table A2** Principal component analysis of realistic and symbolic threats (N=982) Explained variance= 77,7%

Communalities	Extraction
Realistic threat 1: anxiety related to the volume and irregularity (lack of documents) of the migration flow towards Hungary	0,765
Realistic threat 2: anxiety related to the volume and irregularity (lack of documents) of the migration flow towards Europe	0,790
Symbolic threat 1: anxiety related to the different cultural and religious background of migrants arriving in Hungary	0,764
Symbolic threat 2: anxiety related to the different cultural and religious background of migrants arriving in Europe	0,788

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

**Table A3:** Possible combinations of symbolic and realistic threats perceived in relation to Europe (N=982, total percentages)

<b>Realistic threats (irregularity and volume) in relation to Europe</b>	<b>Symbolic threats (different culture and religion) in relation to Europe</b>				
	disagree	somewhat disagree	somewhat agree	strongly agree	total
disagree	2	0	0	0	2
somewhat disagree	0	3	1	0	4
somewhat agree	0	2	18	3	23
strongly agree	1	2	8	59	71
total	3	7	27	62	100

**Table A4** Multivariate models of threat related to Europe: Types 1 and 4 - logistic regression models (N=861)

	<b>The perceived threat is rather realistic than symbolic – Europe (Type 1)</b>		<b>Both realistic and symbolic threats are strongly perceived –Europe (Type 4)</b>	
	Odds ratio	Level of significance	Odds ratio	Level of significance
<i>Level of education (reference: elementary school at most)</i>				
Vocational education	1,204	0,544	1,109	0,663
High school	0,918	0,794	1,022	0,931
College degree	1,334	0,419	0,603	0,077
<i>Age group (reference: 18-27 years)</i>				
28-37 years old	1,178	0,670	0,323	0,000
38-47 years old	1,225	0,623	0,527	0,055
48-57 years old	1,012	0,977	0,435	0,012
58-67 years old	0,901	0,809	0,409	0,008
68-77 years old	1,601	0,282	0,296	0,001
77 years old or older	2,912	0,088	0,148	0,001
gender (female)	1,006	0,977	0,873	0,401
<i>Region (reference: Central Hungary)</i>				
Central Trans-Danubia	0,693	0,390	1,615	0,160
Western Trans-Danubia	1,192	0,677	0,464	0,036

	The perceived threat is rather realistic than symbolic – Europe (Type 1)	Both realistic and symbolic threats are strongly perceived –Europe (Type 4)		
	Odds ratio	Level of significance	Odds ratio	Level of significance
Southern Trans-Danubia	0,364	0,058	<b>4,744</b>	0,000
Northern Hungary	0,698	0,393	<b>3,068</b>	0,001
Northern Great Plain	0,623	0,261	1,869	0,059
Southern Great Plain	0,933	0,860	1,243	0,499
<i>Type of settlement (reference: county seat)</i>				
City	1,001	0,998	0,821	0,436
Small settlement	0,635	0,169	1,493	0,133
Budapest	<b>0,273</b>	0,014	1,55	0,262
<i>Party preference (reference: other)</i>				
Jobbik	1,034	0,921	1,659	0,063
FIDESZ	0,694	0,176	<b>2,193</b>	0,000
MSZP	1,131	0,762	0,67	0,217
<i>Political activity (reference: would definitely vote in the next elections)</i>				
would probably vote in the next election	0,922	0,739	<b>0,537</b>	0,001
probably would not vote	0,996	0,992	0,826	0,575
definitely would not vote	0,858	0,637	1,088	0,738
<i>Contact with migrants (dichotomous variables)</i>				
personally knows foreigners living in Hungary (Chinese, Arab or African origin)	0,953	0,857	<b>0,555</b>	0,003
has met refugees or migrants in Hungary in the past 12 months	0,695	0,179	<b>3,102</b>	0,000
<i>Trust and migration experience (dichotomous variables)</i>				
Trust in people in general	1,814	0,008	1,06	0,742
Trust the church/religious organisations	<b>0,481</b>	0,005	1,266	0,228
Trust the police	1,513	0,084	0,809	0,248
Plan to emigrate in the next 12 months	0,941	0,889	0,668	0,222
Someone in household spent at least 12 months abroad in the past 10 years	<b>2,005</b>	0,034	1,213	0,520
Constant	0,204	0,016	1,888	0,225

Note: Significant relationships at p=0,05 level are marked bold.