

The Spectacle of Security in the Case of Hungarian Far-Right Paramilitary Groups

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Abstract

This paper takes up the emergence of far-right patrols in Hungary in 2011 and provides an interpretation that is centered on security as a need, a practice, and a discourse. The argument is that these patrols used a logic of spectacle in order to legitimize their security agenda, an agenda that was driven by both symbolic and explicit violence. The patrols emerged in the context of a steady growth in and acceptance of far-right ideas and practices in Hungary. These practices and ideas were focused mostly on the ‘Gypsy problem,’ which in Hungary has been articulated as a threat posed by Roma communities. This is a perceived threat to the safety and national and cultural integrity of the Hungarian population, and as such, the far-right groups chose to tackle this threat through security measures. The patrols emerged in the Hungarian countryside as a way to increase the security of the ‘Hungarian’ population vis-à-vis the ‘Gypsy crime’ problem. This paper argues that the violence that these patrols used in their security struggles received a great deal of legitimacy through a combination of security and spectacle. Thus, the patrols were more than thugs and militias: They were reiterating an idealized glorious past, with which every Hungarian could identify. In addressing and illustrating these issues, the paper uses the ‘security-scape’ of Gyöngyöspata, the village where most of the patrols were conducted.

Keywords

far-right; security; spectacle; violence; Hungary; Roma people

* The author is grateful to the anonymous reviewers of this journal for useful comments and references. He would like to thank Xymena Kurowska and Paul Roe for their comments on and suggestions regarding earlier versions of the text, to Péter Lőrincz for his help with the translations from Hungarian, and to Maria Gkresta for discussions and help given throughout the writing of this text.

Introduction

*'Let us close this preface on a personal note. Politically, we find the preoccupation with the extreme Right in Western Europe thoroughly distasteful.'*¹

In the spring of 2011, the Hungarian and the international public opinion woke up with a ghoul on the doorstep, a skeleton that everybody thought had long been buried. In several villages not more than a hundred kilometers from Budapest, people in military uniforms were patrolling the streets and attacking the Roma people. The uniforms had first appeared in 2009, and the alarm had been sounded in every corner of the mass media. At the time, everyone thought that the patrols were an isolated occurrence, meant only to draw attention. Two years later, however, the patrols re-emerged, and now they were more coherent, more articulated, and more prone to act.

What was obvious from the start to all observers was the anti-Roma discourse of these patrols. The 'Gypsies' were seen as the source of all evil in Hungary, and the uniformed patrols were set on defending everybody against this evil. The events accelerated and culminated in April with a crisis situation in the village of Gyöngyöspata, where several patrols had been active. Apart from the widespread consternation about the high level of racism in Hungary (and for some, fear of an imminent civil war between Hungarians and the Roma population) what was from the start difficult to explain was the idea that groups of people would constitute themselves into 'self-defense' units, with a clear military character but no obvious or transparent connection to any state structures. Moreover, these units had a clear purpose: To tackle what they saw as a security threat, embodied by 'Gypsy crime.'

This paper analyzes the context and the discourses of these patrols, and poses the following question: How is it possible for the general population to accept and legitimize these groups and their behavior? It is beyond doubt that these groups have enjoyed high levels of support. This is evident from the number of people attending their meetings, the help and encouragement they have received from the local populations, and even in the thoroughly apathetic reaction of state authorities. The main argument this paper makes is that the main logic that drives Hungarian far-right patrols is a mechanism of addressing perceived threats to the cultural and national identity of the country's population. As such, it is a logic of security, one that operates on the basis of employing various measures of exclusion and oppression in the name of protecting a threatened group. These exclusionary oppressive measures are mainly

¹ Herbert Kitschelt, in collaboration with Anthony J. McGann, *The radical right in Western Europe: A comparative analysis* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), ix.

legitimated through the spectacle of the paramilitary patrols that revive a romanticized glorious and heroic past.

The paper begins by tracing the origins of the patrols to the Hungarian far-right movement, and then focuses on their evolution since 2006. The riots of that year placed a number of personalities and discourses in the limelight. These would later converge in the first political group to develop a paramilitary unit in post-1945 Hungary, namely the Hungarian Guard. After describing the Guard's actions and narratives, the paper moves to the activity of the 'lone wolves,' individuals who, on their own, are able to aggregate and reinforce the discourses that the patrols have adopted as their main ideologies.

In the second section, the paper links these developments with the new rise of the far right at the beginning of 2011, and briefly explores the social features of those who compose the patrols. The paper subsequently devotes a section to the events in Gyöngyöspata, underlining the actors involved, and the involvement of the state and of the civil society. In the fourth section, the paper analyzes and interprets these events, using the concept of the 'security-scape.' The subsequent subsections analyze two dimensions of the Gyöngyöspata securityscape: territory and actors. The final section argues for an understanding of the Hungarian far-right patrols through the logic of a spectacle of security.

Brief history of far-right and paramilitary groups in Hungary

Hungary has a tradition of hyper-nationalist sentiments that have often been translated into retributive, nostalgic, and even chauvinistic ideological articulations of martyrdom, victimization, and struggle to reinstate a glorious past.² Paramilitary units with extreme-right ideologies emerged immediately after the creation of the independent Hungarian state in 1918, and have been behind what is now termed the 'White Terror.' Their activities were directed mostly against communist groups and Jewish people, under the general ideological umbrella of the Trianon treaty revisionism; however, other categories were also targeted, such as unruly peasants.³ Mareš and Stojar⁴ mention the Szeged Fascists that later developed into the *Magyar Országos Véderő Egylet* [Hungarian National Defense Association]. Béla Bodó provides fascinating

² László Szocs, 'A Tale of the Unexpected: The Extreme Right vis-à-vis Democracy in Postcommunist Hungary,' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21, no. 6 (1998): 1096–1115.

³ Béla Bodó, 'Hungarian Aristocracy and the White Terror,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 45, no. 4 (2010): 712–14.

⁴ Miroslav Mareš and Richard Stojar, 'Extreme-right Paramilitary Units in Eastern Europe,' in *Mapping the extreme right in contemporary Europe: From local to transnational*, ed. Andrea Mammone, Emmanuel Godin and Brian Jenkins (London: Routledge, 2012), 161.

accounts of groups such as the Pronay Battalion from Budapest,⁵ the Hejjas militia from Kekcsemet,⁶ the Simony Hussars,⁷ the Jankovich militia,⁸ the Ostenburg Battalion from Sopron,⁹ the *Területvédő Liga* [League for the Defense of Territorial Integrity] in Budapest, two university student battalions,¹⁰ and many more. The social composition of these troops was most diverse, comprising rural farmers, military officers, refugees from lost territories,¹¹ and even aristocrats.¹² They formed an intricate and ferocious network of terror that paved the way for the Horthy regime and the *Nyilaskeresztes Párt* [Arrow Cross Party] of the interwar period.

The end of the Nazi domination of Europe and the instauration of Soviet Communism in Hungary did not, however, put an end to the paramilitary phenomenon. As early as the 1950s, the *Magyar Kommunista Ifjúsági Szövetség* [KISZ; Hungarian Young Communist League] had a military wing called *Iffú Gárda* [Youth Defense Guard] that was similar to the Single Party's *Munkásorség* [Workers' Guard]. They were composed of trained men who were ready to defend the Communist state.¹³ In the succeeding decades, however, the patrols vanished. Yet the extremist ideologies that had animated them in the past managed to survive. Molnár argues that the Communist regime fostered a version of anti-Zionism that was consistent with its anti-capitalist worldview;¹⁴ as such, Israel was seen as the Jewish 'aggressor' of the 'oppressed' Arab Palestine, and the communists therefore sided with the latter. This development in particular largely explains the powerful re-emergence of anti-Semitism in Hungary

⁵ Béla Bodó, 'Paramilitary Violence in Hungary after the First World War,' *East European Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (June 2004): 129–72; Béla Bodó, 'Militia Violence and State Power in Hungary, 1919–1922,' *Hungarian Studies Review* 23, no. 1–2 (2006): 121–56.

⁶ Béla Bodó, 'Iván Héjjas: The Life of a Counterrevolutionary,' *East Central Europe* 37 (2010): 247–79.

⁷ Bodó, 'Hungarian Aristocracy and the White Terror,' 709.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 712.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 720.

¹⁰ Béla Bodó, 'The White Terror in Hungary, 1919–1921: The Social Worlds of Paramilitary Groups,' *Austrian History Yearbook* 42 (2011): 146–47.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 158.

¹² Bodó, 'Hungarian Aristocracy and the White Terror.' Bodó offers extended explanations for the violence perpetrated by the militias. In brief, for him, this violence was a cross between a sort of sadism on behalf of the upper and middle classes directed against the poor (Bodó, 'Paramilitary Violence in Hungary after the First World War,' 141; 144), and the Durkheim-inspired turn of the century 'anomie' or 'normlessness,' which '[manifests] itself, among other things, in asocial behaviour and arbitrary violence against civilians.' (Bodó, 'Militia Violence and State Power in Hungary, 1919–1922,' 125).

¹³ László Kürti, 'The uncivility of a civil society: Skinhead youth in Hungary,' in *Uncivil Society? Contentious Politics in Post-Communist Europe*, ed. Petr Kopecký and Cas Mudde (London: Routledge, 2003), 39.

¹⁴ László Molnár, 'Anti-Semitism in Hungary,' *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs* (November 2010).

after 1990. In parallel, another monster was rearing its ugly face even during communism, namely anti-Gypsy-ism. The Hungarian skinhead subculture in the 1980s featured an emerging antipathy toward the Roma population.¹⁵ Overall, such forms of racism, complemented by Trianon revisionism,¹⁶ ensured that the ideology of the patrols survived during communism:

It has to be emphasized, though, that—as a clandestine subculture—right-wing extremism did exist before 1989. The far-right militants in Hungary during the Kadar regime were the fans of anti-Arab and anti-Roma rock bands of the 1980s and a minority of the fans of the suburban Budapest football club *Ferencvaros*. They were typically underclass ignoramuses from the youth of suburban Budapest and of some other inner cities, for whom, as was put by ... Ferenc Kószeg, 'the Nazi salute was the only remaining form of political protest,' which made them rather dissimilar to their counterparts today.¹⁷

Hence, the re-emergence of far-right discourses and extremist practices after 1990 is far from a surprising event. As Kürti admits: 'The use of Hungarianism and the Hungarianist Movement is a testimony that, at present, organised neo-Nazis view themselves as heirs to the 1944 Nazi paramilitary organization that was responsible for the brutal attacks on the Jewish population of Hungary at the end of World War II.'¹⁸ The steadfast growth of the far right in Hungary during the 1990s is well documented and will not be mentioned here.¹⁹

The Hungarian far-right since 2006

The Budapest riots of September 2006 can be considered the seminal event that brought the existence of well-organized far-right groups in Hungary to the attention of the mainstream media.²⁰ Triggered by a speech made by the prime

¹⁵ Kürti, 'The uncivility of a civil society,' 48.

¹⁶ The Treaty of Trianon was the peace treaty that dealt with the Hungarian territories after the First World War, in 1920. The Kingdom of Hungary, which was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, lost over 70% of its territories to Romania, Czechoslovakia, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia and Austria. 'Trianon revisionism' refers here to the discourse of the necessity to regain control over these lost territories, and revise the Trianon Treaty. György Ligeti and Tamás Nyeste, 'Right-wing Extremism in Hungary,' in *Prevention of Right-Wing Extremism, Xenophobia and Racism in European Perspective*, ed. Peter Rieker, Michaela Glaser and Silke Schuster (Halle: Deutsches Jugendinstitut, 2006), 97–9.

¹⁷ Szocs, 'A Tale of the Unexpected,' 1097.

¹⁸ Kürti, 'The uncivility of a civil society,' 43.

¹⁹ Gabor Bernath, Gabor Miklosi and Cas Mudde, 'Hungary,' in *Racist Extremism in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Cas Mudde (London: Routledge, 2005), 80–100.

²⁰ For a (subjective) chronology of the events, see: *Riots in Hungary weblog*, accessed December 29, 2012, <http://riotsinhungary.blog.hu/page/2>; photos on index.hu, accessed December 29, 2012: <http://index.hu/politika/belfold/2006/elkurtuk/galeriak/>; http://index.hu/gal/?dir=0609/belfold/TV_3galeri/; http://index.hu/gal/?dir=0609/belfold/TV4_galeri/; <http://index.hu/gal/?dir=0609/belfold/mtv6/>.

minister of the time, the riots and violent protests of 2006 were mainly initiated by far-right groups²¹ and football hooligans.²² Among these, the figure of László Toroczkai—the leader of an extremist group advocating the reinstatement of Greater Hungary—stood out as one of the main organizers.²³

At the time of these riots, the messages of the far-right groups were focused on vague ideas of national redemption, with rare outbursts of anti-Semitism and conspiracy theory-inspired accusations against the current political elite. The symbolism displayed on the flags, banners, and clothes of the rioters was limited to ultra-nationalistic elements, such as the Greater Hungary map or the Arpad flag.²⁴ Although the riots seemed to serve as a pretext for these groups to articulate their ideas publicly and on a large scale for the first time, these ideas have never been seen as the dominant ideology behind the violent acts of 2006.²⁵

The following years, however, witnessed hyper-nationalist and anti-Semitic feelings being transgressed from rhetoric to direct actions, as seen in the paramilitary actions of the *Hunnia Mozgalom* [Hunnia Movement], which was founded in 2007 by Toroczkai and another ‘hero’ of the 2006 riots, György Budaházy.²⁶ These violent actions were aimed more generally at ‘corrupt politicians,’ who were to be ‘hunted down’ for their lack of national honor and for their connections to ‘Jewishness,’ such was the case of the attack on the politician Sándor Csintalan, who in 2008 was assaulted and called a ‘Jewish henchman.’²⁷

²¹ Such as the ‘Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom.’ See their website, accessed December 29, 2012, <http://www.hvim.hu/gondolatok>.

²² ‘Csata a Szabadság téren - ostrommal foglalták el az MTV-t,’ Index.hu, accessed December 29, 2012 <http://index.hu/belfold/ostoto60919/>: ‘Meanwhile one smaller group, led by Laszlo Toroczkai, leader of the *Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom* [Sixty-four Counties Youth Movement], went to the headquarters of Hungarian Television in Szabadság Square.’

²³ ‘Csak romok maradtak az MTV előtt’ [Just before the ruining of the Hungarian National Television], Origo.hu, September 18, 2006, accessed December 29, 2012, <http://www.origo.hu/itthon/20060918kezdd.html>.

²⁴ See the media outlet images on Index.hu, accessed December 29, 2012, <http://index.hu/gal/?dir=0611/belfold/astorianio4/>.

²⁵ Although the media have in some cases shed light on the high number of skinheads participating in the demonstrations: ‘Miért divat a Lonsdale zavargáskor?’ [Why is it fashionable to wear Lonsdale during a riot?], Index.hu, September 21, 2006, accessed December 29, 2012, <http://index.hu/kultur/eletmod/lonsdaleo920/>.

²⁶ ‘Hazafiak látogatása Sukoró polgármesterénél’ [Patriots visit the mayor of Sukoró], Kuruc Info, April 23, 2009, accessed December 29, 2012, <http://kuruc.info/r/6/39215/>.

²⁷ The Athena Institute states that ‘The assault on Sándor Csintalan, a known Hungarian public figure, in 2008 can be considered as the bloodiest act carried out by the hate group so far. ... Based on the public figure’s account the attackers, while they were beating him up with a loaded cane, called him a “Jewish henchman” several times during the incident.’ See Athena Institute, ‘The Arrows of the Hungarians National Liberating Army / Hunnia Movement,’ accessed December 29, 2012, <http://www.athenainstitute.eu/en/map/olvas/31#read>.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) events, locations, and personalities were another target of far-right violence. The 2009 Gay Pride Parade in Budapest, for example, witnessed widespread and violent opposition from various groups that articulate ultra-nationalist discourses. These groups harassed, attacked, and threw stones and explosive objects at the parade participants, and attacked a club in which the participants took shelter after the parade. Similar events occurred in 2011, when far-right groups in uniforms attacked the participants at several locations. The annual Gay Pride Parade in Budapest has become a traditional arena of organized display of increased far-right violence and harassment.²⁸

However, these incidents portray a landscape of quite dispersed and ideologically incoherent ultra-nationalist paramilitary actions, isolated events in which evanescent groups perform violent acts that are not interconnected. What put an end to this dispersion and signaled the appearance of what can be called a coherent and organized extreme-right group at a national level, was the formation in August 2007 of the *Magyar Garda* [Hungarian Guard]. Intimately connected to the main extreme right party in Hungary—*Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom* [Jobbik, Movement for a better Hungary] (its leader, Gabor Vona, is the founder of the Guard)—the group defined itself, and was seen from the start, as a sort of ‘party militia.’ The Guard was formed through an ‘oath of allegiance’ taken by men and women wearing black uniforms bearing the ultra-nationalist symbols made famous in the 2006 riots. Among the Guard’s goals stated in the proclaiming document were the strengthening of national self-defense and forming the backbone of an eventual National Guard (or *gendarmerie*).²⁹

With the formation of the *Magyar Garda*, far-right paramilitarism in Hungary developed a more structured dimension. The need for such a group was clearly articulated upon a perceived deficit of security,³⁰ and the Guard was supposed to fill that gap by tackling threats to national security.³¹ Yet,

²⁸ The author’s own participatory observations, August–September 2009, July 2011, and June 2012, Budapest.

²⁹ ‘Rólunk,’ accessed December 29, 2012, <http://gardaszovetseg.com/orzo-magyar-garda/rolunk>.

³⁰ Adam Le Bor, ‘Marching Back to the Future: Magyar Garda and the Resurgence of the Right in Hungary,’ *Dissent* 55, no. 2 (Spring 2008); Michael J. Jordan, ‘On Guard,’ *Transitions Online*, March 2008, accessed January 29, 2013, <http://www.tol.org/client/article/19471-on-guard.html>; Colin Woodard, ‘Hungary’s anti-Roma militia grows,’ *Christian Science Monitor* 100, no. 55 (2008).

³¹ “Basically there is no army in Hungary at the moment,” explains Mr. Fuzessy, who says force reductions have left it impotent. “If the worst happens and there was no one to defend Hungary, it is the aim of the Hungarian Guard to be the foundation of our national defence.” (Quote from Woodard, ‘Hungary’s anti-Roma militia grows.’)

this gap was perceived not only as a capability gap, but also as a moral and ideological one. The Hungarian Guard uttered a discourse of historical decadence, whereby internal and external enemies threaten the daily wellbeing of ethnic Hungarians everywhere. This was doubled by a clearly expressed readiness for action: The Guard quickly progressed from public displays of their black uniforms, to organized marches and parades all across Hungary. Crucially, the Hungarian Guard saw its security functions as inseparable from a coherent ideological set.³²

This ideological set was constructed around the need to protect ethnic Hungarians from enemies, who were to be found mostly inside the country. Thus, the group departed slightly from revisionist objectives related to the old territories of Greater Hungary, since these were out of reach anyway. It also slightly departed from anti-Semitism, probably also since it seemed too vague a target in a country from which most of the Jews had disappeared during the Second World War, or had left shortly after.³³ The new threat was to be found in what the Guard discursively constructed as ‘Gypsy crime.’ The Athena Institute writes that ‘in late 2007, early 2008 more than 200 members of the Hungarian Guard participated—and marched in formations—in rallies announced as “demonstrations against gypsy crime.”’³⁴

The Guard served as an umbrella for a variety of far-right groups and ideas, and at the same time managed to construct a systematic discourse that targeted the Roma population as the main threat of a securitizing discourse. This positioned the Guard as the main protector of the Hungarian nation, not just in terms of its territorial integrity, but crucially, also in terms of its moral, cultural, and historical identity. One of its main slogans, which it popularized well beyond its own circle of supporters, is ‘Hungary belongs to the Hungarians!’

³² Joób Sándor, ‘Magyar Gárda: báránybőrbe bújt farkasok?’ [The Hungarian Guard: Wolves hiding in sheep’s clothes?], Index.hu, August 27, 2007, accessed December 29, 2012, <http://index.hu/belfold/garda2503/>. When interviewed about the differences between the Guard and various private security companies, the Magyar Garda spokesperson declared: ‘The Hungarian Guard often refers to Krav Maga martial arts clubs [Krav Maga is a self-defence system improved in Israel] where the usual/traditional colour of training clothes is also black. Nevertheless, the martial arts clubs are not organized according the structures of paramilitarist and combatant units and they are not connected to any political parties or ideologies. The security services [on the other hand] are basically business oriented. It used to be difficult, if they have too strong connections with politicians or politics and they should be more careful when they decide who to hire, because it happens that there may be real troublemakers among their employees. However, the Hungarian Guard had been founded with the purpose of protecting the Hungarians.’ [Translation by the author]

³³ Jordan, ‘On Guard.’ Although anti-Semitism is still an integral part of the discourse by which the group explains to its supporters the international pressure on Hungary to conduct its internal policies following a multicultural model of tolerance toward the Roma populations.

³⁴ Athena Institute, ‘Hungarian Guard,’ accessed December 29, 2012, <http://www.athenainstitute.eu/en/map/olvas/30#read>.

The Guard was banned in 2009,³⁵ after developing branches even in Romania;³⁶ it subsequently reformed itself as a cultural group,³⁷ and then as a newly born 'New Hungarian Guard' that under the current political configuration of Hungary's parliament—in which *Jobbik* holds no less than twelve percent of the seats—enjoys immunity and freedom.³⁸

At this point, it is worth mentioning the activity of the 'lone wolves,' charismatic individuals who have the capacity to articulate mobilizing discourses, and also to organize and perform acts alone, or with only a very few confederates.³⁹ The figure of László Toroczkai has been already mentioned. He is currently associated with the *Betyársereg* [Outlaws' Army], one of the most ferocious paramilitary extreme-right groups in Hungary, and the leader of the *Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom* [Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement]. He is also the editor of the far-right publication *Magyar Jelen*, in the pages of which he incites racial hatred, and proclaims the Roma and African populations as threatening Hungary.⁴⁰

³⁵ 'Jogerős ítélet mondja ki a Magyar Gárda Egyesület feloszlását' [Final judgment orders the dissolution of the Hungarian Guard Association], *Origo.hu*, July 2, 2009, accessed December 29, 2012, <http://www.origo.hu/itthon/20090701-magyar-gardafeloszlatas-masodfoku-itelet.html>.

³⁶ 'În cuibul Gărzii Maghiare' [In the nest of the Hungarian Guard], *Adevărul*, January 11, 2010, accessed December 29, 2012, http://www.adevarul.ro/actualitate/eveniment/In_cuibul_Garzii_Maghiare_o_187781779.html.

³⁷ Eva S. Balogh argued in December 2008 in 'Hungarian Spectrum' that "The case was a little tricky because the organizers of the Magyar Gárda tried to insulate the troops from any litigation against the alleged cultural organization. They created a separate legal entity comprised of the uniformed fellows with their black boots and insignia suspiciously resembling that of the Hungarian Nazis of Ferenc Szálasi. It was legally distinct from the original organization with its self-described cultural mission. Thus we had a Magyar Gárda Mozgalom [Movement of the Hungarian Guard, the troops] and a Magyar Gárda Egyesület [Association of the Hungarian Guard, the so-called cultural association]. It was with this legal separation that the lawyers working on behalf of Jobbik, the extreme right party responsible for the creation of the Hungarian Guard, tried to save at least the uniformed units that belong to the Movement. Thus, even if the Association meets its fate and is deemed illegal, the guys in uniform can continue their activities.' Eva Balogh, 'The Hungarian Guard: End game?' *Hungarian Spectrum*, December 17, 2008, accessed December 29, 2012, <http://hungarianspectrum.wordpress.com/2008/12/17/the-hungarian-guard-end-game/>.

³⁸ 'Police investigate "new" Magyar Gárda; former minister mulls banning Jobbik,' *Politics.hu*, 14 July 2009, accessed December 29, 2012, <http://www.politics.hu/20090714/police-investigate-new-magyar-garda-former-minister-mulls-banning-jobbik/>; see also Athena Institute, 'New Hungarian Guard,' accessed January 29, 2013, <http://www.athenainstitute.eu/en/map/olvas/42>.

³⁹ Gary Gable and Paul Jackson, *Lone Wolves: myth or reality?* (Ilford: Searchlight). Online available at: <http://www.lonewolfproject.org.uk/resources/LW-complete-final.pdf>, accessed December 29, 2012.

⁴⁰ 'A special holiday offer for everyone who bought our Jewish–Gypsy onslaught conspiracy,' *Politics.hu*, 27 April 2011, accessed December 29, 2012, <http://www.politics.hu/20110427/a-special-holiday-offer-for-everyone-who-bought-our-jewishgypsy-onslaught-conspiracy/>.

Another prominent figure of the paramilitary far right is György Budaházy, who was detained in 2009 and placed under house arrest in 2011. Acting together with the small group of extremists from the Hunnia Movement, Budaházy planned a coordinated series of bomb attacks on several estates of leading politicians.⁴¹ His detention sparked a widespread campaign and a series of demonstrations that demanded his release and portrayed him as a true Hungarian hero. He himself emphasizes his illustrious Hungarian ancestry, which dates back almost a millennium and legitimizes him to speak on behalf of the ‘true’ Hungarian nation.⁴² The third prominent ‘lone wolf’ is Zsolt Tyirityán, who is also associated with the Outlaws’ Army. In his public appearances and speeches, he bluntly advocates direct confrontation with the ‘enemies’ of the country. In 2010, he urged the creation of a national force that would include ‘vigorous’ and ‘genuine’ warriors, in order to restore the ‘genetics of the Hungarian fighter.’⁴³ In August 2011, during a far-right festival, he gave a lecture on guerrilla warfare, in which he argued that sustained violence against the system has to be motivated by a coherent set of beliefs.⁴⁴ He also declared that ‘we must reach a point when if one sees another skin colour, he is able to pull the trigger of an automatic weapon.’⁴⁵ The ‘automatic weapon’ is not meant to be a metaphor, but a direct reference to a need to move from a ‘symbolic’ to a ‘real’ struggle against the perceived internal enemies of the Hungarian nation.

The examples of ‘lone wolves’ serve to illustrate the ways in which certain individuals with a certain type and level of social and securitizing capital, manage to articulate securitizing discourses. By mobilizing elements of idealized folklore, history, mythology, and hyperbolicized nationalist sentiments with narratives of threats, fears, and community, these individuals make a fundamental contribution to a discourse that instigates self-defensive collective action against the Roma population.

Although the Hungarian Guard was outlawed in 2009, it resurfaced a year later, along with a plethora of new organizations that have converging goals

⁴¹ ‘Budaházy’s group of radicals allegedly planned series of attacks,’ *Politics.hu*, October 26, 2010, accessed December 29, 2012, <http://www.politics.hu/20101026/budahazys-group-of-radicals-allegedly-planned-series-of-attacks/>.

⁴² Rob László, ‘Budaházy György nem adja fel,’ *Népszabadság Online*, March 28, 2007, accessed December 29, 2012, <http://nol.hu/archivum/archiv-440509>.

⁴³ ‘Hungarian Neo-Nazis Discuss Readiness to Take Up Arms,’ *The Contrarian Hungarian*, August 10, 2011, accessed on December 29, 2012, <http://thecontrarianhungarian.wordpress.com/2011/08/10/hungarian-neo-nazis-claim-being-ready-to-take-up-arms/>.

⁴⁴ ‘Vona szövetségese: Mi majd le merünk lőni egy rohadt, tetves zsidót?’ *ATV*, August 9, 2011, accessed December 29, 2012, http://atv.hu/cikk/20110809_vona_szovetsege_mi_majd_le_merunk_loni_egy_rohad_tetves_zsidot.

⁴⁵ Athena Institute, ‘Outlaws’ Army’, accessed January 29, 2013, <http://athenaintezet.hu/en/map/olvas/33#read>.

and discourses. Already toward the end of 2009, several violent incidents with racist character had been reported throughout Hungary. In October 2009, a few uniformed members of the Guard got involved in a fight with local Roma people in Káloz. In January 2010, two Roma men in Hangács were murdered by a group of twenty people shouting racist insults.⁴⁶ But it was at the beginning of 2011 that the frequency and intensity of paramilitary attacks on Roma communities intensified. In the first half of 2011 alone, there were fourteen cases of hate crimes motivated by ‘racism,’ in contrast to the whole of 2010, when there were ‘only’ eleven cases of violence against Roma communities.⁴⁷

The newly intensified far-right in 2011⁴⁸

In April 2011, two serious incidents signaled a new rise of militaristic far-right forces. In Hejőszalonta, members of the *Jobbik* party and the New Hungarian Guard initiated a campaign against ‘Gypsy terror,’ following the alleged murder of a local woman by a Roma man. The campaign polarized the small village, literally turning neighbors against each other, as the previously tolerated Roma community found itself targeted and harassed on a daily basis by ‘Hungarian’ locals. This culminated in a ‘commemorative march’ organized by the two abovementioned groups, in which several hundred people walked in a procession, bearing torches and ultra-nationalist symbols, and shouting anti-Roma slogans. This march was countered by a protest organized in the same village by several Roma organizations and human rights and anti-fascist groups. This was the first manifestation of a nascent organized resistance to the far-right renewal in Hungary.⁴⁹ Two weeks later, another group of

⁴⁶ Athena Institute, ‘Hate Crime Record,’ accessed December 29, 2012, http://www.athenainstitute.eu/en/hatecrimerecord_full.

⁴⁷ Ibid. The Institute uses the specific terminology of ‘racist’ hate crimes to refer to crimes against the Roma population.

⁴⁸ This paper is concerned unilaterally with the far-right paramilitary patrols in Hungary, but this should not obscure the fact that the far-right has been enjoying a steady rise in Europe over the last two decades. The rise of the Hungarian far-right cannot be abstracted from this general context. See Matthew Goodwin, ‘Right Response: Understanding and Countering Populist Extremism in Europe,’ (London: Chattham House, 2011). However, the Hungarian case is special, precisely because of the proliferation of paramilitary groups. See an analysis in Margit Feischmidt and Kristof Szombati, *Gyöngyöspata 2011 – The Laboratory of Hungarian Far-Right. A Case Study of Political Mobilization and Interethnic Conflict* (Budapest: Ecopolis, 2012), 10; for other examples of paramilitaries in Eastern Europe, see an overview at RiskandForecast.com, accessed January 29, 2013, http://www.riskandforecast.com/post/bulgaria/the-second-season-of-patrolling-in-hungary_694.html. Other possible special cases are Italy and Greece. However, in the former country, paramilitarism was recently banned, and in Greece there is only one paramilitary group, which belongs to the Golden Dawn party. Thus, Hungary stands out due to its high number and diversity of far-right paramilitaries.

⁴⁹ Author’s participant observation, April 2011.

vigilantes⁵⁰—*Szebb Jövőért* [For a Better Future]—started organizing patrols against the Roma community in Hajdúhadház.⁵¹ On April 13, members of the patrols captured and handcuffed a presumed burglar of Roma ethnicity, who was handed over to the local police. During the entire action, the patrols wore uniforms emblazoned with the Arpad flag and were armed with batons.⁵²

Interlude: A brief analysis of the paramilitary groups

Not much is known about the social background of those who patrol. There are three possible sources of fragmentary information on this issue: the social and electoral data on the umbrella far-right party, *Jobbik*; the personal observations of the author; and an analysis of online sources. None of these sources is exhaustive, and the mere aggregation of the resulting information cannot, of course, lead to a complete image of the social world of the paramilitary groups.⁵³ There are quite a few data about *Jobbik*'s electoral support and target audiences. This could be used as a proxy to infer a number of assumptions about the social-demographic structures of the patrols, since their members are most likely *Jobbik* voters. Karacsony and Rona found that a lack of social or economic capital does not constitute a necessary characteristic of *Jobbik* voters.⁵⁴ Furthermore, they argue that 'unemployment rate, contrary to our expectations, actually decreases sympathies for *Jobbik*.'⁵⁵ Hence, what we would normally call 'class' does not play an essential role in determining the far-right electorate;⁵⁶ *Jobbik* voters come from all segments of society. It is age, however, that plays a slightly more important role: *Jobbik*'s electorate is composed predominantly of individuals aged between 18 and 30 years,⁵⁷ although

⁵⁰ The term 'vigilantes' generally refers to individuals or groups of citizens who take law enforcement into their own hands, so to speak, as a result of a perceived lack of police efficiency. Johnston defines six attributes of vigilantism: It is premeditated, voluntary, a form of autonomous citizenship, uses force, arises when the established order is perceived to be under threat, and offers to provide security. Les Johnston, 'What is Vigilantism?' *British Journal of Criminology* 36, no. 2 (Spring 1996): 220–36.

⁵¹ Watch, for example, 'The Hungarians want better, and the Roma want calmer future,' On the YouTube-channel titled 'CiganyTerrorizmus' [Gypsy Terrorism], accessed December 29, 2012, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5RbRDIF9oBY>.

⁵² 'Híradó 2011-04-13,' Nemzeti TV, accessed December 29, 2012, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GmoRZDiFZVI&feature=player_embedded#!

⁵³ Some quantitative data about the patrols are available on the website of the Athena Institute. Thus, the Hungarian Guard is considered to have over 100 members, the Outlaw's Army over 60, and *Véderő* around 25. The author could not identify the sources of these data.

⁵⁴ Gergely Karacsony and Dániel Róna, 'Reasons behind the rise of the Hungarian radical right,' *Journal of East European and Asian Studies* 2, no. 1 (February 2011): 71.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ For the wealth distribution of *Jobbik* voters, see Tamás Rudas, 'A *Jobbik* törzsszavazóiról,' in *Társadalmi riport 2010*, ed. Kolosi Tamás-Tóth István György (Budapest: Társi, 2010), 520.

⁵⁷ Karacsony and Róna, 'Reasons behind the rise of the Hungarian radical right,' 82.

other age groups are also well represented. As for gender, males are clearly more present in the electorate, as the gender balance tips more toward men than in the cases of the other two major parties in Hungary.⁵⁸ Although *Jobbik* draws most of its voters from the geographical area of northeast Hungary (for example, in the 2010 elections it won 27.2% of the votes in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county, around Miskolc, and almost 25% in Heves, around Eger), where the Roma population is larger, it also gets numerous votes from Budapest (10.8% in the 2010 elections).⁵⁹ As for the normative–psychological profile, scholars tend to believe that the major incentive for voting for *Jobbik* is the perception of the ‘Roma problem’ that no other party could address properly.⁶⁰ As shown later in this article, the Roma population plays in the social imaginary of the Hungarian far-right sympathizers not only the role of the scapegoat,⁶¹ but also the more complex role of a security threat that invites immediate action.

The personal observations can complement these comprehensive studies only with a strictly subjective interpretation that is based mostly on the attendance of rallies and other public manifestations. However, these observations are more directly concerned with the paramilitary groups *per se*, than with *Jobbik* voters in general. These direct observations, which were gathered between 2009 and late 2012 throughout Hungary, convey an image of heterogeneity: The vast majority of those making up the patrols are male. The *Szebb Jövőért* and the *Magyar Garda* are more gender balanced, while what seem to be the more militarized groups like *Véderő* and *Betyársereg* have predominantly strong, muscular, head-shaven men in their ranks. There is a similar case for age: Whereas *Magyar Garda* seems to attract people of all ages—maybe sometimes even more middle-aged than youth—the more combative groups are mostly made up of young people. An interesting observation emerges, for example, from the comparisons of the uniforms: While *Szebb Jövőért* and *Betyársereg* wear carefully crafted coats and hats, which are tailored on an alleged historical pattern, the *Magyar Garda* ‘soldiers’ have only a black jacket of a random sort, on which a patch with the group’s logo is pasted.

As for the analysis of the materials present on the internet, an interesting comparison can be made between the recruiting videos. The one made by

⁵⁸ Ibid., 80; Rudas, ‘A Jobbik törzsszavazóiról,’ 515.

⁵⁹ Nesstar dataset on Hungary, Parliamentary Elections, 2010, available at <http://eed.nsd.uib.no/webview/>, accessed December 26, 2012.

⁶⁰ Karácsony and Róna, ‘Reasons behind the rise of the Hungarian radical right,’ 71–2; Katalin Halasz, ‘The Rise of the Radical Right in Europe and the Case of Hungary: “Gypsy crime” defines national identity?’ *Development* 52, no. 4 (2009): 490–94.

⁶¹ For a treatment of the relationship between security and the violence against the ‘scapegoat,’ see Manuel Mireanu, ‘Security, Violence and the Sacred,’ *Politikon* 18 (December 2012): 89–101, accessed January 29, 2013, <http://www.iapss.org/publications/politikon/archive>.

*Szebb Jövőért*⁶² has more young people in it, some playing electric guitars, others wielding weapons, and there is some concern for presenting women as fighters and machine-gun carriers—everything with Hungarian metal music playing in the background. In contrast, the *Magyar Garda* video⁶³ has religious music in the background, and the serious voice that narrates throughout utters an ‘amen’ at the end; women are present here as well, but in the hypostasis of care and help givers. Both videos generally portray a strong militaristic ethos imbued with an heroic–historical figure cult. All of this hints at a hyper-masculinized ideal of the strong male who fights gloriously and sacrifices himself for a higher ideal, thus becoming a hero.⁶⁴ This image is hyperbolized in the appearances of *Véderő* and *Betyársereg*, whose all-male members display a propensity for man-to-man combat and, in the case of the latter group, intense body-building.⁶⁵

The events of Gyöngyöspata

It was in the small village of Gyöngyöspata, 50 kilometers east of Budapest, that the height of paramilitary activity directed against the Roma population was reached. In February 2011, the far-right news channel *Barikad TV* aired an investigative video report that was set on sounding an alarm about the everyday ‘Gypsy terror’ among the residents of Gyöngyöspata.⁶⁶ The video was

⁶² ‘Szebb Jövőért Polgárőr Egyesület Toborzó indulója,’ *Szebb Jövőért*, accessed December 21, 2012, http://www.szebbjovo-ert.com/index.php?q=content/Toborzo_video.

⁶³ ‘Toborzó,’ *Magyar Garda*, accessed on December 21, 2012, <http://www.gardamozgalom.org/csonkahon/20121119/toborzofilm>.

⁶⁴ Thus it would appear that the age and gender dimensions converge toward an ideal type of far-right activists as being young, hypertrophied males who are prone to indulge in physical combat and general violence. This image is becoming somewhat of a stereotype in studies on the far-right, one that we would not replicate here. For an instance of this, see Michael Kimmel, ‘Racism as Adolescent Male Rite of Passage: Ex-Nazis in Scandinavia,’ *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 36, no. 2 (2007): 202–18. We argue that the social world of the Hungarian paramilitaries is composed of much more than skinhead ruffian mobs. The patrols articulate legitimizing discourses that are based on mainstream values. In this respect, the *Betyársereg* of 2012 are not the Pronay Battalions of 1920. From what this author can infer, the contemporary paramilitaries are much more willing and able than their predecessors to immerse themselves in a local social and cultural milieu that would confer on them more symbolic capital. As is presented below, the sheer force is rationalized (through the logic of the spectacle) and focused on specific targets—the Roma people—rather than diffused and indiscriminate, as in the case of the Pronay troops. In other words, the patrols frame themselves as legitimate suppliers of the population’s need for security. For a development of this argument, see also Mireanu, ‘Security, Violence and the Sacred’ (note 61).

⁶⁵ Power of Hungarian National Resistance, YouTube, accessed December 21, 2012, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_vHihOWrc.

⁶⁶ ‘‘Cigányterror’’—Heves megye a polgárháború szélén áll’ [Gypsy Terror—Heves County on the brink of civil war], *Barikad TV*, accessed December 29, 2012, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zc-YJww4huM>.

mostly focused on a group of elderly women complaining about the insolence of Roma teenagers. These complaints were used to evoke an atmosphere of panic and terror in the village. Moreover, an old local man had committed suicide at the beginning of the year, claiming that he could no longer bear the terror of the Gypsies.⁶⁷ The video portrays a community torn apart by a fear against which there seems to be no remedy.

At the beginning of the following month, the *Szebb Jövőért* organization announced that it would send patrols to the village in order to help the locals defend themselves.⁶⁸ The leader of the organization, Attila László, claimed: ‘We knew that we need to help the Hungarian people who live in these circumstances.’⁶⁹ He also declared that the patrols were to be a temporary solution, as the final goal was to help the villagers organize themselves against the Roma terror. The local Hungarian population welcomed these initiatives, and some even joined the patrols. Soon, other far-right organizations joined in the village vigilante patrols, including the *Betyársereg* and the *Véderő* [Defense] groups. The locals also formed their own patrols, acting against the same terror. These efforts converged into a concerted and sustained set of actions against the local Roma population. People were harassed with whips and dogs by paramilitaries, dressed in black and exhibiting nationalist symbols, patrolling the Roma neighborhood of the village. All this happened in the absence of any police presence.

Under the alarmist message that the ‘Gypsy terror’ would create a ‘civil war’ between Hungarians and Roma in Hungary, in the middle of March 2011, the parliamentary far-right party *Jobbik* and its supporters held a demonstration in the village. The aim was to alert the nation to the ‘Gypsy terror’ and at the same time to be a display of force. Imbued with nationalist and racist declarations from the participants, the demonstration gathered over 2,500 people. In the words of one *Jobbik* official, this number gave the village once again the ideal Hungarian ‘ethnic ratio,’ which had been off-balance ever since the Roma population started living there.⁷⁰

These events placed the problem of Gyöngyöspata in the press and brought it to the government’s attention. At the time, no serious action had been taken against the far-right organizations involved. However, two days later, it appeared that *Szebb Jövőért* and the other groups had stopped patrolling the

⁶⁷ Feischmidt and Szombati, *Gyöngyöspata 2011*, 16.

⁶⁸ ‘Önvédelmi közösségek szerveződnek Gyöngyöspatán’ [Communities organize in self-defense in Gyongyospatan], *Szebb Jövőért*, accessed on December 29, 2012, http://www.szebbjovo-ert.com/index.php?q=hireink/bejegyzes/onvedelmi_kozossegek_szervezodnek_Gyongyospatan-1.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ ‘Roma neighbourhood under control of neo-Nazis in Hungary,’ *Indymedia*, March 17, 2011, accessed December 29, 2012, <http://indymediacall.blogspot.com/2011/03/roma-neighborhood-under-control-of-neo.html>.

village, on account of the presumed success of their campaign, while the self-organized local groups remained in the village.⁷¹

Yet the situation did not stabilize in Gyöngyöspata. The leader of *Véderő*, Tamas Eszes, acquired private property in the village, and with the support of the local population, started organizing a ‘training camp.’ This was announced in early April as a three-day event during which participants would learn various self-defense strategies that could be used against ‘internal and external enemies.’⁷² Eszes also declared that the camp would compensate for the lack of military and physical training among Hungarian youth, and would be organized according to strict military hierarchical principles. The camp was to be held in the village, on Eszes’ property,⁷³ on April 22 (the Catholic Easter weekend). The news soon broke out, and human rights watchdogs warned the authorities about this perceived new assault on the Roma community, despite Eszes’ denial that the ‘Gypsy terror’ was part of the camp’s rationale.

The subsequent events could have been part of a thriller movie. Panic soon broke out in the Roma community, which was already subject to constant harassment by the remaining patrols in the village. On the night of the 21st, the Roma women and children were put on a bus and driven to an unknown location, allegedly for their own protection (according to some accounts, they were taken on a ‘planned holiday’).⁷⁴ At the time of writing, there is still uncertainty as to who organized this. It was initially thought that it was the Red Cross, but the NGO soon dismissed this claim. On the morning of the 22nd, the village was flooded with national police forces, there for the first time since the incidents had begun a few weeks earlier. The police arrested the organizers, and the camp was cancelled.⁷⁵ Tamas Eszes, dressed in camouflage military uniform and boots and wearing a red beret, was detained by the police. The Hungarian minister of the Interior arrived in order to calm the situation. In the afternoon of the same day, groups of human rights activists and social workers arrived in the village to express their solidarity with the Roma community. They found only adult and old Roma men in the village; they also discovered that the participants in the camp had not fled the village, but were being hidden in the

⁷¹ Athena Institute, ‘Success in Gyöngyöspata,’ March 17, 2011, accessed December 29, 2012, <http://www.athenaintezet.eu/en/news/read/135>.

⁷² This quote was taken from the announcement of the Gyöngyöspata camp, which can be found here <http://www.vedero.hu/cikkek/hirek/taborok-kikepzések/amiról-valójában-szol-a-taborunk.html>; accessed December 26, 2012.

⁷³ Athena Institute, ‘Gyöngyöspata Assemblage,’ May 15, 2011, accessed December 29, 2012, <http://athenaintezet.eu/en/infocus/read/8>.

⁷⁴ ‘Roma in Hungary leave town to escape vigilantes,’ *Fox News*, 22 April 2011, accessed December 29, 2012, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2011/04/22/roma-hungary-leave-town-escape-vigilantes/>.

⁷⁵ ‘Véderő Gyöngyöspatán Húsvéthétfőn,’ *Nepszabadság Online*, 26 April 2011, accessed December 29, 2012, <http://www.noltv.hu/video/3371.html>.

homes of the Hungarian locals.⁷⁶ After the Easter weekend, the police and activists left, and the patrols returned.

These events constitute the climax of the Gyöngyöspata incidents. The Hungarian government soon issued an order banning the use of un-authorized military uniforms in public. However, on April 25, the Court ‘relieved all accused and closed the case.’⁷⁷ After his release, Eszes announced he would stand as a candidate for election as mayor of Gyöngyöspata. On April 26, the remaining patrols continued their harassment of the local Roma population;⁷⁸ this resulted in a violent clash between the patrols and the Roma people, with four people being hospitalized.⁷⁹ The clash was captured by a surveillance camera, and made public by the national police.⁸⁰

In June, Eszes ran for mayor against the *Jobbik* incumbent, but won only ten percent of the vote. Over the summer, the government organized ‘working camps’ in the village, which were intended to integrate unemployed people into the labor force. Welfare benefits were made dependent upon participating in these working camps, and the Roma population was explicitly targeted.⁸¹ In November, Tamas Eszes committed suicide in his house in Gyöngyöspata. The conflict has now de-escalated, but some groups still patrol sporadically the Roma neighborhood of the village.⁸²

The securityscape in Gyöngyöspata

I argue that security is a key aspect of the discourses and practices of the Hungarian far-right, and one that was overwhelmingly present in the events in

⁷⁶ Participant observation by the author, April 2011.

⁷⁷ Athena Institute, ‘Incident Report no. 3,’ April 29, 2011, accessed December 29, 2012, <http://www.athenaintezet.eu/en/news/read/164>.

⁷⁸ ‘Tension bursts out in Gyöngyöspata—mass fight and full blockade of the town,’ Gyöngyöspata Solidarity, April 26, 2011, accessed December 29, 2012, <http://gyongyospatasolidarity.wordpress.com/2011/04/26/via-hirszerzo-tension-burst-out-in-gyongyospata-mass-fight-and-full-blockade-of-the-town/>.

⁷⁹ ‘Hungary Roma battle far-right vigilantes,’ BBC News Europe, April 27, 2011, accessed December 29, 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-13206261>.

⁸⁰ The video can be watched on Youtube.com, accessed December 29, 2012, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8SEBngkiC4M>.

⁸¹ ‘Travail obligatoire pour les Roms de Gyöngyöspata,’ *AFP*, December 7, 2011, accessed December 29, 2012, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EUaw-z64to>.

⁸² In the summer of 2012, new violent incidents were sparked by patrols in Cegléd and in Devecser. ‘Neo-Nazis in Cegléd, Hungary,’ Hungarian Spectrum, accessed January 29, 2013, <http://hungarianspectrum.wordpress.com/2012/08/20/neo-nazis-in-cegled-hungary/comment-page-1/>. In October 2012, the Roma people organized a big counter-demonstration against the patrols in Miskolc, in what was probably the most important display of Roma resistance in the previous twenty years (author’s participant observation, October 2012).

Gyöngyöspata. In order to go about exploring the security dimensions of the far-right in Hungary, I use the concept of ‘security-scape.’⁸³ I do so in order to underline the violence inherent in security practices and discourses, and to provide the logic of spectacle as a possible way of understanding how this violence is being legitimated.

For Appadurai, the suffix ‘scape’ points to the array of intersubjective relations of a social entity or phenomenon. These relations are ‘inflected by the historical, linguistic, and political situatedness of different sorts of actors.’⁸⁴ The ‘scape’ suffix is related to different historically situated imaginaries, varying from ethnicity to media, technology, finance, and ideas.⁸⁵ In particular, Gusterson uses the concept of ‘securityscape’ to focus on the ‘asymmetrical distributions’ of security (in a military sense) resources among ‘local and global imaginaries of identity, power and vulnerability.’⁸⁶ Thus, he directs the attention to key actors and the micro-worlds in which they move and ‘clash.’

The securityscape includes not only the material capabilities of security apparatuses, but also the discourses, practices, and imaginaries that accompany their use; in other words, it also includes the ways in which the security apparatuses are situated in their contexts. A securityscape is an assemblage of techniques, practices, infrastructures, materialities, and governmentalities of security.⁸⁷ I find it useful to add another dimension to Gusterson’s account, namely territoriality. As the name suggests, securityscapes are not merely symbolic mappings of security networks, but also have a poignant territorial (geographical) dimension. Security *dispositifs* and the imaginaries adjacent to them are concretely situated in spaces; they have a territorial logic. Practices and *dispositifs* of security produce spaces and territories, and in turn, geography is able to produce security practices.

Territory and security

In the case of Gyöngyöspata, this mutual production can be easily underlined. To begin with, the village is clearly divided between a hillside area and a small

⁸³ The hyphen between ‘security’ and ‘scape’ is used here in order to underline the territorial dimension that is absent from Gusterson’s account (see below), and is not used in the rest of the paper.

⁸⁴ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 33.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 34–6.

⁸⁶ Hugh Gusterson, *People of the bomb: portraits of America’s nuclear complex* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 166.

⁸⁷ Didier Bigo, ‘Security and Immigration: Toward a Critique of the Governmentality of Unease,’ *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 27, no. 1 (2002): 63–92; Jef Huysmans, ‘A Foucaultian View on Spill-over: Freedom and Security in the EU,’ *Journal of International Relations and Development* 7, no. 3 (2004): 294–318.

valley on the banks of a river. This division is also ethnic: The hillside is inhabited by ‘Hungarians,’ while the valley is populated by the Roma community. This territorialization translates into various dimensions of separation. The houses on the hillside are big, clean, and *coquette*, with the typical rural-meets-modern air to them. The houses in the valley are old, ruined by a previous flood, and look extremely poor and unkempt. The streets on the hillside are well maintained, while those in the valley are potholed and muddy. This black-and-white picture is complemented by a transitory space, an in-between area with no buildings: The abrupt terrain of the slope between the hill and the river, and also the area in which the garbage from the hillside is deposited, acting as a buffer zone between the Roma neighborhood and the rest of the village. There is also a fourth space, situated outside the village itself: another hill overlooking the valley. This is a deserted area, and several patrols were still active there when the activists came to the village after the camp was cancelled.⁸⁸

In this way, the ‘Roma area’ becomes a space of segregation and exclusion, squeezed between the slope and the river. This separation was once again rendered visible and reinforced during the spring incidents. The patrols moved around mostly in the Roma area, sometimes closing off the access ways by preventing people from circulating. Moreover, when the national police arrived, most of the display of force occurred in the Roma neighborhood. The villagers on the hillside went about their daily activities, while down in the valley there was commotion and all normal practices were interrupted. This clear-cut separation on different levels constitutes one of the aspects of the security context of the Gyöngyöspata securityscape.

Security actors

Another aspect is constituted by the array of security actors present at different moments in time, but within a short period, in the Roma neighborhood in Gyöngyöspata. These actors are the national police forces, the various paramilitary groups, and the human rights organizations. The local police were largely passive during the incidents,⁸⁹ and the national police arrived only when the events escalated and the training camp of the *Véderő* group was about to start. Although there were several groups patrolling prior to these events, the police were almost nowhere to be seen in the village. At the same time, after the camp was stopped, there were about ten police in the small area between the hillside and the river, even though at this point the patrols were no longer there. It is therefore hard to decide what security concerns the

⁸⁸) Participant observation by the author, April 2011.

⁸⁹) Feischmidt and Szombati, *Gyöngyöspata 2011*, 17.

national police had in the village. On the one hand, one would expect these forces to be oriented toward de-escalating the conflict and protecting the victims of violence. On the other hand, the actual behavior of the police seems to indicate a certain complacency regarding the patrols.⁹⁰

The paramilitary groups constitute a distinct array of actors. At the moment the events escalated, there were four groups of patrols in Gyöngyöspata. All of them were converging on the goals of their actions, namely to help the local population defend itself against the Roma terror, which was articulated as a security threat. As depicted in the previous paragraphs, the patrols were supported by several far-right organizations, and also had the participation and direct support of the ‘Magyar’ locals themselves.⁹¹ Members of these organizations arrived in the village and collaborated on a daily basis with the Hungarian community. The patrols had been trained in martial arts, and they wore uniforms, carried whips and batons, and had dogs on leashes.⁹² I therefore argue that these patrols had a paramilitary character. Thus, the ‘paramilitarization’ of Gyöngyöspata constitutes another distinct aspect of the local securityscape.

Another group of actors that ought to be mentioned in the Gyöngyöspata securityscape consists of civil society members who were outraged by the patrols’ actions. Throughout the development of the events, several human rights and Roma organizations operated in the village, along with independent groups of activists. These groups considered the activity of the patrols a security threat.⁹³ Despite it being a tardy response to the situation, human rights NGOs such as Amnesty and TASZ⁹⁴ articulated a discourse around the need to defend the local Roma community. In a letter signed by a group of Hungarian civil society organizations dated April 2012 and addressed to Hungarian and European authorities, this need is expressed as an ‘urge’ for ‘Hungarian competent authorities to instruct Hungarian police to swiftly intervene to prevent and investigate’ the paramilitary actions.⁹⁵ Some groups even tried to ensure a

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁹² ‘Roma hunting season set to continue,’ PressEurop.eu, April 6, 2011, accessed December 29, 2012, <http://www.presseurop.eu/en/content/article/586961-roma-hunting-season-set-continue>: ‘There were also a number of particularly aggressive looking individuals sporting combat fatigues and skinhead haircuts, who were armed with axes, whips and accompanied by pitbulls.’

⁹³ ‘Amnesty International: Kudarc a Gyöngyöspata-bizottság,’ Nepszabadsag Online, March 30, 2012, accessed December 29, 2012, http://nol.hu/belfold/amnesty_international_kudarc_a_gyongyospata-bizottsag.

⁹⁴ TASZ stands for ‘Társaság a Szabadságjogokért’—the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union, an NGO specialized in legal support for marginalized groups.

⁹⁵ The text of the letter can be found here: <http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/file/hungary-hajduhadhaz-letter-english-14-april-2011.pdf>.

constant presence in the village, in order to express solidarity against the patrols.

Security, violence, and the spectacle

The far-right patrols that were active in Gyöngyöspata employed a mechanism of security in their actions, as do extreme-right groups in general.⁹⁶ They claimed that certain groups within society are vulnerable and threatened by other groups, and volunteered to take action against these threats. Security practices have an intrinsic logic of drawing distinctions between ‘us’ and ‘them,’ where ‘us’ is the community to be defended, and ‘they’ are the enemy that has to be eliminated.⁹⁷ In the name of ensuring the security of a group, social actors attempt to delimit a distinct group of ‘others’ that represents the threat. In this way, not only does the ‘enemy’ become defined, but so too does the identity of the threatened group, on behalf of which security is provided.

This logic of distinguishing between friends and enemies is a violent one. It is the logic of exclusion and conflict. It legitimizes discrimination against certain people because they are considered a ‘threat.’ More than that, it legitimizes illegal and violent actions against other people, in the name of societal self-defense. Hence, violence is an integral part of security.

Violence and security are closely interrelated; from exceptional measures outside the realm of normal politics,⁹⁸ to practices of surveillance, control, and the ban,⁹⁹ and finally to war itself, violence is the main modality of security.¹⁰⁰ Whether they are outright displays of force, or a more subtle practice of domination through consent, security actions are predominantly violent.

In the case of the far-right paramilitaries in Hungary, and especially the patrols in Gyöngyöspata, violence was present throughout the discourses and practices undertaken. From the outset, it was the main modality of the security practices employed by the patrols against the Roma population. Starting from the symbolic, yet harmful displays of racism and hatred directed against

⁹⁶ Manuel Mireanu, *Domestic Extremism – A Political Analysis of Security and Violence* (Athena Institute, 2012). Accessed January 29, 2013, http://www.athenainstitute.eu/uploaded_docs/4f97bc2cb2e53.pdf.

⁹⁷ Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 2007); Michael Williams, ‘Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics,’ *International Studies Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (2003): 511–31.

⁹⁸ Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 1998).

⁹⁹ C.a.s.e. Collective, ‘Critical Approaches to Security in Europe: A Networked Manifesto,’ *Security Dialogue* 37, no. 4 (2006): 443–87.

¹⁰⁰ Iver Neumann, ‘Identity and the Outbreak of War: Or Why the Copenhagen School of Security Studies Should Include the Idea of “Violisation” in Its Framework of Analysis,’ *International Journal of Peace Studies* 3, no. 1 (1998): 1–10.

the Roma people, the far-right groups quickly moved on to explicit violent acts: breaking windows, burning houses, harassing people on the street with dogs and whips, starting altercations, and so on. Yet the reaction of the ‘Hungarians’ in the village, and of general segments of the Hungarian population elsewhere, ranged from apathy to approval of this violence.

How was this possible? My argument is that this violence was legitimated through what I call the logic of spectacle. Crucially, the spectacle instantiates a rupture between illusion and reality. It relies on powerful and suggestive impressions to convey messages that are imbued with tremor and emotions. The spectacle is mainly visual, and it uses images and the affects that they elicit. But the spectacle is also material: It is an assemblage of techniques and practices brought together by the need to stagger, to impress, to move, in a very physical way, the audience. Furthermore, the spectacle blurs the boundary between describing the world and creating the images of a new reality. As Boyle and Haggerty argue, the ‘spectacle involves ongoing processes whereby social life is processed and packaged for mass visual consumption in a society increasingly oriented to appearances in the service of capitalism.’¹⁰¹ Indeed, the realm of ‘appearances’ and of the illusory seems to be the fertile ground of the spectacular. Through the spectacle they created, the Hungarian far-right groups managed to create an illusion for the consumption of the general population—an illusion based to a large extent on existing perceptions, ideas, and stereotypes, but also an illusion of safety, community, and prosperity. This idealistic promise was based, fundamentally and paradoxically, on violent acts committed against the Roma population.

David Apter reminds us that violence creates not only a discourse, but also ‘a form of capital, a monopolistic capital of truths and virtues, of logocentric closure. It produces a conveyance, people giving over a piece of their minds to the collective, enabling them to draw more power than they give up.’¹⁰² Thus by employing violence for their security actions, the patrols gained a good deal of symbolic capital. People who had once watched helplessly as ‘the Gypsies’ spread fear, could now witness and even participate in a retributive collective action. Moreover, this action was firmly grounded in all the values they cherished, and that the Gypsies were threatening, namely reverence of the glorious past, masculinity, and force, honor, and vigilance. The use of violence ensured that the actions of the patrols had a degree of firmness and decisiveness that was lacking in the state’s interventions. Faced with the impotence of the state apparatus against the growing terror acts, the population accepted and

¹⁰¹ Philip Boyle and Kevin D. Haggerty, ‘Spectacular Security: Mega-Events and the Security Complex,’ *International Political Sociology* 3, no. 3 (September 2009): 259.

¹⁰² David Apter, *The Legitimization of Violence* (London: Macmillan, 1997), 13.

reinforced what it saw as a community-based, powerful, trained, effective, and well-organized grouping of forces that could stand up and deliver security and defense. It is small wonder that the website of the *Betyarsereg* group lists the following qualities that are required from their members: vigor, some experience in martial arts, athletic and ‘good-looking’ allure, and preferably male gender.¹⁰³ The readiness to engage in man-to-man combat instilled by intensive martial arts training is seen as a powerful asset and an effective tool of vigilantism in Hungary.

To quote David Apter again, ‘it is when events are incorporated into interpretive discourses embodied in discourse communities that political violence not only builds on itself, but becomes both self-validating and self-sustaining.’¹⁰⁴ In the case of Hungarian paramilitarism, the guiding discourse is intrinsically connected to the tropes of the glorious, romanticized past. It is from history that the Hungarian patrols draw their inspiration and their motivation. And it is from an idealized narrative of national supremacy and heroism on the one hand,¹⁰⁵ and from eternal victimization and un-recognition on the other hand, that the patrols obtain their main legitimacy. The past is revisited and fabricated in a fabulous way. This would be nothing new in the plethora of worldwide nationalisms that have spread across the globe since the beginning of the nineteenth century. What makes the Hungarian far right in general, and the anti-Roma patrols in particular, stand out, is the spectacularity of this nationalism, which is not sponsored by the state, but germinates from the grass-root level.¹⁰⁶

A sharp-eyed walk around Budapest’s historical center reveals a surprising phenomenon: Shops with windows displaying large numbers of historical artifacts, ranging from key-chains and books to t-shirts and ‘traditional’ pieces of attire, and even to bows, arrows, drinking horns, and amulets. All these items bear some nationalist symbol, whether the (outlawed) Arpad flag or the

¹⁰³ ‘Kapsolat,’ *Betyarsereg*, accessed December 29, 2012, <http://betyarsereg.hu/koezlemony>.

¹⁰⁴ Apter, *The Legitimization of Violence*, 12.

¹⁰⁵ ‘Not only is the past made heroic, but the very existence of the contemporary “warrior” has to resemble that of the ancient heroes. Thus, an entire lifestyle is being set up, and the external readiness for violence has to be congruent with an internal state of mind that emphasizes honour, abstinence, community, and even love.’ ‘Gondolatok’ [Thoughts], *Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom*, accessed December 29, 2012 <http://www.hvim.hu/gondolatok>.

¹⁰⁶ This is also an allusion to a possible comparison between the Hungarian and the Greek far-right movements, two of the strongest forces of the extreme right in Europe at the moment. The Greek ‘Golden Dawn’ is based not so much on the spectacular dimension of violence, but, in an environment in which non-state violence has been practiced for a longer time than in Hungary, it carries out direct violent acts in clear daylight. See Sappho Xenakis, ‘A New Dawn? Change and Continuity in Political Violence in Greece,’ *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24, no. 3 (2012): 437–64. More remains to be developed along these lines for such a comparison, but this should be the object of a separate study.

Greater Hungary map.¹⁰⁷ And all these items are being acquired by fervent ‘patriots’ who are eager to show their allegiance to Hungary. It is not unusual to see people in Budapest wearing anachronistic clothes that allude to a tribal and nomadic past, and the spread of images featuring the Greater Hungary map is extraordinary. This manifests a commodification of the past, a transformation of nationalist symbols into merchandise that, once bought, can bestow certain symbolic capital on the owner; yet it also points to the instantiations of the mythology that legitimates and reinforces the discourses used by the far-right groups. It is, in a manner of speaking, a ‘Lord of the Rings’ effect: People instantiate in their daily lives the myths that allow them to make up for this or that frustration.

The patrols, however, take this instantiation to a higher level. Their attire is not merely a uniform: It is a coherent set of artifacts that is meant to convey a discourse, the myth of Hungarian resilience and heroic stoutness. From the queer hats and pelerines of the *Betyarsereg*, to the black vests with Arpad flags of the *Magyar Garda*, from the whips that are meant to summon up images of ancient Hungarian outlaws, to embroidery that points to the *huszár* tradition, the uniforms of the different patrols are a fundamental part of their legitimacy discourse. These groups do not merely patrol and ensure security: They do so in a spectacular way.

Thus, spectacle becomes an integral component of security; it becomes a mechanism that legitimates the inherent violence in security practices. The spectacle of security accomplishes what Apter refers to as the ‘self-validating and self-sustaining’ mechanisms of violence. The far-right patrols are meant to make a first staggering impression on the visual level, before progressing to actual actions. Their very presence in somber, black, pre-modern attire, is meant to startle their enemies and comfort their friends. The myth comes to life, legend becomes reality, and the present time becomes the theatre of an eternal re-enactment of a glorified past.

The spectacular dimension of security sheds a good deal of light on the question how, in the case of Hungary, audiences legitimize vigilantism. The spectacle brings together disparate themes to form a coherent narrative. It emphasizes the fabulous, the extravagant, and the visual in its purest form. The focus of the spectacle is on the display, the showing off, and the entertainment. Spectacle allows the patrols to articulate their discourse and perform

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, this report on a Nazi festival in 2011: ‘Breivik tribute, Hungary – magyar sziget festival,’ YouTube, accessed December 29, 2012, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNGWm-gpdRQ&feature=related>. The breadth of artifacts shown here is far more complex, and it includes outright displays of Nazi symbols and Holocaust denial slogans.

a successful securitizing move even in the absence of any concrete action. In relation to violence, the spectacle has a precedent: It may announce violence, but it can also function in its absence, because it can impress an audience through grandeur and awe. Before they started to patrol in the actual sense, all paramilitary groups had been present at various demonstrations and protests, performing no other action than just being there. Thus, crucially, the spectacle is self-legitimizing: Its presence is already proof of its acceptance. The spectacle does not invent anything new; it just brings together elements of already accepted discourses, and gives them a twist.

The spectacular dimension is complemented by the dramaturgical one. Indeed, any spectacle is a performance in front of an audience. And as Mark Salter notices, security itself has a dramaturgical component: The speech act involves a theatrical move in front of a group of spectators.¹⁰⁸ The joint dimensions of spectacle and dramaturgy directly imply that behind these theatrical moves there are clearly stated intentions, and that the actors do not just automatically play a given role: They consciously create and reinforce the myths and narratives in order to convince their audiences. Here, the emotional aspect of the spectacle of security is crucial. The patrols elicit a certain range of effects, from nostalgia for a glorious past, to anger about a decayed present, and to the excitement and hope of being able to bring back that glorious past in order to make a change. These constitute a powerful force of legitimacy, which, like the rest of the spectacle, functions at a non-verbal level.

Conclusion

This paper argued for an interpretation of the rise of the legitimacy of the far-right in Hungary through the perspective of contemporary security studies. It pointed out the mechanisms of labeling a minority group a threat to the identity of the greater population, and taking direct action to tackle this threat. In the case of the Hungarian far-right, the Roma population was clearly articulated as a security threat that needs to be neutralized if the Hungarian identity is to survive and thrive. The security discourse helped to legitimize a powerful logic of exclusion and violence. This paper has argued that this legitimization has been done primarily through spectacular security. The spectacle of reviving a glorious past was a primary component of the practices of the patrols that acted in Hungarian villages such as Gyöngyöspata.

¹⁰⁸ Mark Salter, 'Securitization and Desecuritization: a Dramaturgical Analysis of the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority,' *Journal of International Relations and Development* 11 (2008): 321–49.

Such an argument naturally raises important questions regarding the populist usage of cultural and historical symbols and narratives for the sake of gaining enough legitimacy for violence. But more importantly, it illustrates the way in which far-right groups in general need an ‘enemy’ to function—that is, a group against which the identity upheld by the far-right group has to be defined. According to this logic, security, violence, and identity go hand in hand.