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Gender, Militarized Masculinity, and Hungarian Illiberalism

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Abstract

The article explores how gendered relations of power and masculinity are articulated in the Hungarian illiberal government's rhetorical, legal, and spatial marking of borders and surrounding right-wing discourses in relation to categories of "East"/"West." After the Hungarian government declared and gradually normalized its illiberal regime, particularly in response to the European refugee crisis in 2015, it passed various anti-migration, anti-gender, and anti-minority laws and policies in the name of defending Hungarians against both the influence of the "feminine" West and the "hyper-masculine" Eastern Other seeking refuge in Hungary. This article examines how the Hungarian government constructs the illiberal state, negotiates its geopolitical position, and propagates illiberal values as "masculine" to articulate and assert its sovereignty against spheres of the "feminized" international, particularly against the West. In parallel with these processes, subnational competing discourses of masculinized sovereignty emerged between the Hungarian government and the mayor of Ásotthalom. By utilizing an intersectional analytical framework, this article maps how these competing discourses of masculinized sovereignty operate at the national and local levels, against the unfolding of the 2015 humanitarian crisis and its aftermath.

Keywords: Hungarian illiberalism; militarized masculinity; gender and nationalism; border politics; discourse

Introduction

Categories of national/international and "East"/"West" have become important guiding logic of contemporary Hungarian "illiberal" public discourse since the Orbán government took power in 2010. The government has not only instrumentalized these categories by declaring certain values "foreign" or "imported from the West" but it has also been using anti-colonial rhetoric to frame its objection to a set of values often associated with Western liberal democracies. The president of the National Assembly, László Kövér, infamously said about "gender ideology" that the "colonizers first want to colonize the minds and then the territories." Then he followed,

when the colonizers want to subjugate one in their homeland and take away their material and spiritual wealth, they first break and confuse one's mind. They attack one's gender, familial, religious, and national identity; they want to falsify one's past and take away one's future so that the victim is so confused eventually that one does not even know whether he is a boy or a girl, where he comes from, where he is heading to, and whom he belongs to. (*Origo*, August 11, 2018)

The permeability and porousness of borders and boundaries between nation-states, the gendered logic of the outside and inside, the international/transnational and the national, and the gendered

delineation of categories of West and East have been at the center of feminist IR scholarship for a long time (Enloe 1989; Eisenstein 2000; Runyan 2002; Nagel 2003; Runyan and Peterson 2015; and Moore 2022). The case study of contemporary Hungarian nationalist politics and the government's anti-immigration and anti-gender rhetoric will contribute to this discussion of permeable borders, where the articulation and hierarchization of gendered difference take place. The article will explore this through the state's conceptualization and negotiation of the "masculine" national self, the "feminine" and "feminizing" West, and the "hyper-masculine" East. The Hungarian government and other right-wing political actors have claimed and negotiated their illiberal "masculine" position and corresponding sovereignty claims in the international sphere in relation to these gendered configurations of East and West. This took particular forms in response to, and in the aftermath of, the European refugee crisis in 2015. The article explores how gendered articulations of difference and competing forms of masculinity are at the heart of these negotiations in Hungarian governmental and surrounding right-wing discourses after 2015. What makes the Hungarian case interesting for further examination is its specific location in the European Union and at the intersection of West and East – including, moreover, how this "middle" position is instrumentalized by the masculine national state to assert its sovereignty against spheres of the feminized and feminizing West (exemplified by the European Union, Western liberal institutions, and international organizations), its feminized national Others (the Western-funded civil organizations, minoritized groups and the opposition not adhering to these illiberal masculine ideals), and the allegedly hyper-masculine and "reterritorializing" East (exemplified by the emergence of the figure of the hyper-sexual Muslim male Other seeking refuge in Hungary in 2015). Finally, what makes the case of Hungary intriguing is that this assertion of masculinized sovereignty takes particular forms between two competing political actors with their exclusionary politics directed against migration and minoritized groups in Hungary. More specifically, this assertion of illiberal masculinized sovereignty is also expressed sub-nationally between the local and national governmental levels. In the aftermath of the humanitarian crisis in 2015, competing discourses of masculinized sovereignty emerged between the Hungarian government and the former mayor of Ásotthalom, the founder and leader of Our Homeland Movement ("Mi Hazánk Mozgalom"), a far-right political party, currently in the Hungarian Parliament. At first glance, the tension between these two levels of government concerning anti-migration and anti-gender policies may seem consistently aligned with one another. However, the case study will show that the strategic positioning, interpretations, and convergences of militarized masculinity through competing discourses of sovereignty do specific political work in justifying the gradual militarization of public discourse in Hungary, locally and nationally. This article is concerned with these competing discourses of sovereignty and how gendered metaphors undergird them at the intersection of race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality.

Theoretical Frameworks

Scholars argued for the importance of recognizing the role of gender and gendered relations of power in marking various boundaries of the nation (Enloe 1989; Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989; Bracewell 1996; Yuval-Davis 1997). Scholars of Hungarian politics have explored different elements of Hungarian nationalism and the radical right (Feischmidt and Hervik 2015; Feischmidt et al. 2014) and the discursive construction of fear in Ásotthalom, a Southern border village along the Balkan migratory route in 2015 (Feischmidt 2020), during and after the European refugee crisis (Melegh 2016; Rajaram 2016; Waterbury 2020). They also showed the importance of ethnicity (Jenne 2018) and gender as analytical categories to explore contemporary Hungarian nationalism and conservative "familialist policies" (Grzebalska and Pető 2018), where women have a central role in (re)producing various boundaries of the nation. Adhering to ethno-nationalist (Bieber 2020) norms are often expressed in (re)producing heteronormative gendered relations of power. In contrast, those who do not comply with these norms of masculinity and femininity are often considered "traitors to their ethnicity" (Werner 2009, 314, cited in Suyarkulova 2016). Scholars

(Connell 1995; Waetjen 2001; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Norocel et al. 2020) have also argued that there is no unitary form of masculinity, but “multiple and competing masculinities, which are cross-cut by other social categories” (Helms 2006, 344) such as race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, and geographical locations. However, it is yet to be explored more in-depth how the Hungarian government and other local actors use competing forms of masculinity to construct Hungary’s national self in expressions of an illiberal “masculine” ideal. In this article, I examine the complicated nexus between the national self (specifically, the Orbán government that attempts to project this aura of illiberal masculinity) and its national and international Others, and their gendered and racialized significance in Hungarian public discourse on sovereignty. Keeping the government’s aspirational middle ground in mind between the East and West, this article analyzes the specific sites and nuances in the (re)production of heteronormative masculinities and the role of these masculinities in the construction of different national (governmental) and local (municipality) sovereignties.

By utilizing an intersectional analytical framework (Crenshaw 1991; Collins 1993; Brah 1996; Verloo 2006; Hancock 2007; Kóczé 2009; Dhamoon 2011; Levine-Rasky 2011; Hankivsky and Mussell 2018; Nath, Tungohan, and Gaucher 2018) “across several axes of difference” (Norocel et al. 2020, 425), this article explores how interlocking systems of power operate in the production of the masculine state against different feminized and feminizing actors. Specifically, the article uses this analytical lens along with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough 1992; Fairclough and Wodak 1997; Milliken 1999; Lazar 2005; Wodak and Meyer 2009; Norocel et al. 2020) to explore both political processes in Hungary against the unfolding of the 2015 humanitarian crisis and its aftermath, as well as the discursive and binary constructions of the Eastern Other that emerged around this time. These analytical approaches provide a valuable framework for making overlapping systems of power and the hierarchization of difference visible, at the intersection of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. They also show how hegemonic discourses are “unstable grids” that are “always in the process of being articulated” (Doty 1996, 6, cited in Milliken 1999, 230) to “fix” the underlying “regime of truth” (230). The emergence of the national and international Others in Hungarian illiberal public discourse presents a critical case for “multiple-axis thinking.” This is important because, similar to the persistence of various blind spots in political science literature for simultaneously considering race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class (Hawkesworth 2016, 2; Krook and Nugent 2016), earlier work on illiberalism and Hungarian nationalism has also often fallen into the same trap. This literature often considers the “gendered subjects” of illiberalism as predominantly “unmarked or implicitly white” (Brown 2014, cited in Tolley 2022, 3). This is particularly relevant to the central question of this article, which is to understand how the anti-migrant rhetoric, the surrounding anti-genderism framework, and the case study on Ásotthalom have come together in expressions of masculinized state sovereignty in Hungary after 2015.

Data and Method

Michelle Lazar writes that discourse is “a site of struggle, where forces of social (re)production and contestation are played out” (2005, 4). This article builds on analyzing the gradual militarization of public life in Hungary via select sites of gendered and racialized struggles shaped by key figures and institutions. The article weaves together research conducted on governmental rhetoric and restrictive bordering practices (published by the Cabinet Office of the Prime Minister), constitutional court decisions (from the website of the Constitutional Court of Hungary), pro-governmental media coverage (from *Origo*, *Magyar Nemzet*, *Magyar Hírlap*, *Demokrata*, *Pestisrációk*), radical right-wing social media accounts and websites (Mi Hazánk Mozgalom and László Toroczkai from Facebook and YouTube), and select speeches by the Prime Minister of Hungary (from the official website of the Prime Minister) between 2014 and 2022. These texts and audiovisual materials are important to understand the intimate entanglement between competing and shifting forms of masculinity in contemporary Hungarian politics concerning sovereignty in the case of Ásotthalom,

a village in Southern Hungary near the Serbian border. This case is located in the context of larger competing right-wing and governmental discourses directed at spheres of the national/international and categories of East/West. The article predominantly focuses on this one case study, but it also engages with select contextualizing discourses to show the complex interweaving of external/internal bordering politics in expressions of masculine, hetero-nationalist (Yuval-Davis 1997; Graff 2009), Hungarian state sovereignty.

Between 2017 and 2023, I collected over 120 relevant Hungarian media articles and blog posts centering on migration, migrants, illegality, border control, border hunters, Ásotthalom, gender, the West, and the European Union. The data I analyzed were selected about key political events as illustrative cases of emerging social processes and shifts in Hungary. These events were identified as key sites of struggle where the construction of different national and local sovereignties and specific positioning of masculinities took place along with the (re)articulation of national identities. The article maps how competing forms of sovereignties were asserted by actors of right-wing political parties, different paramilitary groups, governmental institutions, the prime minister, governmental media platforms, the new constitution of Hungary, and the Hungarian Constitutional Court's select decisions.

This article builds on this empirical material to examine the gradual militarization of Hungarian public discourse at the local and national levels. Norman Fairclough argues that “texts are sensitive barometers of social processes, movement and diversity, and textual analysis can provide particularly good indicators of social change” (1992, 211). The textual data grounding this article aims to provide evidence for these social changes in Hungary, where the gendered and racialized figure of the international and national Others emerged at the time, such as the European migrant crisis in 2015 when a “redefinition of social relations” and “reconstitution of social identities” (Fairclough 1992, 211) took place between the Hungarian government and its political community. Operationalizing CDA as a method allowed a more nuanced analytical engagement with categories of East/West, their productive qualities, and their relationship to specific texts, right-wing political actors, and the surrounding political contexts.

Nationalism and the Larger Anti-“Genderism” Project

Since the summer of 2015, various laws and policies have been passed by the government that targeted its “undesirable” others. These laws (such as the legislation around the building of the Southern border fence or strict militarized law enforcement around Hungary's borders) are rooted in the context of anti-migration rhetoric, both at the governmental and municipality levels, as it was in the case of Ásotthalom. Both local and national anti-migration discourses attempt to distinguish the illiberal national self from the feminized Western international sphere via competing sovereignty claims. Spheres of the international are associated by the government and local municipalities with “leftists from Brussels,” the liberal “Soros network,” and “LGBT propaganda” (*Magyar Nemzet*, September 29, 2021). Furthermore, legal measures to control the Hungarian state's various “feminized” others have also contributed to particular competing discourses of sovereignty between the national and local levels. These competing discourses of sovereignty between the government and the mayor of Ásotthalom not only delimit spheres of the national and international, West and East, but also shape and (re)produce the gendered meanings attached to these spheres. By doing that, the government and other right-wing actors have negotiated the boundaries and ideological constructions of East and West and Hungary's “appropriate” illiberal masculine positions in relation to them.

As other scholars have argued earlier, investigating the larger underlying transnational anti-gender ideological project of the current government (Kováts, Poim, and Pető 2015; Norocel 2015; Grzebalska and Pető 2018; Kováts and Pető 2017; Paternotte and Kuhar 2018; Krizsán and Roggeband 2021; Thorleifsson 2021; and Graff and Korolczuk 2022) is crucial for understanding these specific gendered elements of Hungarian right-wing discourses and how different political

actors negotiate boundaries of the nation and assert their claims of sovereignty against the Eastern and Western Other. Graff and Korolczuk write that anti-gender mobilizations and campaigners emerged around 2010 as a “new political configuration” that mobilizes rhetoric that can be perceived as a “reactionary critique of neoliberalism” (2022). In the larger post-socialist space, anti-gender discourses and mobilization have a shared pattern of contending that Western policies and civil-rights campaigns advocating for gender equality and equal rights for sexual minorities are “imposed by transnational elite organizations” predominantly led by George Soros (2022, 96). The activities of these often Western-funded organizations are viewed as a “colonizing assault” on “families, local democracy,” and the given state’s sovereignty (96). We can also observe similar tendencies in Russia, Poland, Romania, and Croatia. However, what makes the case of Hungary exemplary in this region is that among the current member states of the European Union, Hungary is not considered a democracy anymore but an “electoral autocracy” by the European Parliament as of September 2022. The resolution of the European Parliament noted the “increasing consensus among experts” that the country “has become the EU’s first authoritarian” member state (European Parliament resolution P9_TA(2022)0324). The significant changes in its political system and its simultaneous presence in the EU set Hungary apart from other EU member states or Eastern European countries outside the EU with similar anti-gender and anti-migration rhetoric and policies.

This article builds on the existing scholarship on anti-gender movements while employing an intersectional analytical lens to disentangle how anti-gender discourses are rooted in the context of anti-migration policies and how the anti-gender ideological project further shapes anti-migration rhetoric at both the national and sub-national levels. The case for analyzing this entanglement between anti-genderism and anti-migration policies is further evidenced by the recent work of Éva Fodor, who analyzed 156 media articles published in select months between 2018 and 2020. Her findings show that the government’s rhetoric around the term gender was predominantly utilized “to weave a story about migration and Hungary’s struggle against the European Union’s migration quota” (Fodor 2022, 18). In her analysis, the European Union is often conceptualized in these governmental media platforms as a “pro-gender enemy of the Hungarian nation” (19). This article takes a further look at the relationship between anti-gender and anti-migration discourses along with analyzing multiple axes of power concerning: (1) heteronormativity, (2) racialized and ethnicized hierarchies, (3) and the making of a militarized border regime in Southern Hungary. These axes of power will be operationalized to explain how this relationship between anti-gender and anti-migration discourses shapes the ways the examined political actors publicly assert their masculine roles in the case of Ásotthalom. The anti-gender and anti-migration discourses take particular forms in relation to strategically selected Western and Eastern Others, who became recurring reference points for these political actors to negotiate competing discourses of sovereignty through masculinized performances, both at the governmental and the municipality level.

Hungarian Heteronormativity Against Brussels and the West

The larger governmental anti-gender ideological project includes rhetorical and legal attempts by the government to frame questions of gender and marriage equality, and gender identity as Western concepts that foreign actors “force” on the Hungarian public. It also includes specific legislative decisions to ban gender studies education in Hungary (*Inside Higher Ed*, October 17, 2018), LGBTQ+-related books, or television content accused of depicting non-straight relationships and non-normative gender identities (*Deutsche Welle*, July 8, 2021). This anti-gender framework is an important entry point into understanding the linkage between Hungarian nationalism and specific articulations of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005) and in certain instances, performances of militarized masculinity to amplify these traditionalist gendered and racialized relations of power (Williams 1994; Enloe 2007; Richter-Montpetit 2007; Eichler 2014). The construction of Hungarian illiberalism and European identity is intimately tied

with different insecurities of the state, whether negotiated at the newly erected barbed-wire border or by fighting against the alleged feminizing and reterritorializing gender ideology of the West. The gendered, sexualized, racialized, and classed aspects of Hungarian citizenship and social membership are negotiated by hegemonic constructions of gendered and racialized positions (Nagel 1998; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). These idealized gendered positions prescribe the “proper” and, in the governmental interpretations, biologically determined places for men and women allegedly threatened on two fronts: by Western gender ideology and the hyper-masculine Eastern Muslim Other seeking refuge in Europe.

An early indication of the government of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s discourse on ideologically marking its position in relation to the West, liberal democracies, and the international sphere can be traced back to 2013 and 2014. In 2013, Orbán notoriously said about international banks and multinational companies and their “monopoly” under the previous socialist government that “the era of colonization is over” for these actors in Hungary (Szakacs 2013). Then in 2014, in his known “illiberal democracy” speech held in Romania, Orbán made an often-cited statement that Western “liberal values today incorporate corruption, sex, and violence” (Puddington 2017). Against the backdrop of these statements, Orbán has promoted his “Eastern” approach of “illiberal democracy” exemplified by the government’s absolute dominance over political institutions, a weak and limited minority opposition, parliamentary supremacy over pillars of checks and balances, various forms of fear-mongering rhetoric, anti-minority stance, a general hostility toward EU politics, and militarized border policies. Furthermore, Orbán’s illiberal populism¹ has been built on strong opposition to immigration and against the “public display” of non-normative sexualities and gender identities. The prime minister’s rhetoric has simultaneously combined anti-immigrant and heteronormative ideologies, which have become an important organizing logic of the government’s policies since the European refugee crisis.

Within these governmental discursive practices, notions of state sovereignty and gendered narratives about exerting state sovereignty have been constructed against the feminized West and the hyper-masculine East. One aspect of the government’s attempt to normalize its heteronormative illiberal policies concerning the West and East can be captured in its discourse against Western liberal democratic spaces and the state’s symbolic and political struggles around particular social identities. Korolczuk and Graff write that illiberal populism and the “global Right” handpicks selective discourses from both Leftist and feminist discourses (2018) in a way that it “construct[s] a new universalism” based on illiberal ideas around minority rights and representation and the societal role of religion and the family² (798). The current regime’s concept of illiberalism is instrumentalized at various levels combining nationalist, sovereignty-oriented, and pro-market ideologies (Geva and Santos 2021). In the past decade, Hungarian illiberalism has been deployed against liberal democracy as a particular concept, a set of values, and a logic for marking the boundaries of the political community. These boundaries are marked against liberalism as a political ideology, against the European Union and other Western institutions as a trans/international entity, and against the assumed hegemony of the liberal/leftist Western elite in the international sphere. Based on these positions, the government has attacked institutions associated with George Soros and notions of “open society,” Brussels, and NGOs funded from the West. They accuse these organizations of foreign-funded reterritorializing attempts to change the “fundamental values” of Hungarian statehood and society, particularly concerning the traditional heteronormative family model, cultural and gender identity, and immigration and national identity.

A notable and well-known example of the Hungarian government’s gendered symbolic disidentification practices with feminized Western spaces and “gender ideology” can be captured when, in November 2019, Hungary officially pulled out of participating in the annual international song contest called Eurovision. Although there were no official announcements from the government about the reasons for this, reportedly, semi-official remarks were made that were broadcast on pro-governmental media platforms. According to the comment of a well-known pro-Fidesz journalist in October, the song contest is an international “homosexual flotilla,” and not

participating in it “is advisable for mental health reasons” of the nation because “this is a disgusting, far-fetched propagandistic parade of otherness with figures like Conchita Wurst” that “ruin the public taste” (24.hu, October 29, 2019). The case of Conchita Wurst, one of the winners of the Eurovision song contest, signals an essential element of Hungary’s approach to heteronormative gender relations. Conchita is an Austrian drag queen and singer who won the Eurovision in 2014. Conchita’s victory prompted widespread disapproval from countries such as Russia, Turkey, Poland, Hungary, and Serbia, claiming that this is another example of Western “moral corruption” and its feminization of Europe.³

Essentializing heteronormativity as an innate Hungarian cultural value is important in delineating the Hungarian masculine national identity against the government’s perceived construction of a feminized European identity. Norms of Western spaces and non-hegemonic subject positions (minoritized groups) in Hungary are associated with “improper” masculinity, against which the “properly” masculine, illiberal national state claims to defend itself. Since this particular Eurovision event, anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric has gradually intensified at the national and local levels. In line with this rhetoric, a series of exclusionary legislations have been passed to enforce the government’s rigid gender regime.

The Gendered and Racialized Making of a Militarized Border Regime

Feminist scholarship on the gendered and sexualized nature of states, sovereignty, and security (Runyan and Peterson 2015; Weber 2016; Richter-Montpetit 2007) is essential for understanding how the Hungarian government mobilizes its state apparatus and militarized public discourse against both Western and Eastern spaces, its Others, and “European moral hierarchies” (Kallius 2017) embedded in gendered, racialized, and sexualized dynamics of citizenship. What makes the Hungarian case specific among other EU member states that use similar anti-gender and anti-migration rhetoric is that concurrently with the Hungarian government’s orientalist notions of the East that positions Hungarian Christianity at odds with Muslim immigrants, it also criticizes the idea of Western progression, modernization, and “supremacy” of liberal values. With these governmental concerns, the often-cited tectonic event is the 2015 European refugee crisis. Hungary played a significant role in enabling and exploiting the humanitarian crisis at its Southern border. Since the fall of 2015, selective images of the refugee crisis, women wearing a burqa, young men on the move, and footage about the erection of a border wall have been regularly used in public broadcasting channels, pro-government media platforms, and publicly funded billboard posters (Thorpe 2015). These visual references are readily available and mobilizable daily for the state’s gradual militarization of public discourse and its border apparatus at the Southern border.

However, this militarization of public discourse was not merely produced by the national government. Different expressions of the “proper” illiberal position were embedded in competing discourses of sovereignty claims and militarized discourses at the local and national levels, whether directed at immigrants, non-normative citizens, dissenting voices, or in the arena of international and EU politics. In his above-mentioned illiberal democracy speech, Orbán stated that there is “a race underway to find the method of community organization, the state, which is most capable of making a nation and a community internationally competitive” (Puddington 2017). This competition in the international space is rooted in the “masculinized memory” (Enloe 1989, 44) of imagined past “greatness” as well as in the future-oriented “chosenness” of Orbán’s ethno-national (“Viktor Orbán Sparks Outrage with Attack on ‘Race Mixing’ in Europe,” *The Guardian*, July 24, 2022) masculine state and his political community to fight against Western liberal institutions and the “progressive virus” they “cultured” and “unleashed on us” (*Website of the Hungarian Government*, May 4, 2023).

In the context of the Orbán government’s regularly utilized anti-genderism framework, the anti-migration rhetoric intensified along with the production of two competing forms of “militarized masculinity” (Williams 1994; Richter-Montpetit 2007; Enloe 2007). These have been the national

deployment of soldiers and police, and the mobilization of far-right paramilitary groups by a local mayor at the Southern border of Hungary since 2015. These processes played an essential role in constituting masculinized conceptions of Hungarian national identity based on the binary construction of gendered differences (McClintock 1993) and heterosexist state-centrism (Peterson 1999). What brings the various militarized border patrol groups and state-led performances together is their strategic performance of militarized masculinity, a particular “ideology of manliness” (Whitworth 2004), which is regularly constituted and normalized in various public media channels and state discourses of security. The media practices of the government – given its hegemonic position in the Hungarian media landscape (*New York Times*, November 29, 2018) – had a significant role in the gradual militarization of public discourse. These masculinized and militarized conceptions of the national self constitute the idealized hegemonic subject position of the nation, and they are put into specific political use depending on the context. For instance, in the context of the 2021 Summer Olympics games in Tokyo, in his interview with *Nemzeti Sport*, Orbán drew explicit connections between militarized masculinity and the Hungarian “male ideals” represented by Hungarian Olympians. He said that “rebuilding the army, introducing daily physical education at schools, and the fact that our male athletes have yet again climbed to the top of the podium, as well as the fact that we have football role models again, will be good to Hungary. All of this is also a huge help in raising our children” (*HVG*, August 13, 2021).⁴

This is one of the many rhetorical instances where the articulation of gendered difference takes place in Hungarian governmental discourse. Moreover, this statement was directly positioned in relation to the state’s illiberal masculine ideals vis-à-vis what the prime minister calls the “threatening” presence of “LGBTQ-madness” and “a unisex world.” These strategic discourses against the state’s internal others and the feminized Western spaces are evoked simultaneously with the state-sponsored, large-scale anti-migration campaign. The prime minister’s anti-migration rhetoric, specific policies, and the gradual militarization of the Southern border were built on a particularly gendered conception of the “migrant” that, according to Orbán, not only “poses a public security and terror risk” (*Politico*, July 27, 2016) but *he* “hunt[s] down our women and daughters” (Speech by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán on March 15, 2016). Similar to other illiberal regimes, the Hungarian government only mobilized an affirmative position around opposing domestic violence against women – considered primarily as reproducers of the nation – when the presumption of perpetrating this violence is attached to non-White, non-Christian “outsiders.” Gender-based violence is strategically linked to the hypermasculine East in the governmental discourse. Concurrently with the latter position, and similar to the case of Turkey (Arat 2022), the government has not only refused to ratify it retroactively in 2020 but has also actively campaigned for years against the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, more popularly known as the Istanbul Convention. The context of the withdrawal was yet another example of the government’s routinely declared intention and anti-colonial rhetoric (Korolczuk and Graff 2018, 797) to protect the polity from the spread of “Western propaganda,” and “liberal” “gender ideology” being enforced on the nation by EU institutions (*The Guardian*, May 5, 2020).

The entanglement between anti-gender and anti-migration discourses and the surrounding legal texts and court decisions shows the multiple forms of emasculating/feminizing subordinations present in making Hungary’s militarized border regime and the propagated masculine illiberal ideals undergirding it.

Pronatalism and Racialized/Ethnicized Hierarchies

The state’s masculine ideals are propagated via the simultaneous (re)production of race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class. The making of the Hungarian state’s hegemonic subject position⁵ is embedded in the image of the self-sustaining, middle-class, heterosexual, gender-conforming white Hungarian, whose desires stem from “defending the Christian roots of Europe,” “protecting”

national sovereignty against immigration and “Western influence,” and “do not fall for the LGBTQ-madness” and its surrounding multiculturalism (*Website of the Prime Minister*, March 4, 2021).

The anti-migration rhetoric that started during the summer and fall of 2015 also signaled the government’s universalizing crisis narrative that was predominantly narrated as the crisis for Europe, specifically “for European culture, for European women, for European religion, for European political systems” (Rajaram 2016, 5). As a result of concerted anti-migration efforts, the everyday anti-foreigner/anti-migrant and anti-Western rhetoric has become routine-like in public discourse. The mobilization against the figure of the hyper-masculine migrant from the East and the allegedly feminized West was embedded in hetero-nationalist and racialized discourses around hierarchical difference that were also used to justify the government’s ongoing “pro-family” and pronatalist policies.

One illustrative example of this entanglement between anti-migration and anti-minority discourses can be seen in how the government’s pronatalist rhetoric and policies were often juxtaposed with anti-migration statements. As Orbán recently said, “We cannot replace a Christian child with a Muslim man... Hungary can only be preserved as Hungarian by Hungarian children” (*Telex*, March 5, 2022).⁶ This pronatalist logic of the government is simultaneously at work to reiterate existing ethnicized and gendered domestic hierarchies. This logic can be seen in ongoing state incentives, where eligible married heterosexual couples could receive conditional loans to purchase a property after committing to produce a certain number of children (Beswick 2019). These policies strategically target heterosexual, non-Romani, upper- and middle-class couples (Szikra 2018; Lehotai 2020; Szántó 2021), and they have a particular political impact on maintaining deeply embedded hierarchies in the national context. The complicated interplay between anti-migration, anti-gender, and anti-minority discourses shows that Hungary’s gendered and racialized othering practices at the Southern border that became visible in the light of the European refugee crisis are deeply entangled with preexisting gendered and ethnicized domestic hierarchies before the summer of 2015. Anti-Romani rhetoric was reportedly used to justify the state’s masculine and militarized performance against migrants and asylum seekers. After 2015 these existing gendered and racialized/ethnicized hierarchies and the discourses around them became essential sites for negotiating competing masculinized expressions of sovereignty among different governmental and municipal actors in the case of Ásotthalom.

Debates of Sovereignty: The Case of Ásotthalom

The case study analyzed in this article is located in the borderlands of Hungary and Serbia. During the summer of 2015, the Hungarian government erected an approximately 110-mile-long razor-wire fence at the Southern border as part of its anti-migration campaign and militarized border enforcement. In parallel with governmental anti-migration legislation at the national level and the use of police enforcement and a newly established permanent regiment of the Emergency Police (“Készenléti Rendőrség”), the so-called “border hunters” (“határ vadász”) squads⁷ (*Website of the Prime Minister*, September 9, 2022), localized forms of far-right resistance also emerged in Southern Hungary. These localized forms of resistance took the form of anti-migration rhetoric by local political actors, exclusionary municipal legislations, and paramilitary border patrolling by the so-called field rangers (“mezőőrök”), which emerged in a village called Ásotthalom with about 4,000 inhabitants.

The previous mayor, László Toroczkai, and different border patrol groups have advocated for militarized forms of vigilante control during and since the summer of 2015 to defend Hungarians and their claimed European values. In an interview in June 2015, Toroczkai welcomed the building of the border fence, emphasizing that he has long advocated for this. He said, “I am not jealous that the government is carrying out my idea. I am glad and congratulate the government that it had enough courage and determination to take this step” (*Associated Press*, June 18, 2015).

Different instances of militarized masculinity endorsed by Toroczkai reportedly included regular patrolling activities along the Southern border of Hungary, taking dehumanizing images of people crossing the border, intimidating people on the move by harassing them, and providing physical obstacles to prevent them from moving. The militarized response of the mayor, who was successfully elected three times to lead the village, was unsurprising. Toroczkai was first a member of the radical right-wing party Jobbik between 2016 and 2018 (as well as Dóra Dúró, during 2005–2018), and then moved further to the far-right by founding Our Homeland Movement (Mi Hazánk Mozgalom) in 2018. He was also well-known for his far-right political views, the founding of his militant, irredentist organization, the 64 Counties Youth Movement (HVIM), his violent siege with football hooligans to the public TV (MTV) headquarters in 2006, and his regular physical disruption of Pride marches in Budapest (*Hungarian Spectrum*, December 17, 2013). According to him, disrupting Pride and other related LGBTQ+ activities is a justified defense of “normality” because “they want to make everyone homosexual” (444, March 14, 2022). The mayor regularly posted about his border patrolling activities on Facebook and displayed dehumanizing images of asylum seekers. Aside from the tension around competing sovereignty claims of “adequate” border control between Toroczkai and the government, the mayor is also a founding member of a recently launched anti-vaccine far-right party, Our Homeland Movement, which ran against the governing parties in the national assembly elections in April 2022. After the most recent national elections, this party formed the second-largest opposition faction in the Parliament. After the national assembly elections in 2022, Toroczkai received his mandate from the party list, stepped down as mayor, and assumed his new office⁸ at the national level. However, he is still actively present in the everyday life of Ásotthalom (*Telex*, August 7, 2022).

Regarding his outreach, Toroczkai is a well-known and actively followed figure in the Hungarian public sphere. He has over 186 thousand followers with over 42 million overall views on YouTube, over 44 thousand followers on TikTok, and about 22 thousand followers on Twitter.⁹ In addition, he used to have an active Facebook page with over 207 thousand followers until the social media site repeatedly suspended his account (along with the Facebook page of Our Homeland Movement with 80,000 followers) in 2020 for violating community guidelines (*24.hu*, October 27, 2020).

In parallel with the paramilitary group activities of the mayor and his municipality’s use of local field rangers at the Southern border, the Hungarian government has mobilized soldiers and police officers to provide permanent border surveillance. After building the fence, on its first anniversary in August 2016, the prime minister said, “If we cannot do it nicely, we have to hold them back by force. And we will do it, too” (*Independent*, August 27, 2016). He earlier expedited building the border fence by raising the daily per diem of soldiers (*Magyar Nemzet*, August 10, 2015) mobilized for construction along with public workers and inmates from close-by prison complexes (*Associated Press*, September 21, 2016). The border patrols also regularly performed violent pushback of asylum claimants to Serbia (Balla, 2016), and the government increased the number of soldiers at the borders.

The building of the Southern border fence served as a crucial marker of the masculine national self against feminized Western spaces and the hyper-masculine Eastern Other. The competing norm-making and the mobilization of militarized actors around the border fence were used by both the illiberal Hungarian government and the mayor of Ásotthalom to strategically position their assertion of legitimacy in being the most masculine, sovereign actor to carry out the anti-migration and anti-gender policies. Toroczkai often contested the government’s border policies for not being efficient enough and called the prime minister out for expecting the police to drive “migrants armed with Kalashnikovs”¹⁰ back to Serbia (*168 Óra*, June 27, 2022) instead of “send[ing] all illegal immigrants to labor camps in Hungary before their deportation” or “sending the illegal immigrants back to Rwanda”¹¹ (*Index*, July 2, 2022), referring to the widely criticized recent policy plan of the British government to deport asylum seekers. The subsequent sections will discuss how the national government, state institutions, and the local municipality used competing legislations and discourses of sovereignty to declare and take ownership of the most “appropriate masculine”

militarized response at Hungary's borders. The stake of these competing discourses of sovereignty between the government and the mayor was to prove which actor acted more in line with the illiberal masculine ideals propagated by right-wing discourses and thereby on behalf of the Hungarian political community.

The Surrounding National Legal Context

Since 2010, a series of constitutional amendments have been passed that re-enforced gendered, racialized, and classed hierarchies of power. These included the Fourth and Seventh Amendments of the Fundamental Law of Hungary (2020), which incorporated provisions that authorized local municipalities to criminalize homelessness. While the Fourth Amendment prescribed the protection of public spaces from homelessness and brought the heteronormative family unit to the forefront of politics at the constitutional level, the Seventh Amendment passed in 2018 made further references to defending the public order (Fundamental Law of Hungary 2020, art. XXII, sec. 3). These constitutional provisions about protecting the public order were surrounded by anti-migration and anti-Western discourses both in the reasoning of these texts and in the larger societal discussion around them. The anti-immigration statements were inserted in the Constitution under the guise of “protecting Hungary’s Christian culture” and the constitutional identity as “an obligation of every organ of the State” (Fundamental Law of Hungary 2020, art. R, sec. 4). More specifically, Article XIV (1) of the amendment states that “No foreign population shall be settled in Hungary.” In the general reasoning section of the bill when it was proposed, this need for protection was framed as follows:

Mass immigration affecting Europe and the activity of pro-immigration forces threaten the national sovereignty of Hungary. Brussels intended to introduce a mandatory, automatic quota-based distribution of migrants residing in and coming to Europe, which endangers our country’s safety and permanently changes Hungary’s population and culture. (T/332 Seventh Amendment of the Fundamental Law of Hungary 2020.)¹²

The constitution also emphasizes the obligation of the police to protect the borders: “The core duties of the police shall be the prevention and investigation of criminal offenses, and the protection of public security, public order, and the order of state borders. The police shall participate in preventing illegal immigration” (Fundamental Law of Hungary 2020, art. 46, sec. 1). Inserting the role of the police in preventing illegal immigration was not an accidental statement in the new provisions at the time. In fact, the role of the police was an important site of contestation between the government and the mayor. This was played out in competing discourses around the role of the police mobilized by the state, the role of field rangers mobilized by the local municipalities around the Southern border, and the il/legality of civilian border patrols mobilized by right-wing groups in fighting against illegal immigration since the summer of 2015. These discourses and Toroczkaï’s years-long bending of the boundaries between the role of police, field rangers, and local paramilitary groups contributed to further tensions between the ruling parties and the mayor’s far-right mobilization both at the municipal and the national levels.

The Competing Local Legal Context

While the parliamentary legislature imposed these constitutional and legal changes, the mayor of Ásotthalom introduced and adopted his series of seemingly unrelated legislations in the local council in 2016. This legislation had provisions banning any alleged form of “performing Muslim activities” and any public display of affection that “diverges” from the heteronormative definition of family stated by the Fundamental Law of Hungary 2020. These prohibited wearing the burqa, niqab, and chador, and building and restricting activities of muezzins in 2016. This was overturned by the Constitutional Court (“Alkotmánybíróság,” AB) in 2017, based on the legal argument that local

municipalities are not authorized to regulate groups and individuals that would directly infringe on their constitutional rights (Constitutional Court Decision 7/2017. [IV.18.] AB). The mayor on Facebook termed these municipality legislations as an “action plan” for “a defense against the forced mass resettlement [of migrants] by Brussels ... more than 90 percent [of which] are Muslims.” On his Facebook page, he also claimed and legitimized his “action plan” and declarations of “taking the actions on our own” by saying that some of these normative ideals “were adopted from the western half of the European Union,” such as from Switzerland¹³ and France. As 7 / B. § of the local bylaw of Ásotthalom states:

Not allowed in public areas:

- a) The activity of muezzins, as it is capable of disturbing the public order, and it is also capable of evoking fear, panic, and scandal among the local population;
- b) Wearing the burqas, niqab, and chadors that cover the whole body and the head or the whole or part of the face, and wearing a full-body swimsuit, including the so-called burkini.
- c) Performing any propaganda activity that presents the institution of marriage in any other way than a relationship between a man and a woman, as it is defined by the Fundamental Law, including the display of any public action, especially performances, demonstrations, posters, flyers, and audio advertising.
- d) Performing any kind of propaganda activity that violates the Fundamental Law by not recognizing marriage or parent-child relationships as the sole basis for family relationships, including any public action, especially performances, demonstrations, posters, flyers, and audio advertising. (Translated from Constitutional Court Decision 7/2017. [IV.18.] AB)¹⁴

According to the ruling of the Constitutional Court, this particular local municipality legislation conflicts with the Constitution because the Fundamental Law states that only parliamentary law can establish norms about constitutional rights and duties. The overturning of the local municipality regulation was predominantly positioned as a technicality and procedural issue, but its content was not challenged substantively. It was mainly discussed as a matter of competing discourses of jurisdiction over who is the sovereign man who can define and regulate on behalf of the political community what and who “is capable of disturbing the public order.” Three of the judges attached their concurring opinions to this decision where they stated that while “considering the evident dangers of Europe’s Islamization,” the court did not investigate the “possible restrictions of practicing Islam and its related accessories displayed in public” (7/2017. [IV.18.] AB). Their decision reinforced the same rhetoric as the mayor’s local regulation that was overturned, and their opinion even opened up a potential legal avenue for discussing the question within a “more appropriate” national legislative framework.

After the Constitutional Court’s decision in April 2017, Toroczkai passed a new decree with a slightly modified text, thereby maintaining this competitive negotiation of sovereignty and militarized masculine responses at the Southern border. This text proposed to ban the “covering of one’s face in a public space or building with clothing or other objects”¹⁵ (*Magyar Narancs*, December 6, 2017) on November 23, 2017 (18/2017 Municipality Decree of Ásotthalom).¹⁶ The county government office of Csongrád struck down this decree¹⁷ for the same jurisdictional reason as previously, which was confirmed by the Curia of Hungary (“Kúria”) both in 2017 (Köf.5009/2017/4) and 2018 (Köf.5006/2018/3) since the mayor responded that he will not withdraw the decree until the highest court decision. On October 15, 2018, then-independent MP Dóra Dúró, who was expelled from Jobbik and then joined the “Our Homeland Movement” founded by Toroczkai in the summer of 2018, submitted an amendment (T/2638) to the National Assembly. This amendment was endorsed and widely promoted by Toroczkai and his Party. The submission was also endorsed by governmental MPs to be registered as part of the agenda for further discussion in the Parliament’s National Defense and Law Enforcement permanent committee (Népszava, November 22, 2018). This is only the initial step of potentially legislating a

national ban on wearing a burqa, and it is yet to be seen what other forms these competing discourses of masculinized sovereignty might take with the newly formed National Assembly that also includes the mayor's Our Homeland Movement after the April 2022 national elections. In light of this submission, Toroczkai said that Hungarian institutions must take a firmer stance on this proposal and affirm that "Islam is not compatible with Hungarian values and identity" (*Echo TV*, November 26, 2018). After reflecting on the role of local legislation in Ásotthalom, Toroczkai claimed that since "Hungary is in a constitutional crisis" (*Telex*, January 20, 2022), these issues need to be taken to the national level and be legislated constitutionally by an appropriate National Assembly.

The former mayor claimed several times that the governing parties consider them "enemies" (*Telex*, January 20, 2022) and that they are competing with them by "stealing" their ideas and rhetoric. After being elected to the Parliament, these actors' combative and competitive relationships persist. Although he critiqued the Hungarian government for its inadequate response to illegal migration, Toroczkai welcomed its recent decision to hire more "border hunters"¹⁸ (*Index*, July 1, 2022). However, he argued that these hiring practices should not take place within the framework of the police force. Instead, he campaigned that the state should set up a separate border patrol agency equipped with state-provided military gear. These competing discourses of masculinity aim to define who the more masculine and militarized sovereign actor is under the current illiberal institutional conditions.

The Gradual Militarization of the Hungarian Public Sphere

Analyzing the local municipality's legislation on migration and the use of different border patrolling actors is essential to make sense of the complicated interplay between the politics of the local municipality and the government. The proposed legislative package and surrounding paramilitary patrolling acts of the former mayor of Ásotthalom displayed the local municipality's approach toward the figure of the hyper-masculine migrant from the East. This approach contends that migration cannot be countered by the feminized West, namely the EU's common migration policy or the Hungarian government's border politics, but by the locally propagated illiberal masculine norms.

At first glance, the government's public response to these local decrees seems to reflect its own anti-migration and anti-gender agenda. However, this article suggests an added reading of this rivalry over exclusionary legislation. The article argues that this rivalry can be viewed as a manifestation of competing masculinities over sovereignty. These manifestations take specific forms in the Eastern European geography of masculinities and show the complicated interplay between negotiating categories of East and West through gendered and racialized relations of power. On the one hand, the Hungarian government co-opted some of the far-right's anti-migration stances while simultaneously normalizing its discourses of public order and cultural values. This was achieved by claiming that Hungary's illiberal government is the "solution" to defend Hungarians from both extremes (the Westernized liberal/leftist opposition and the far-right) of the political spectrum.

On the other hand, the case of Ásotthalom shows the inherent tensions, instability, and "constant (re)negotiation" (Norocel et al. 2020, 442) involved in asserting the illiberal masculine position between different right-wing political actors in Hungary. These competing discourses of sovereignty produce their own logic and relations with masculinization/feminization and militarization. The mayor and the prime minister evoked specific elements of militarized masculinity in the legal and discursive battles between the local municipality, the constitutional court, and local courts and in their masculinized performances at the Southern border. These competing and overlapping discursive practices are articulated over declarations of the proper public order, what that public order entails, and who the sovereign man is that can confer legitimacy over these illiberal ideals.

One of the tensions in asserting these militarized masculine positions between the mayor and the government emerged around the Hungarian government's strategically deployed "homofriendliness" (Langlois 2015) in comparison to Toroczkai's views. According to Orbán, he "tolerates homosexuals" as long as "they are not provocative" because "tolerance... does not mean that we would apply the same rules for people whose lifestyles are different from our own. We differentiate between them and us" (*Diggit Magazine*, April 12, 2018). According to the government, any perceived disruption of the illiberal gender order, such as pride marches and the Eurovision song contest, is an "organized" international attack against Hungarian values, traditionalism, and Christianity. The government strategically mobilized its relative homofriendliness toward sexual minorities in Hungary to reiterate essentialized views of Islam and the securitized fears about the "invasion of foreign Muslim bodies." While doing that, the government mapped non-normative sexualities and bodies onto the moral hierarchies of East and West, making a distinctive binary between tolerable "good homosexuals" and undesirable "bad queers." Toroczkai and his Our Homeland Movement rejected this select homofriendliness. He argued that the governing parties do politics for strategic reasons and votes, while his movement "does politics straight from their heart" (*Egyetem TV*, 2021).

The other central tension in asserting the appropriate militarized masculine position between these two actors concerned the use of field rangers by the municipality. The municipality of Ásotthalom hired civil field rangers to conduct border patrolling activities. In the fall of 2021, the mayor posted a video titled "Manhunting at the border after the attacks" ("Támadások után embervadászat a határon"). The video shows field rangers in action, equipped with weapons searching for migrants at the Southern border. The video claims that field rangers have successfully conducted these manhunting activities for years (444, January 14, 2022). The Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (HCLU/TASZ), a human rights NGO often attacked by both the Hungarian government and the mayor for receiving funding from abroad (*Index*, January 11, 2017), started an investigative process (*HCLU*, February 3, 2022) and asked the relevant county government office and police to examine whether this is a lawful use of civil field rangers whose primary role would be to protect agricultural lands and the protection of crops, animals, and farm equipment (Act CXX of 2012). HCLU argued that the civilian border patrolling activities of Ásotthalom are "arbitrary and illegal," and the Hungarian government supports these illegal activities by continuously funding (*HVG*, November 29, 2022) field rangers in nine villages along the borders. A lower court first fined the field rangers of Ásotthalom, then a second instance court reduced this fine to a warning (444, December 20, 2022). Toroczkai and the Our Homeland Movement have actively attacked HCLU and campaigned to ban the organization upon entering the Parliament. The most recent rivalry between Toroczkai and the government is the result of the Csongrád-Csanád County Government starting an investigation at the end of December 2022 against the current and the former mayor of Ásotthalom requesting information from these actors in their role in giving orders to field rangers and the content of these orders concerning "public safety and order." Toroczkai posted a video on social media claiming that he "will not run away from the government and continue the fight" and "takes full responsibility for giving the orders to the field rangers to stop illegal immigration and protect decent Hungarians" (YouTube, December 30, 2022).

Meanwhile, this ongoing rivalry around anti-migration and anti-gender rhetoric between the mayor and the Hungarian government switched gears and is taking place within the framework of the national legislature after the 2022 elections. It is yet to be seen how these competing forms of masculinized sovereignties will be performed at the national level in the upcoming parliamentary cycles. This article contends that the Southern border fence is an important site for these actors to define the changing parameters of militarized masculinity. Discourses around this border fence produce particular tensions, and the actors interpret their militarized masculine positions in relation to gendered and racialized relations of power. The political and legal context of the border fence is where the boundaries of West and East, feminized vs. masculinized positions, and different configurations of militarized masculinity are marked in the nationalist imaginary. Furthermore, the

border fence was an entry point into the ongoing militarization of Hungarian public life. The competing masculinized articulations of this militarization – at the level of state-appointed police forces and paramilitary troops, the spectacle of governmental politicians going to the Southern border, the affirmation of these policies by the majority of inhabitants in Ásotthalom (the current mayor received 57,85% of votes in the interim mayoral elections in August 2022) – play a key role not only in the mayor becoming an elected member of the parliament but also in the state’s permanent securitizing processes against internal and external others.

Conclusion

This article investigated how hetero-nationalism, racialized and ethnicized hierarchies, and competing forms of militarized masculinity work simultaneously, focusing on the case of Ásotthalom and its continued relevance today. This article argued for using an intersectional analytical lens to understand how binary constructions of East/West shape Hungarian politics at the intersection of anti-migration and anti-gender discourses. Negotiating the permeable borders of East/West in relation to the illiberal masculine position of Hungary plays a vital role in creating competing forms of masculinized sovereignty at the national and local levels. These competing discourses between Toroczkai and the Hungarian government emerged at a time when there was a significant shift in global politics during and in the aftermath of the humanitarian crisis in 2015. The case of Ásotthalom showed some overlap between these actors. It also showed the inherent tensions and continuous negotiation involved in their encounters while navigating their masculinized and militarized sovereignty claims. These competing assertions of sovereignty brought about an ongoing rivalry between these masculinized sovereignty claims and shaped the gradual militarization of Hungarian public discourse at the intersection of anti-Western, anti-gender, and anti-migration narratives. These gendered and racialized narratives about different feminized and feminizing actors were at the forefront of producing competing expressions of masculinized state sovereignty. Concurrently with these processes, the democratic backsliding and the various exclusionary legislation in Hungary have remained mostly unchallenged within the framework of the European Union, while pro-Orbán voices and illiberal non-democratic practices are growing steadily.

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Notes

- 1 Building on Korolczuk and Graff’s earlier use of the term and their references to Wodak’s work, they define illiberal populism “as an ideological orientation based on ‘a nativist concept of belonging, linked to a chauvinist and racialized concept of ‘the people’ and ‘the nation’” (Wodak 2015, 47, cited in Korolczuk and Graff 2018, 798). Moreover, this ideology is also oriented against experts and political and intellectual elites, as well as liberal principles of minority and individual rights (798). In a later piece, the authors argue that the term “illiberal populism” was used to “underscore the fact that the right-wing actors openly challenge liberalism understood as individual freedoms, minority rights, and pluralism” (Graff and Korolczuk 2022, 37). However, they opt to replace this term with “the more precise concept of right-wing populism, recognizing the significance of the opposition between corrupt elites and innocent people as the key structuring principle of the phenomenon at hand” (37).
- 2 More on the principles of this can be found in the “World Family Declaration” published by the World Congress of Families, n.d., <http://worldfamilydeclaration.org/> (cited in Korolczuk and Graff 2018, 798) as well as on the website of the 4th Budapest Demographic Summit organized

by Katalin Novak, Hungarian Minister for Families in 2021. <https://budapestidemografiaicsucs.hu/en/speakers>. (Accessed September 2, 2022.)

- 3 There are excellent in-depth queer IR readings on the case of Conchita Wurst published by Cynthia Weber (“Queer International Relations,” 2016) and Catherine Baker (“The ‘Gay Olympics’? The Eurovision Song Contest and the Politics of LGBT/European Belonging,” 2017).
- 4 Translated from “Biztos vagyok abban, hogy a hadsereg újjáépítése, a mindennapos iskolai testnevelés bevezetése és az, hogy a férfi sportolóink újra felkapaszkodtak a dobogó tetejére, és hogy ismét vannak futballista példaképeink, ez így együtt jót fog tenni Magyarországnak. Mindez óriási segítség a gyerekek nevelésében.”
- 5 As part of the Fourth Amendment, the government had already established other exclusionary points for future evocations. In these ordered passages, the Hungarian state declared its intended protection of the “institution of marriage is the union of a man and a woman established by voluntary decision and the family is the basis of the survival of the nation. Family ties are based on marriage or the relationship between parents and children. The mother shall be a woman, the father shall be a man” (Fundamental Law of Hungary 2020, Art. L, sec. 1).
- 6 Translated from “Az nem megy, egy keresztény gyereket nem lehet kiváltani egy muszlim férfival...mert Magyarországot csak a magyar gyerekek tudják magyarnak megtartani.”
- 7 From August 2022, the Hungarian Emergency Police has established a new permanent unit, the Border Hunter Regiment (“Határ vadász Ezred”) with Border Hunter Squads (“Határ vadász Század”) in five border counties (Bács-Kiskun, Csongrád-Csanád, Békés, Hajdú-Bihar, and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties). Reportedly the first permanent officers took their oath on September 9, 2022.
- 8 The parliamentary position is in conflict with holding a mayoral position. Therefore, interim mayoral elections were held in August 2022, and the former deputy mayor and Our Homeland Movement backed, Renáta Papp was elected as the new mayor (*Nemzeti Választási Iroda*, August 7, 2022).
- 9 Recorded as of January 2023.
- 10 The Hungarian expression that Toroczkaï used was “a kormány azt kéri, hogy taxitassák őket vissza Szerbiába.” This expression is insinuating that the Hungarian policemen at the borders are expected to act as cab drivers to drive migrants back to Serbia.
- 11 Excerpts translated from “Ne a szerb oldalra taxitassuk vissza a bűnözőket, hanem azonnal vegyék őrizetbe őket, és vagy itthoni munkatáborba kerüljenek a kitoloncolásuk előtt, vagy legalább Ruandáig deportáljuk őket.”
- 12 Translated by the Hungarian Helsinki Committee (HHC).
- 13 Although Toroczkaï’s post lumps together Switzerland and France as the “Western half of the European Union,” Switzerland is not an EU member state.
- 14 Translated from “7/2017. (IV. 18.) AB határozat Ásotthalom Nagyközségi Önkormányzat Képviselő-testületének a közösségi együttélés alapvető szabályairól szóló 12/2014. (IV. 20.) önkormányzati rendelete 7/B. §-a alaptörvény-ellenességének megállapításáról és megsemmisítéséről” in the Official Gazette of the Constitutional Court (AK).
- 15 Excerpts translated from “A közösségi együttélés alapvető szabályaival ellentétes magatartást valósít meg, aki arcvonásait közterületen vagy középületben ruházatával vagy egyéb tárggyal úgy rejti vagy takarja el, hogy ezáltal mások számára felismerhetetlenné válik.”
- 16 Translated from “Ásotthalom Nagyközségi Önkormányzat Képviselő-testületének 18/2017. (XI.23.) önkormányzati rendelete a közösségi együttélés alapvető szabályairól szóló 12/2014. (IV.30.) önkormányzati rendelet módosításáról” in the National Legislation Database.
- 17 According to the now archived website of Kormányhivatal (n.d.), county government offices are “territorial administrative organs of the Government with general competence, and as such the biggest administrative units at territorial level.” Their role is to “further the implantation of government policies at the territorial level. They exercise coordinative, authority-type, proposing and consultative powers.”
- 18 Translated from “határ vadász.”

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