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Politically Driven:

Mapping Political and Media Discourses of Penal Populism—The Hungarian Case

Zsolt Boda
Gabriella Szabó
Attila Bartha
Gergő Medve-Bálint
Centre for Social Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences

Zsuzsanna Vidra
Center for Policy Studies, Central European University

Penal populism, advocating severe punishment of criminals, has greatly influenced justice policy measures in Eastern Europe over the last decade. This article takes Hungary as a typical case in the region and based on a recent criminal policy reform it investigates the roots of the penal populist discourse, which legitimizes and supports punitive measures. The research assumes that policy discourses need specific social actors that construct and promote them. Accordingly, the article explores whether the right-wing political parties and the tabloid media have taken a leading role in constructing the discourse of penal populism as a response to public concerns about crime. Content analysis and frame analysis of political communication and media was conducted to identify the discursive positions of major political parties and selected national media sources. The research found that penal populism was dominant in Hungarian political discourse while most of the media, including the tabloid press, have been rather reluctant to adopt punitive tones. The results thus contradict previous findings and offer a more nuanced view on how penal populism is being constructed and promoted in Eastern Europe.

Keywords: *crime; Eastern Europe; media framing; tabloidization; penal populism; policy making; political discourse*

Introduction

Penal populism is "a punishment policy developed primarily for its anticipated popularity."[1] This key element of rising populism in Eastern Europe advocates harsher, tougher measures against perpetrators of crime. Although compared to Western Europe the level of punitivity of Eastern European justice systems was already high in the 1990s,[2] penal populism has recently captured penal policies in

the East and, as a consequence, even tougher punishments have been adopted or are being considered to be introduced into the penal laws.[3] Studies on penal populism usually identify two main factors responsible for creating the discourse of penal populism: the populist radical right-wing parties and the tabloid media. In Eastern Europe, however, this phenomenon deserves closer attention. In spite of the numerous studies devoted to this topic, we know relatively little about who exactly creates and promotes the penal populist discourse there.

Populism, which claims to represent and express the general will of common people and takes a strong anti-elitist stance, has recently been on the rise all over Europe.[4] The populist radical right, which promotes penal populism by urging tough measures against criminals, has found considerable electoral support in Western Europe[5] and, more recently, also in the new democracies of Eastern Europe.[6] Yet, Minkenberg[7] argues that at least in one important aspect Eastern European right-wing populism is different from its Western European counterpart. While in Western Europe conservative parties have been able to tame and co-opt the electoral rise of the populist radical right, in Eastern Europe the radicalization of mainstream centre-right parties has taken place. While in Western Europe some "populist contagion" from radical to mainstream parties has certainly happened,[8] it has remained limited in scope and mostly affected the rhetorical level only. In Eastern Europe the influence of populism is supposed to be more widespread and may affect even the policy outcomes. The causes of this phenomenon need further research; however, for the purposes of the present study it is important to note that when mapping the actors behind the penal populist discourse in Eastern Europe one should pay attention not only to radical but also to mainstream right-wing parties.

Other accounts consider the media as the main drivers of populism in general and penal populism in particular. For instance, Roberts et al.[9] argue that by devoting special attention to the coverage of violent crime, the media indirectly promote harsher sentences and penal populism. Furthermore, the way crime is framed in the media directly influences both politicians and the public on what (typically harsh) policy response would be appropriate for certain types of crime. In the Eastern European context, mostly drawing on the example of Poland, Kossowska et al.[10] find that the mass media are to a great extent responsible for generating punitive attitudes in the public, which also affects politicians' stances on penal measures. Especially the sensationalist reporting style of the tabloid media—which emphasize brutal, violent incidents and suggest tough law enforcement measures—play a great role in promoting penal populism.

We selected Hungary as the most typical, illustrative case for analyzing the discourse of penal populism in Eastern Europe. The country demonstrates all the features of the recently experienced populist backlash;[11] thus, it is an emblematic case in the region.[12] Moreover, recent studies have found that tabloid media have contributed to the rise of the radical right in Hungary[13] and tabloid-style coverage of crime events has also been spreading there.[14] Finally, in 2010 a justice policy reform adopted punitive

measures known as the "three strikes" principle.[15] The country thus provides an optimal case to test whether the discourse of penal populism in Eastern Europe is being promoted by radical and possibly also mainstream right-wing parties and/or the media.

The Discourse of Penal Populism—Analytical Framework and Hypotheses

Penal populism refers to a discourse which suggests that the justice system privileges criminals and prisoners at the expense of crime victims and the law-abiding public.[16] It appeals to emotions rather than reason as "penal populism usually feeds on expressions of anger, disenchantment and disillusionment with the criminal justice establishment."[17] The discourse reclaims the justice system for the "oppressed" or "silent" majority as it emphasizes the rights of common people to safety and security and demands that criminal justice be shifted away from protecting criminals towards the interests of the law-abiding public. This explains most of the slogans associated with its initiatives: "three strikes," "truth in sentencing," "life means life," "zero tolerance," and so on.[18] In sum, penal populism (1) relies on and generates fear of crime, suggesting that crime is a growing threat to society; (2) blames the justice system and its alleged impotence by criticizing the protection it provides to criminals; (3) and urges harsher punishments and tougher measures against perpetrators of crime.

The alternative or anti-populist approach to crime stresses that punitive penal policy is both ineffective and costly.[19] It is ineffective because the severity of punishment has negligible influence on criminal behaviour,[20] and it is costly because it incurs growing expenses on the justice system, for instance, by increasing the number of prisoners.[21] Besides the ineffectiveness problem, punitive measures are also argued to be unfair as they may obstruct fair trials and violate basic human rights.[22] The anti-populist view argues that crime prevention is best achieved by reducing social inequalities and improving upward social mobility.[23] At the same time, it proposes measures such as increasing the procedural fairness of the justice system, which would reinforce citizens' normative compliance with it.[24] In addition, it also urges innovative solutions of restorative justice in order to promote processes of repair, reconciliation and the rebuilding of relationships instead of satisfying abstract legal principles and punishing the offenders.[25]

Where does the discourse of penal populism originate from? As mentioned above, because of its wide reach and persuasiveness, the media have great potential for shaping public opinion on crime, justice, and the police.[26] Hohl stresses that by portraying a distorted picture of criminal activity, the media create widespread incredulity about crime trends and are responsible for the declining levels of confidence in the justice systems.[27] Falling trust is also linked to the "irrationally inflated" fear of crime which is believed to be fuelled by the media.[28]

However, studies on policy discourses emphasize the role of crucial social actors that construct and spread them.[29] Thus, without other relevant social actors, the media alone may not be sufficient to create and promote penal populism. Those actors can be experts, scientists, and other knowledge brokers as the concept of epistemic communities[30] suggests; or NGOs and social movements that challenge and change the dominant interpretations on a specific social problem.[31] In the case of penal populism, however, the typical actors that construct its discourse are predominantly populist movements and radical right-wing political parties.[32] This is not to say that these actors and the media "cause" penal populism. Still, right-wing populist parties together with the media may construct the language of, and arguments for punitive justice policy, which may affect public opinion, too. Once the penal populist discourse becomes widespread, it may influence justice policy and could trigger the adoption of more punitive measures.[33]

Accordingly, in this article we intend to map the discourse that created the problem stream behind the policy change that actually took place. We formulated the following research questions:

Research question 1: Is Hungarian political discourse on criminal justice issues divided primarily along the left–right axis? That is, does the liberal left oppose penal populist measures while right-wing parties support it?
Research question 2: Are the media, particularly the tabloid media, promoting penal populism by supporting the three-strikes initiative and framing crime in a populist manner?

In order to answer these questions about the Hungarian case, we performed content and frame analysis of both political and media discourses on crime and criminal policy. The content analysis aimed to identify discourses that can be labelled populist.

In order to better understand the discursive construction of crime and criminal policy, we also conducted a frame analysis in which we anticipated five dominant interpretive frames of crime and criminal justice that usually appear in political and media discourses.[34] These frames provide an interpretive background on the origins of crime and based on their characteristics, some of them typically support the penal populist discourse while the others are rather used in anti-populist discourses of crime and penal policy.

The *faulty system frame* blames crime on the ineffective and weak criminal justice system, which does not sufficiently serve public security. The *social breakdown frame* views crime as a result of a general crisis in societal values that lead to the disintegration of families and small communities. This frame also involves the criminalization of antisocial behaviour such as begging, prostitution, and drug consumption and emphasizes the role of collective efforts against crime via crime watches and community policing. The *violent media frame* suggests that violence frequently portrayed in the mass media undermines respect for life. This frame implies that in order to decrease violence in real life, violence portrayed in the media should be reduced first.

The *blocked opportunities* and *racist system frames* share a common crime-conception suggesting that crime is the consequence of social inequality, discrimination, and social exclusion. The blocked opportunity frame finds the roots of criminal behaviour in rising unemployment, poverty, and low levels of education. The racist system frame refers to the racially/ethnically biased character of the criminal justice system. These frames interpret crime as a means through which the socially deprived express frustration as a result of their situation.

We did not expect all the frames derived from the literature to play a significant role in the Hungarian context.[35] Moreover, in addition to the above frames proposed by the literature,[36] we included two other interpretive frames to fully capture the Hungarian context. In a recent study, Boda and Szabó[37] found that a high proportion of media outlets in Hungary regarded crime as an inexplicable hybrid of coincidence and human brutality. Although this frame seems to comply with the social breakdown frame, its main distinguishing feature is that it focuses almost exclusively on describing the brutality of criminal offences without offering any explanations of the origins of crime. We labelled it as the *mean world frame* because it gives an impression that life is full of violence and everybody (regardless of age, sex, and social status) can become a perpetrator or a victim of crime.[38]

Another interpretive frame derives from the particular relation between the judicial system and politics in Hungary. Fleck[39] emphasizes that the autonomy of the Hungarian judicial profession is vulnerable as the political elite tends to interfere with it. This implies that we have to make a distinction between the perceived problems of the proper criminal justice system (revealed by the faulty system frame) and the perceived harmful influence of the political elite. For this reason, we apply a separate interpretive frame called the *faulty politics frame*, which refers to power-abusing politics and corrupt politicians and suggests that criminal activity may be indirectly generated by the political elite.

The populist discourse, which usually argues that public security has to be enhanced by applying stricter measures of punishment and demands more state funding for the police and prisons, mainly builds on the faulty system, the social breakdown, and the mean world frames. In contrast, the anti-populist discourse, which argues that figures of crime rates do not substantiate the claims for harsher punishments and there is no evidence that harsher measures would reduce violent crime, mainly relies on the frames of blocked opportunities and a racist system. These two frames suggest that a punitive criminal code is rather counterproductive: to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour, the decision makers should improve the social conditions of marginalized people by enforcing equal opportunities and granting them greater access to education. However, the anti-populist discourse may also use the faulty system frame when criticizing the poor effectiveness of punitive policies and advocating new measures, like restorative justice or trust-based policies.

## Penal Populism and Justice Policy Reform in Hungary: Background and Data

Our analysis focuses on the political and media discourses that accompanied the adoption of the three-strikes principle into Hungarian criminal law. Three-strikes laws originate from the United States where they significantly increased the prison sentences of perpetrators who had been previously convicted of two or more violent crimes or serious felonies. The debate about this issue in Hungary took place in two consecutive time periods, in the spring of 2009 and, after the parliamentary elections, in the spring and summer of 2010. In both periods, Fidesz, the moderate right-wing conservative party proposed the introduction of the three-strikes principle into the criminal law. In February 2009, the party was in opposition and the socialist-liberal majority voted down the initiative. However, in June 2010, after the general elections where the socialist government was ousted[40] and Fidesz secured a constitutional (two-thirds) majority in Parliament, the new Fidesz government passed a series of bills that introduced three-strikes statutes into Hungarian criminal law. As a consequence, the law now compels courts to impose life sentences on habitual offenders committing serious violent crimes.

In order to understand the general context, it is important to note that the years 2008–2009 brought about the growing popularity of Jobbik, a radical right-wing party, which was first voted into parliament in the 2010 elections, and acquired about 12 per cent of the parliamentary seats. The party played on public fear of crime, and in its main campaign message was urging tougher measures against the allegedly growing Roma (or Gipsy) crime. Jobbik proposed to increase the severity of sentencing, demanded greater public spending on police, and encouraged grass-roots organizations of self-defence. The law-and-order discourse of the party was one of the main factors that brought its electoral success in the European Parliament elections in 2009 and in the 2010 general elections.[41]

Thus, a possible root of penal populism in Hungary is the radical right-wing because Jobbik was the first political party that placed the issue of justice and crime on the political agenda. However, once in power, the moderate right-wing Fidesz adopted many of the propositions of Jobbik, including the increase in the severity of punishment. This is consistent with the claims of Minkenberg,[42] who observed the radicalization of mainstream right-wing parties in Eastern Europe.

The political parties may have had a political rationale for adopting the penal populist discourse because public attitudes in Hungary favour punitive measures. Data from the fourth round of the ESS survey (2008)[43] reveal that the level of expressive punitivity,[44] which reflects a general desire for tougher penalties, is among the highest in Europe. This suggests that penal populism falls on fertile ground there. Nevertheless, the general level of fear of crime[45] is not particularly high in Hungary if we take a European perspective (Figure 1).

Figure 1
Expressive Punitivity and Fear of Crime across Europe in 2008[46]
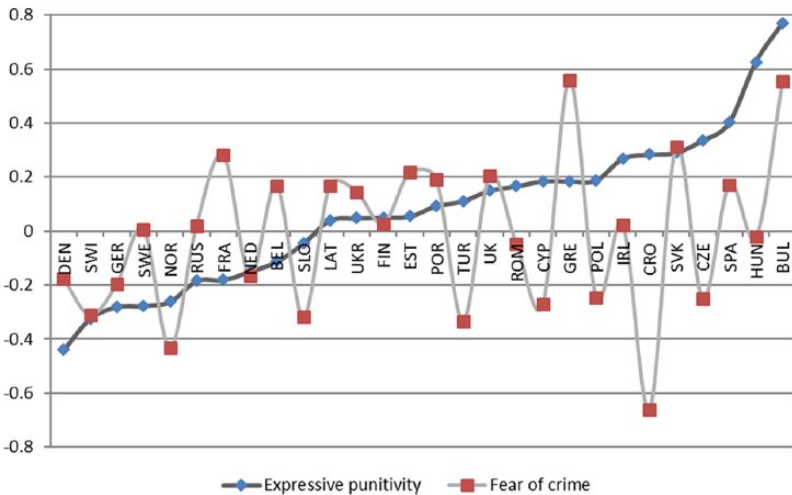
Source: Authors' own calculations, ESS data (2008)
Note: The indicators have been standardized to have a mean of zero and standard deviation of one.

However, people rarely have fixed and consistent attitudes about specific issues,[47] and attitudes alone do not make up a policy discourse. The attitudes of Hungarian people may be compatible with penal populism, but this does not exclude the possibility that they could accept other discourses and frames on crime and justice as well. Indeed, a representative survey conducted in September 2009 revealed that popular interpretations about the roots of crime may be compatible with a more liberal and less punitive political discourse on justice policy (Table 1). The relative majority, nearly half of the respondents (47 per cent), believed that poverty and related social problems were the main causes of public security concerns. This complies with the crime conception of the blocked opportunities frame that finds the root of crime in social inequality and exclusion. Only 12 per cent of the respondents blamed the police for crime, which is the usual scapegoat of penal populism. This suggests that while Hungarians are strongly in favour of more punitive criminal justice measures, they do not necessarily share the populist interpretations about the origins of crime.

In order to chart how these public attitudes are channelled and formulated by major policy actors, we collected the relevant assertions of political actors and corresponding media content that dealt with the issue of the criminal law reform, one month before and two months after the respective parliamentary debates. Following our research questions we assumed that the penal populist discourse and the support for the three-strikes initiative would be dominant in right-wing political statements

Table 1
Perceptions about the Main Factors Affecting Public Security
in Hungary, 2009

Which of the following factors do you think has the most important effect on public security?	Share (%) of valid responses (N = 928)
The current state of the police	12.0%
Social tensions, impoverishment	47.2%
Ethnic conflicts	16.3%
Organized crime	8.9%
The elite does not display a moral example to follow	9.9%
Other response	5.7%

Source: Századvég survey, September 2009.

while they would remain sporadic in left-wing politics. We also assumed that the penal populist discourse would be heavily present in the tabloid media, while the quality press would rather be exempt from it.

We identified 69 items that constituted the main political discourse regarding the three-strikes principle. The sources of these records include documents of three parliamentary debates (2 March 2009, 21 May 2010, 5 July 2010) devoted to the three-strikes laws and related penal measures (twenty-seven items), press releases, campaign materials, the government programme for 2010–2014, and related entries published on the parties' official websites and social media profiles (forty-two items). We considered each piece of communication (e.g., a parliamentary speech or a press release) as a single item and sought to identify whether a given item is a manifestation of the penal populist discourse.[48]

As for the media analysis, we selected six media sources: the two most popular daily broadsheets (*Magyar Nemzet*, right-wing; and *Népszabadság*, left-wing), the two most popular daily tabloids (*Blikk* and *Bors*), and the two most frequently read online news portals (*Index* and *Origo*). Empirical evidence on the Hungarian media landscape supports our choice. Even though the readership of daily broadsheets has been shrinking over the last decade, quality papers still play an active role in framing policy changes.[49] Tabloids pay special attention to crime and crime-related political issues,[50] while the growing popularity of online portals justifies the inclusion of the internet-based media into the scope of inquiry.[51] However, we did not include into our analysis commercial TV programmes because recent media studies did not find significant differences between daily tabloids and commercial channels in terms of their reporting styles of crime-related events.[52]

By using a set of keywords,[53] we collected articles dealing with crime and criminal justice published in the above indicated periods. We also filtered the false positives, which for instance discussed crime fiction (books, TV series, films, etc.) or criminal activity abroad. As a next step, we selected those articles that were directly dedicated

to the issue of the three-strikes initiative. Surprisingly, slightly more than 1 per cent (53 items) of the total 4779 articles fell into this category (three-strikes sample; referred to hereafter as TSS). The very low coverage suggested that neither the print nor the online media showed particular interest in the topic. In order to gain a general overview of how Hungarian media discuss crime, we also took a 5 per cent random sample of the remaining articles and we coded them as well (this constituted our general crime sample, referred to hereafter as GCS). When coding the articles, our aim was to find their main message, that is, whether they implied a rather populist or anti-populist understanding of the origin and nature of crime.[54] Again, each article counted as one item.

Every political and media item was coded by two independent researchers. When the coding of an item differed, the research team discussed the issue and determined the final coding. We coded all the material according to three main aspects. First, the researchers identified basic information about the item's author/publisher, genre, and date of publication. The second aspect consisted of an evaluation of whether the content of the item supported the three-strikes principle or in general promoted harsher penal measures. We also assessed whether the main message of the text was populist or not. For this, we used an operationalized definition of penal populism based on the scholarly approaches presented above. A discourse is labelled as penal populist if it (1) stresses the rights and interests of crime victims in particular and the law-abiding public in general as contrasted to those of criminals and prisoners; (2) uses expressions of anger, disenchantment, and disillusionment with the criminal justice establishment; (3) takes the form of "feelings and intuitions" or expressions of everyday talk between citizens rather than some more quantifiable indicators; (4) employs a tabloid style of communication that bears simplicity and directness. A discourse had to exhibit at least two of these features in order to be labelled as populist. Finally, in the frame analysis, we coded the interpretive frame(s) that the text provided on crime and justice.[55] Discourses that do not show the features of penal populism fall into two categories. We labelled anti-populist those communications that took a direct stance against the populist approach. As we will see, political discourses were either populist or anti-populist. However, a number of media items could not be classified into any of these two categories. They are nonpopulist or descriptive, without expressing a clear position on the issue and simply reporting news, like the adoption of the new criminal bill or a robbery. In the following sections, we summarize the results of our empirical analysis. First, we analyse the political discourse and we continue with the evaluation of the media discourse.

The Political Discourse Revolving around the three-strikes Initiative

Fidesz was the dominant actor both in the first and the second phase of the debate on the three-strikes initiative as the party issued more than half (thirty-eight items)

of all the political communication records in this topic. Thus, the conservative party was the clear issue owner shaping the political agenda concerning the three-strikes laws. After their draft bill had been rejected by the socialist-liberal majority in March 2009, Fidesz launched a signature campaign[56] to demonstrate that there was significant public demand for a more punitive penal policy.[57] The penal policy reform became a salient issue after Fidesz won the elections in 2010 as it also constituted a key part of the new government's programme.[58] Fidesz MPs emphasized that the former socialist-liberal government applied lenient policies that neither deterred perpetrators nor protected the law-abiding public. The party's programme declared,

> The laws of the previous government led by Ferenc Gyurcsány encouraged offenders to commit crimes rather than protect the victims and law-abiding people. . . . This must be changed.[59]

Fidesz also argued that because of the ineffective penal policy, violent crimes reached record high levels and as a consequence the general public had lost its trust in the criminal justice system.[60] However, criminal justice statistics do not fully support these claims. Between 1999 and 2009, the annual number of cases of registered crime in Hungary fell from 505,000 to slightly below 394,000. At the same time, crimes against persons increased from 19,000 to 24,000 per year in the same period.[61] The arguments of Fidesz about the origins of crime comply mostly with the faulty system frame. Other frames rarely appeared in their communication although we identified traces of the social breakdown frame and the mean world frame in 4 of the recorded items. Yet, they were always accompanied by the dominant faulty system narrative.[62]

Jobbik (the radical right-wing party) was also keen to express its standpoints on the three-strikes laws (thirteen recorded items). The party clearly communicated its dissatisfaction with the performance of the criminal justice system over the last two decades and blamed the "leftist-liberal intellectuals" for protecting the perpetrators rather than the victims. Jobbik demonstrated deep scepticism about the reliability of crime statistics.[63] The position of the party complied with the faulty system frame as most of the party's recorded items referred to the inability of the criminal justice system to prevent violence. In some instances, social breakdown was also referred to as a cause of rising crime rates. Even though Jobbik was clearly advocating a much stricter criminal law, the party opposed the initiative of Fidesz about the three-strikes bills. Jobbik believed that the proposed modifications were insufficient as they did not introduce fundamental, more punitive changes into the penal code. Jobbik's stance can thus be summarized as "yes to the principle, no to the bills."[64]

Unexpectedly, in the first phase of the debate, the socialist government officials did not provide a strong alternative position to the three-strikes initiative, and neither did the socialist MPs in the second phase, after Fidesz had won the elections. In

2009, the socialist government questioned the criminological adequacy of the three-strikes model and raised constitutional doubts about introducing it into the penal code. However, the socialists acknowledged that the level of violent crime was increasing and admitted the need for urgent policy interventions.[65] After the elections, the party offered surprisingly few contributions to the second phase of the debate. Only two socialist MPs raised their voices in Parliament. One of them sharply criticized the three-strikes principle and also highlighted that Fidesz drafted the bills without consulting legal experts.[66] However, another socialist MP expressed his commitment towards a more punitive penal code and he stressed that the former socialist government also issued stricter measures to fight against violence. At the same time, he doubted whether the three-strikes principle would be appropriate to be introduced in Hungary.[67]

Concerning the anti-populist discourse, only the green-liberal party (LMP) represented a consistent approach against penal populism. They grounded their arguments in academic research that compared penal policy practices in the world and concluded that the three-strikes principle had no positive effect on public security: "No evidence has been found to prove the efficacy of the 'three strikes' model."[68] In the debate only the LMP contextualised crime as a social phenomenon pointing to the high correlation between poverty, social exclusion, and crime. The following quote from the party's election programme demonstrates this aspect:

> Poverty and low levels of education always involve a greater chance of violating social norms. . . . This is a complex problem which cannot be solved by using merely punitive crime control techniques. . . . What we promote is a structurally renewed, non-discriminative set of policies granting equal opportunity to deprived communities to integrate them into society.[69]

They also argued that without overcoming social obstacles (lack of equal opportunities and discrepancies in the social and education services) in deprived areas, harsher, more punitive crime policy measures would not reduce crime. While LMP also heavily criticized the punitive penal policies of the previous socialist-liberal governments, it denounced the positions of both Fidesz and Jobbik and accused them of deepening social conflicts by maintaining the exclusion of the marginalized groups:

> Notwithstanding our deepest sympathy for the victims of crime, an increase in the imprisoned population would not solve the problem of crime. It would create more trouble which will jeopardize the fragile social peace.[70]

Instead of introducing harsher measures, the party advocated elements of restorative justice (victim-offender mediation) to tackle crime.[71] LMP's communication can thus be characterized as a combination of the blocked opportunities and faulty system frames.

Table 2
Map of the Political Discourse Concerning the Three-Strikes Initiative

	Penal Populist Discourse	Anti-populist Discourse
Political actors	Jobbik (radical right-wing party)	LMP (green-liberal party)
	Fidesz (centre-right party) and centre-right government officials	
	MSZP (socialist party) and socialist government officials	
Frames	Faulty system Social breakdown	Blocked opportunities
	Mean world	Faulty system
Suggested policy measures	More punitive measures	Protecting vulnerable groups
	Three-strikes principle	Restorative justice
Number of items	n = 59	n = 10

These findings suggest that most of the Hungarian political actors internalized public anxiety about crime. Except for the green-liberal LMP, the parties argued for more punitive penal measures although only Fidesz supported the punitive changes to the Penal Code. This dominance of the penal populist discourse may explain why so few alternatives to the three-strikes bills appeared during the debates. Almost the entire political spectrum (Fidesz, Jobbik, and MSZP) shared the discourse of penal populism, which was based on the presumption that the criminal justice system was inefficient in tackling crime. Only the green-liberal party attempted to counterbalance the dominant "law-and-order" language (Table 2). Interestingly, the communications of the political actors were mostly based on the faulty system frame. It seems that blaming the system is a common argumentative approach for the Hungarian political elite in discussing penal policy. This frame can support both populist and anti-populist discourses, as criticism of the current justice system relying on this frame can be formulated from both perspectives.

The Media Discourse

Our second research question concerned the role of the media and especially the tabloids in creating an atmosphere conducive to penal populism. The possible role of the media can be substantiated in a stronger and a weaker version. The stronger version understands tabloid media as the major, direct contributor to the penal populist discourse while the weaker version assumes that media, especially tabloids, are indirectly shaping Hungarian citizens' and politicians' perceptions of criminality through frequent, expressive, and often brutal presentation of crime. Recent research on Eastern Europe has found evidence supporting the weaker version of understanding the role of the media[72] but the emerging trend of media popularization and

tabloidization[73] makes the stronger version also relevant. Accordingly, the three-strikes sample (TSS) may serve to answer whether the media contribute directly to the penal populist discourse, while the analysis of the general crime sample (GCS) may explore the dominant interpretation (frame) on crime and justice that the media are offering.

The number of media articles specifically dedicated to the three-strikes initiative was fairly low (*n* = 53) in the analysed sources, which indicated limited media interest in the issue. Surprisingly, only a quarter (13 items) of the three-strikes articles took an unambiguously populist stance towards the initiative either by agreeing with it or by suggesting the need for tougher penal measures to prevent crime. The right-wing broadsheet, *Magyar Nemzet* was responsible for nearly half (6 items) of these populist items and it was the only media source in the TSS sample where the populist articles outnumbered the clearly anti-populist ones. It seems that the right-wing broadsheet had accommodated and was spreading the Fidesz's position.

As the following quote demonstrates, in some cases *Magyar Nemzet* applied typical penal populist rhetoric:

> Public security is deteriorating in Hungary. . . . In fact, it is not deteriorating, it has ceased to exist. . . . The opposition party[74] proposed to introduce stricter measures into the criminal justice system. . . . More of these initiatives are necessary and not only here but all over the continent. . . . The justice system should deliver justice but this is only possible if it serves the law-abiding citizens instead of the criminals.[75]

The online portals and especially the left-wing broadsheet expressed a rather anti-populist attitude towards the three-strikes initiative. Considering these three media outlets together, only five items were coded as explicitly populist. The two tabloid newspapers showed the least interest in the three-strikes debate: they published only seven articles on this topic, out of which three items expressed support for the initiative. That is, the tabloids were rather reluctant to formulate a clear position in the debate.

Concerning the discursive frames, the most common one in the TSS was the faulty system frame, which was almost equally distributed among the left-wing and the right-wing newspapers, tabloids, and online media sources. The mean world frame was notably present in the right-wing broadsheet and the tabloids, while it was completely missing from the left-wing newspaper. Although both the faulty system and the mean world frames may provide penal populist arguments, we found that the faulty system frame was also used in anti-populist assertions indicating that a general discontent with the Hungarian criminal justice system does not necessarily involve a populist stance. The apparent agreement about the serious functional problems of the system sometimes implies disagreement with populist measures of punitive rigour as was also observed in our analysis of the political discourse on penal populism:

> The increase in the number of minor thefts below the felony threshold has become a factor basically undermining the security perception of the inhabitants in several regions. . . . Nobody debates the objectives of the new policies, but we criticize the suggested measures as in general the prospect of stricter punishment has no impact on potential criminals. Especially in the case of youth, confinement does not bring about respect for social norms; in addition, it breaches international norms.[76]

In our general crime sample, which consisted of 233 articles, the share of explicitly populist items was even smaller than in the case of the TSS: only 6 per cent of the GCS was coded as unambiguously populist. *Magyar Nemzet*, the right-wing broadsheet, was responsible for half of those populist articles while the explicit presence of penal populism in the other media sources was negligible. However, this does not imply that the majority of the Hungarian media sources would be definitely anti-populist either. Indeed, most of the items in the GCS provide only mere descriptions of crimes—this is what we simply call non-populist. This media sample, especially the tabloid and the online sources, are dominated by news stories and articles without offering any interpretation about crime and justice.[77] A typical example of such a descriptive, non-populist item was published in a Hungarian tabloid:

> It is not enough that the flood devastated his home; then the man was attacked by a robber at his temporary lodgement. He began to grapple with the criminal who beat him and the victim suffered an injury that would heal in more than eight days. The police started an investigation.[78]

With respect to the occurrence of crime frames in the GCS, the mean world frame appeared most frequently as we identified this frame in the majority of the descriptive articles (illustrated by the example above). The second most often used frame was the faulty system (19 per cent) followed by the faulty politics frame (6 per cent). The fact that blocked opportunities, violent media, and racist system frames were almost completely missing reflects that the Hungarian media sources offer a highly limited explanation about the causes of crime (Table 3).

The dominant descriptive approach of criminality that ignores the possible social and policy arguments usually presents individual stories and it simply illustrates the cruelty of human life. If any social explanation of crime is given at all, then it is usually portrayed according to the faulty system, or the faulty politics frame. This substantially confines the media discourse on the origins of crime to a few possible interpretations: crime is either described as a natural attribute of life that is full of violence or it is blamed on the weak criminal justice system or on the corrupt political elite. As the last two interpretations typically belong to the penal populist discourse, it is no surprise that in the three-strikes debate they appeared most frequently even though sometimes they were also employed in an anti-populist context expressing a general dissatisfaction with the performance of the Hungarian political elite and the criminal justice system.

Table 3
Map of the Hungarian Media Discourse of Penal Populism and Crime

Media Sources	Left-Wing Broadsheet (*Népszabadság*)	Right-Wing Broadsheet (*Magyar Nemzet*)	Online Media (*Index* and *Origo*)	Tabloids (*Blikk* and *Bors*)
Dominant discursive positions	Anti-populist	Populist and descriptive	Descriptive and anti-populist	Descriptive
Frames	Faulty system	Faulty system	Faulty system	Mean world
	Faulty politics	Social breakdown	Faulty politics	Faulty system
		Mean world	Mean world	
Number of items, three-strikes sample (TSS)	*n* = 15	*n* = 10	*n* = 21	*n* = 7
Number of items, general crime sample (GCS)	*n* = 33	*n* = 52	*n* = 98	*n* = 50

Based on these results, we did not find evidence in support of the tabloids driving the discourse of penal populism. In Hungary, it is not the tabloid press but the right-wing daily that took a leading role in this process. However, while explicit penal populism seems to be limited to the right-wing broadsheet, very few articles presented counter-arguments to the penal populist discourse in the press. That is, while the Hungarian press in general does not seem to use the discourse of penal populism, it is far from expressing an anti-populist tone either.

We cannot reject, however, that through the expressive portrayal of violent crime, the media indirectly shape popular attitudes towards the criminal justice system. Although most of the analyzed articles gave a fairly neutral account of crime events, we found that the two tabloids as well as the two online portals did not refrain from emphasizing the gory, brutal details of violent acts. Given the already high level of punitivity in Hungary, the public may be sensitive to such reports of crime, which may further raise punitive attitudes. Yet, the evidence that we collected is not sufficient for drawing a definite conclusion in this respect.

Conclusion

Considering Hungary as a typical case of rising populism in Eastern Europe, we attempted to explore the political and the media discourse about the introduction of the three-strikes principle into the Hungarian penal code. We expected to find a clear divide between the discourses of the supposedly populist right-wing and the anti-populist liberal left-wing parties. We also assumed that the media, especially the tabloids, would foster rather populist ideas about crime and punishment. However, our analysis did not fully support these hypotheses. In fact, the results are quite surprising in that they show a remarkable mismatch between the political and media discourses.

Based on the content and frame analysis, we found that the Hungarian political parties are almost entirely inclined to penal populism and only LMP, the green-liberal party, poses an exception to this rule. Penal populism is not restricted to the radical right but it has been incorporated and, through the promotion of the three-strikes principle, actively spread by Fidesz, the centre-right conservative party. The socialists have also expressed markedly punitive attitudes and in this sense penal populism has become the mainstream political discourse in Hungary. As the level of punitivity of the Hungarian population is high (especially in a European comparison), playing on these attitudes may bring electoral success: the steeply rising popularity of the radical right-wing Jobbik has illustrated this point. However, when it comes to the interpretation of the causes and origins of crime, the majority of Hungarians do not express populist beliefs as they tend to share the view that criminal activity is mainly caused by blocked social opportunities and impoverishment. Yet, neither the political nor the media discourses reflect these more nuanced attitudes. While the Hungarian population expresses a mixture of both punitive and liberal positions, political discourse remains almost entirely punitive. This may suggest that political parties do not only exploit public punitivity but also play a leading role in shaping and reinforcing those attitudes through the construction and promotion of the penal populist discourse.

Regarding the role of the media, we did not find sufficient evidence for the case that tabloids would be the main drivers of penal populism in Hungary. The media seem to be more balanced and also rather more neutral in discussing crime than the political parties. The only exception in this respect is the right-wing broadsheet, which has consistently supported the three-strikes initiative. In spite of this, punitivity does not characterize the media discourse as much as it is a typical feature of the political discourse.

Although the media were reserved concerning the penal populist discourse, we have to emphasize that the anti-populist interpretations of crime were almost entirely missing from the analyzed media sources. Interpretive frames of crime that may appeal to punitive attitudes frequently appear in the media in a descriptive, non-argumentative way. So the apparent neutrality does not rule out that Hungarian media actually serve punitive public sentiments and indirectly reinforce them especially through the general trend of tabloidization in the media coverage of crime.

Our findings suggest that there is a more complex interplay between public attitudes to crime and the media and political discourses than is usually assumed in the literature. While the media are often found to be the main drivers of penal populism, the Hungarian case shows that a strongly and almost uniformly punitive political discourse may also become the key element in reinforcing punitive attitudes of the public. Our analysis demonstrated that this may happen even if the media remain rather reluctant towards the punitive political discourse.

The general take of the literature is that right-wing populist parties and the tabloid media are the main drivers of the penal populist discourse. This claim is mostly based on empirical research conducted either in Western European or North American contexts. Although recent empirical works on Eastern Europe also seem to reinforce this point, our findings suggest that there is a more nuanced, much less straightforward relationship between the recent rise of penal populism in Eastern Europe and the role played in this process by the media and political parties. Our research highlights the primacy of politics; even if explicit populist discourses are modestly represented in the media, penal populism may capture the discourse of nearly the whole political spectrum, which evidently leads to the adoption of harsher penal measures. This brings further evidence for the claim that in Eastern Europe the radicalization of mainstream political parties is taking place.

Why policy makers chose the populist stance is a question that remains open. Was it out of strategic considerations (competition with the far right), ideological commitment, or a mix of different reasons? These questions point toward explaining causes of penal policy change that was not the objective of our endeavour here, though we believe that our findings also open up new research streams from that perspective.

Notes

1. Julian V. Roberts, Loretta J. Stalans, David Indermaur, and Mike Hough, eds., *Penal Populism and Public Opinion: Lessons from Five Countries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 65.

2. Tapio Lappi-Seppälä, "Trust, Welfare, and Political Culture: Explaining Differences in National Penal Policies," *Crime and Justice* 37, no. 1 (2008): 313–87.

3. Anna Kossowska et al., "Politicians, Media, and Society's Perception of Crime," in *Crime and Transition in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Alenka Šelih and Aleš Završnik (New York: Springer, 2012), 37–66.

4. Recent studies about populism offer various conceptualisations; populism as ideology and populism as a political communication style are the most frequently used conceptual approaches. See, e.g., Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); and Benjamin Moffitt and Simon Tormey, "Rethinking Populism: Politics, Mediatisation and Political Style," *Political Studies* 62, no. 2 (2014): 381–97. In the context of penal populism, populism is rather conceived as a political style.

5. Duane Swank and Hans-Georg Betz, "Globalization, the Welfare State and Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe," *Socio-Economic Review* 1, no. 2 (2003): 215–45.

6. Bojan Bugarič, "Populism, Liberal Democracy, and the Rule of Law in Central and Eastern Europe," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 41, no. 2 (2008): 191–203.

7. Michael Minkenberg, "From Pariah to Policy-Maker? The Radical Right in Europe, West and East: Between Margin and Mainstream," *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 21, no. 1 (2013): 5–24.

8. Gilles Ivaldi, "Evaluating the Populist Challenge: Partisanship and the Making of Immigration Policy in France (1974-2011)" (paper prepared for the mini-symposium "New Right Populist Parties and Their Impact on European Parties and Party Systems," Council for European Studies Conference, Barcelona, June 20-22, 2011).

9. Roberts et al., *Penal Populism and Public Opinion*.

10. Kossowska et al., "Politicians, Media, and Society's Perception of Crime."

11. Umut Korkut, *Liberalization Challenges in Hungary: Elitism, Progressivism, and Populism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Ulrich Sedelmeier, "Anchoring Democracy from Above: The European Union and Democratic Backsliding in Hungary and Romania after Accession," *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 52, no. 1 (2014): 105–21.

12. Jacques Rupnik, "How Things Went Wrong," *Journal of Democracy* 23, no. 3 (2012): 132–37.

13. Gergely Karácsony and Dániel Róna, "The Secret of Jobbik. Reasons Behind the Rise of the Hungarian Radical Right," *Journal of East European and Asian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2011): 61–92.

14. Gábor Bernáth, "Bulvár. A média romaképének változása," *Beszélő* 17, no. 4 (2012), http://beszelo.c3.hu/cikkek/bulvar.

15. Note that the three-strikes principle has been literally translated into Hungarian, though most Hungarians are entirely unaware of the original baseball connotations of it. The translated version (three "csapás"), however, invokes the connotation of blows, calamities, and disasters in environmental, meteorological, military or public security context (inter alia, the biblical ten plagues are ten "csapás" in Hungarian). Moreover, number three has an obvious reference to the serious crime in local crime and punishment context due to the widely used Hungarian saying that "three is the Hungarian justice."

16. See Mike Hough, Jessica Jacobson, and Andrew Millie, *The Decision to Imprison: Sentencing and the Prison Population. Rethinking Crime and Punishment* (London: Prison Reform Trust, 2003); Zsolt Boda, Gergő Medve-Bálint, and Gabriella Szabó, "Exploring Trust in Justice and Fear of Crime through Media Consumption," in *Trust in Justice: Why It Is Important for Criminal Policy, and How It Can Be Measured*, ed. Mike Hough and M. Sato (Helsinki: Institute for Criminal Policy Research Birkbeck, University of London, 2011), 30–35, http://www.eurojustis.eu/documents.html; J. Pratt, *Penal Populism*, Key Ideas in Criminology (Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2007); Roberts et al., *Penal Populism and Public Opinion*.

17. Pratt, *Penal Populism*, 12.

18. Tom R. Tyler and Robert J. Boeckmann, "Three Strikes and You Are Out, But Why? The Psychology of Public Support for Punishing Rule Breakers," *Law & Society Review* 31, no. 2 (1997): 237.

19. Mike Hough and Mai Sato, eds., *Trust in Justice: Why It Is Important for Criminal Policy, and How It Can Be Measured* (Helsinki: HEUNI, 2011).

20. John M. Darley, "On the Unlikely Prospects of Reducing Crime Rates by Increasing the Severity of Prison Sentences," *Journal of Law and Policy* 13, no. 1 (2005): 189–208; Anthony N. Doob and Cheryl M. Webster, "Sentence Severity and Crime: Accepting the Null Hypothesis," in *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*, ed. Michael Tonry, vol. 30 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 143–95.

21. Mike Hough, Jessica Jacobson, and Andrew Millie, *The Decision to Imprison: Sentencing and the Prison Population. Rethinking Crime and Punishment*.

22. For instance, recently the European Court of Human Rights ruled that imprisonment for life without eligibility for parole amounted to inhuman and degrading treatment. Case László Magyar versus Hungary, see at http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/sites/eng/pages/search.aspx?i=001-144109#{%22ite mid%22:[%22001-144109%22]}.

23. Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2009).

24. Tom R. Tyler, "Procedural Justice, Legitimacy, and the Effective Rule of Law," in *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*, ed. Michael Tonry, vol. 30 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 283–357; Tom R. Tyler, "Psychological Perspectives on Legitimacy and Legitimation," *Annual Review of Psychology* 57 (2006): 375–400.

25. John Braithwaite, *Restorative Justice and Responsive Regulation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

26. David Garland, *The Culture of Control. Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); David A. Green, "Public Opinion versus Public Judgment about Crime Correcting the 'Comedy of Errors,'" *British Journal of Criminology* 46, no. 1 (2006): 131–54; David A. Green, "Feeding Wolves Punitiveness and Culture," *European Journal of Criminology* 6, no. 6 (2009):

517–36; Peter K. Manning, *Policing Contingencies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Robert Reiner, *The Politics of the Police*, eth edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

27. Katrin Hohl, "The Role of Mass Media and Police Communication in Trust in the Police: New Approaches to the Analysis of Survey and Media Data" (PhD thesis, The London School of Economics and Political Science, 2011), 28.

28. Becca Chapman, Catriona Mirrlees-Black, and Claire Brawn, *Improving Public Attitudes to the Criminal Justice System: The Impact of Information*, Home Office Research Study 245 (London: Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate, 2002); Lawrence Singer and Susanne Cooper, *Inform, Persuade and Remind: An Evaluation of a Project to Improve Confidence in the Criminal Justice System*, Ministry of Justice Research Series 15/08 (London: Office for Criminal Justice Reform, 2008).

29. See, e.g., Frank Fischer, *Reframing Public Policy: Discursive Politics and Deliberative Practices: Discursive Politics and Deliberative Practices* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Paul A. Sabatier, "The Advocacy Coalition Framework: Revisions and Relevance for Europe," *Journal of European Public Policy* 5, no. 1 (1998): 98–130.

30. Peter M. Haas, "Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination," *International Organization* 46, no. 1 (1992): 1–35.

31. Maarten A. Hajer, *The Politics of Environmental Discourse: Ecological Modernization and the Policy Process* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Sabatier, "The Advocacy Coalition Framework."

32. Liz Fekete and Frances Webber, "Foreign Nationals, Enemy Penology and the Criminal Justice System," *Race & Class* 51, no. 4 (1 April 2010): 1–25.

33. Francis Pakes, "The Politics of Discontent: The Emergence of a New Criminal Justice Discourse in the Netherlands," *Howard Journal of Criminal Justice* 43, no. 3 (2004): 284–98.

34. Theodore Sasson, *Crime Talk: How Citizens Construct a Social Problem* (Hawthorne, NY: Aldine de Gruyter, 1995); Ray Surette, *Media, Crime, and Criminal Justice: Images, Realities, and Policies*, The Wadsworth Contemporary Issues in Crime and Justice Series (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2007).

35. Indeed, our empirical analysis reveals that neither the *violent media*, nor the *racist system* frame made any appearance in the public discourse about the three-strikes initiative. Nevertheless, the frames proved to be useful analytical tools for our research as they captured the main discursive patterns about crime and justice and they could be adequately operationalized.

36. Surette, *Media, Crime, and Criminal Justice*.

37. Zsolt Boda and Gabriella Szabó, "The Media and Attitudes towards Crime and the Justice System: A Qualitative Approach," *European Journal of Criminology* 8, no. 4 (2011): 329–42.

38. See also Eric M. Uslaner, "Social Capital, Television, and the 'Mean World': Trust, Optimism, and Civic Participation," *Political Psychology* 19, no. 3 (1998): 441–67.

39. Zoltán Fleck, "Judicial Independence in Hungary," in *Judicial Independence in Transition*, ed. Anja Seibert-Fohr (Heidelberg: Springer, 2012), 793–834.

40. The liberals had left the coalition earlier, in 2008.

41. Attila Juhász, "A Jobbik politikájának szerepe a pártrendszer átalakulásában—különös tekintettel a cigánybűnözés kampányra," in *Magyarország Politikai Évkönyve 2009-Ről*, ed. Péter Sándor and László Vass, vol. 22, 1st ed. (Budapest: Demokrácia Kutatások Magyarországi Központja Közhasznú Alapítvány, 2010), 61–64; Karácsony and Róna, "The Secret of Jobbik. Reasons Behind the Rise of the Hungarian Radical Right"; Lili Zentai, "Utolsó, előre fuss! A Jobbik hajrája 2010-Ben," in *Kritikus Kampány. A 2010-Es Országgyűlési Választások Elemzése*, ed. Gabriella Szabó, Zsuzsanna Mihályffy, and Balázs Kiss (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2011), 69–85.

42. Minkenberg, "From Pariah to Policy-Maker?"

43. European Social Survey Round 4 Data, *Data File Edition 4.0* (Norway: Norwegian Social Science Data Services, 2008).

44. Measure of expressive punitivity: Answers to the question in the ESS 2008 dataset "People who break the law should be given much harsher sentences than they are these days." Recoded as 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree.

45. Measure of fear of crime: Combined answers to the questions in the ESS 2008 dataset about "How often do you worry about your home being burgled?" and "How often do you worry about becoming a victim of violent crime?" Recoded as 1 = never worried, 2 = just occasionally, 3 = some of the time, 4 = all or most of the time.

46. Country abbreviations: DEN = Denmark; SWI = Switzerland; GER = Germany; SWE = Sweden; NOR = Norway; RUS = Russia; FRA = France; NED = Netherlands; BEL = Belgium; SLO = Slovenia; LAT = Latvia; UKR = Ukraine; FIN = Finland; EST = Estonia; POR = Portugal; TUR = Turkey; UK = United Kingdom; ROM = Romania; CYP = Cyprus; GRE = Greece; POL = Poland; IRL = Ireland; CRO = Croatia; SVK = Slovakia; CZE = Czech Republic; SPA = Spain; HUN = Hungary; BUL = Bulgaria.

47. John R. Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

48. This approach evidently entails simplification. It is obvious that not every communication has the same weight in its discursive impact, but our objective was not to assess their effects but to identify the main actors behind the populist discourse as well as the spread of that discourse in the public sphere.

49. Kriszta F. Tóth, "Kommunikációkép az ezredfordulós sajtószövegekben: politika, technológia, minőség," *Médiakutató* 11, no. 4 (2010), http://www.mediakutato.hu/cikk/2010_04_tel/06_kommunikacio_ezredfordulo_sajtoszoveg/.

50. Bernáth, "Bulvár. A média romaképének változása."

51. Norbert Merkovity, *Bevezetés a hagyományos és az új politikai kommunikáció elméletébe* (Szeged: Pólay Elemér Alapítvány, 2012).

52. Zsuzsanna Mihályffy and Gabriella Szabó, "Árnyékban. A 2009-es európai parlamenti választási kampányok elemzése," *Studies in Political Science / Politikatudományi Tanulmányok* 4 (2010); Gabriella Szabó, Zsuzsanna Mihályffy, and Balázs Kiss, eds., *Kritikus kampány: a 2010-es országgyűlési választások elemzése* (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2011).

53. Keywords: felony, crime, criminal investigation, penal code, crime policy, three strikes, public security, police, penal system, verdict, violent crime, Gypsy crime, judicial system, zero tolerance.

54. In the case that an article cited or referred to only one policy actor without juxtaposing it with another one or without the journalist/editor expressing their own opinion, then the actor's stance was coded as the main message of the article.

55. If an item contained several clearly distinguishable frames, then we coded it for all the frames mentioned.

56. Zsuzsanna Mihályffy, "Biztosra menve. A Fidesz-Magyar Polgári Szövetség kampánya," in *Árnyékban. Az európai parlamenti választási kampányok elemzése*, ed. Zsuzsanna Mihályffy and Gabriella Szabó, vol. 4, Studies in Political Science (Budapest: MTA Politikatudományi Intézet, 2010), 46.

57. Data are not available concerning the number of signatures collected in this campaign. The campaign remained a political communication action with no further legal consequences.

58 See *Nemzeti együttműködés programja* (government programme for 2010–2014), http://www.kormany.hu (accessed 10 August 2012).

59. *Nemzeti ügyek politikája* (Fidesz party programme for General Election 2010), page 53, http://program2010.fidesz.hu (accessed 10 August 2012).

60. Draft bills no. T/8875, issued in 17 February 2009, page 5, http://www.mkogy.hu (accessed 10 August 2012).

61. Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs, Department of Coordination and Statistics (November 2013).

62. See, e.g., Orbán Viktor: Magyarország rendet akar, fidesz.hu, 11 May 2010.

63. Parliamentary speech of MP János Volner (Jobbik) in the plenary session debate on the Draft No. T/25 on 21 May 2010, http://www.mkogy.hu (accessed 10 August 2012).

64. Igen a három csapásra—nem a szólásszabadság korlátozására, 5 June 2010, Jobbik.hu.

65. Gyurcsány több rendőrt, nagyobb szigort ígér, 25 February 2009, http://index.hu.

66. Parliamentary speech of MP Tamás Harangozó in the plenary debate on Draft No. T/580 on 5 July 2010, http://www.mkogy.hu (accessed 10 August 2012).

67. Parliamentary speech of MP Gergely Bárándy in the plenary debate on Draft No. T/25 on 21 May 2010, http://www.mkogy.hu (accessed 10 August 2012).

68. Három csapás—becsapás, *Magyar Narancs*, 25 February 2009.

69. Fenntartható jövő—Programme of LMP for General Election 2010, pp. 76–78, http://lehetmas.hu (accessed 10 August 2012).

70. Ibid.

71. Parliamentary speech of MP Gábor Vágó (LMP) in the plenary session debate on the Draft No. T/25 on 21 May 2010, http://www.mkogy.hu (accessed 10 August 2012).

72. Kossowska et al., "Politicians, Media, and Society's Perception of Crime"; Aleš Bučar Ručman, "Crime News Discourse in Slovenia: Critical Reflection Two Decades after Transition to 'democracy,'" *Crime, Law and Social Change* 59, no. 1 (2013): 21–37.

73. Bernáth, "Bulvár. A média romaképének változása"; Gabriella Szabó, "Vox Pop. A populáris média politikaképe a 2010-es országgyűlési választási kampány idején," *Politikatudományi Szemle* 20, no. 1 (2011): 75–94.

74. The article refers to Fidesz, which was in opposition in 2009.

75. *Magyar Nemzet*, 20 February 2009.

76. *Népszabadság*, 5 July 2010

77. We do not expect the media, especially tabloids, to offer lengthy explanations on the origins of crime. However, even a short remark (e.g., about the poverty of the perpetrator) may suggest an interpretive frame. It is remarkable how rare those frames are in the Hungarian media.

78. *Blikk*, 25 June 2010.

Zsolt Boda is a senior research fellow and head of the Department of Governance and Public Policy at the Centre for Social Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He has researched and published extensively on issues of environmental policy, institutional trust, and governance. He is leading the Hungarian Comparative Agendas Project.

Gabriella Szabó (PhD) is a full-time researcher at the Centre for Social Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Her research interests lie in the area of political communication, public sphere and media studies.

Attila Bartha is a research fellow at the Center for Social Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences and a visiting research fellow at the Center for Policy Studies, Central European University. He is an editor of the journal Intersections. East European Journal of Society and Politics and teaches courses at Corvinus University and International Business School of Budapest. His main areas of research are comparative public policy, welfare policy and political economy.

Gergő Medve-Bálint is a full-time researcher at the Centre for Social Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He specializes in comparative political economy with a particular focus on the patterns of uneven regional development and institutional trust in East-Central Europe. His recent publications include articles in the *Journal of Borderlands Studies, Czech Sociological Review* and *Journal of Common Market Studies*.

Zsuzsanna Vidra is an assistant professor at the Center for Intercultural Psychology and Education, ELTE University and a research fellow at the Center for Policy Studies, Central European University, Hungary. Her main areas of research are poverty, ethnicity, migration and media and minorities. She has published several articles on Roma and non-Roma interethnic relations, educational inequalities and minority media representations and edited a volume on Roma migration to Canada.