

The impact of Russia's state-run propaganda apparatus on online media in Hungary – 2010–2017

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”Of course, it’s not accepted, but the factual point is that all the terrorists are basically migrants”

[Viktor Orbán’s statement in the Politico: <https://bitly.com/>]

Research questions

- Whether there is any similarity or equivalence with regard to topics, the use of words or assumptions between Hungarian news portals and hidfo.ru (a news portal for Russian state propaganda written in Hungarian)?
- We investigate possible Russian state influence on Hungary's online media, especially on its pro-government portals.

Null hypothesis


1. There are no equivalence between the content of Hungary's online media (including the pro-government news portals) and that of the Russian state-run propaganda portal, hidfo.ru.
2. There is no difference between the pro-government and independent news portals in how they use and follow the language and logic of Russian state propaganda.

An example of the Russian influence: the recent Italian case

Source: Alto Data Analytics. 2018. *The construction of anti-immigration electoral messages in Italy. The role of foreign media in the anti-immigration debate one year before the 2018 election.* [alto.analytics.com. http://bit.ly/2FSD2Wq](http://bit.ly/2FSD2Wq)

THE CONVERSATION ABOUT IMMIGRATION IN ITALY ON SOCIAL NETWORKS

Analysis of 1,055,774 comments generated by 98,191 users between February 1 and July 31, 2017.

 **85.2%** of the users in the conversation come from **Twitter**

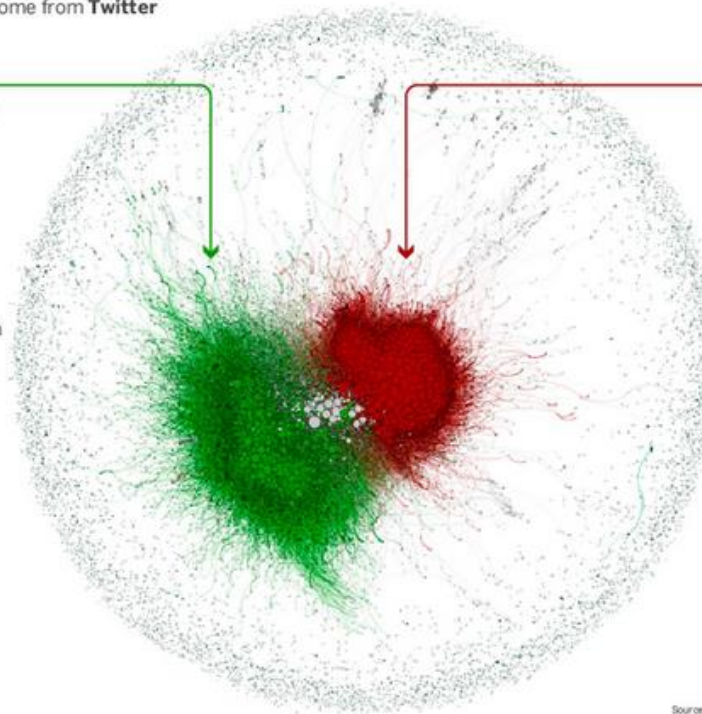
PRO-IMMIGRATION COMMUNITIES

42,495 users
(53% of the total)

219,187 tweets
(27% of the total)

The narratives are based on local media outlets such as *Redatorre Social*, *Open Migration*, *Famiglia Cristiana*, *Radio Vaticana* and *Rai*.

Foreign media outlets related to this community include *The Guardian*, *Euronews* and *VICE*.



NEUTRAL COMMUNITIES

ANTI-IMMIGRATION COMMUNITIES

25,325 users
(32% of the total)

562,168 tweets
(68% of the total)

Sputnik Italia is the **second most influential international media outlet** in the debate.

90.4% of the content distributed by *Sputnik Italia* and *Russia Today* comes from anti-immigration communities.

Source: Alto Data Analytics and in-house. EL PAÍS

DAVID ALANDETE   | DANIEL VERDÚ 

Milan / Rome • 1 MAR 2018 • 18:21 CET

2018. 07. 06.

Data

Nine news portals:

independent: mno.hu, index.hu,

pro-gov.: 888.hu, magyaridok.hu, pestisracok.hu,
lokal.hu,

Russian state propaganda: hidfo.ru

others: mindenegyben.com (*all in one*) and origo.hu

Period of time: Jan. 2010[Sept. 2015] – Dec. 2017

Corpus: 1 million articles, 278 million words

Sites

	name	Political orientation	Number of real user (RU)	Pages download million page
			1 March 2018	7 March 2018
1	888.hu	Pro-government	n.a.	n.a.
2	hidfo.ru	Russian state propaganda	n.a.	n.a.
3	index.hu	independent, moderate left-wing, liberal	633.539	6,0
4	lokal.hu	Pro-government	n.a.	n.a.
5	magyaridok.hu	Pro-government, moderate right-wing	n.a.	n.a.
6	mindenegyben.com	?	188.086	0,3
7	mno.hu	conservative, after February 2015 independent	78.769	0,2
8	origo.hu	Moderate liberal, after July 2015 increasingly pro-government	662.489	5,5
9	pestisracok.hu	Pro-government, radical right-wing	n.a.	
	Total page download			12,0

Topics

- Six topics:
 - the coverage of negative or sensitive issues and events concerning the Russian government or Russian politics
 - the use of different words for refugees (“migrant” vs. “refugee”)
 - If migrant, then terror
 - If migrant, then violence
 - Linguistic distance
 - Russian Propaganda Vector (RPV)

Methods

- Qualitative and quantitative content analysis
- Distributive semantic analysis
- Forensic linguistics
- Political history

Qualitative content analysis

Differences in handling the Navalny case

- Research question: How often and how five Hungarian news portals present the Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny
- Data: articles that were published between June 2012 and December 2017 on one of five Hungarian news sites and contain the word “Navalny”.

Sites: hidfo.ru, mindenegyben.com, 888.hu, pestisracok.hu and index.hu

news site	number of articles
hidfo.ru	0
mindenegyben.com	0
888.hu	7
pestisracok.hu	11
index.hu	85
Total	103

Results

hidfo.ru (the Russian's state propaganda site) and mindenegyben.com: no article on Navalny

888.hu (8 articles)

Main statement: Navalny is convicted for an economic offense and he was legally excluded by the Central Election Commission from standing in the presidential election

Pestisracok.hu (11 articles)

Main statement:

- it was unlawful to exclude Navalny from the presidential election process
- the dissatisfaction with Putin's Russia is mentioned

Results

Index.hu (85 articles)

Main statement:

- Navalny is a serious opponent of Putin
- against Navalny the Russian government has taken several unlawful measures

Results

Summary

- the pro-Russian site do not mention Navalny, the government-friendly sites publish only a few, but distorted information on Navalny

Quantitative content analysis

Methods

- words => categories => connections amongst categories
- Similarity analysis amongst news portals: logit models
Controlled by date of publication and length of articles

Methods

- Categories used

- *RUSSIAN* = {"Putin" | "Russian" | "Russia"}
- *NEGATIVE* = {"doping" & *RUSSIAN* | "Panama" & *RUSSIAN* | "Nemtsov" | "Malaysian" | "Montenegro" & "putsch" | "Navalny" | "Politovskaia" | "Berezovski"}
- *RUSSIAN* = {"putyin" | "Russian" | "Russia"}
- *REFUGEE* = { "refugee" | "migrant" | "immigrant" | "asylum seeker"}
- *TERROR* = { "terror" | "terrorist"}
- *VIOLENCE* = {"to browbeat" | "to molest" | "to harass" | "to finger" | "to touch lightly" | "to rape" | "rape" | "abuse" | "sexual" & "violence"}

Methods

- Logit models
 - $Pr (C_NEG=1) = f (S, T, \ln W)$
 - $Pr [(migrant=1), \text{ where } REFUGEE=1] = f (S, T, \ln W)$
 - $Pr [(TERROR = 1), \text{ where "migrant" } = 1] = f (S, T, \ln W)$
 - $Pr [(VIOLENCE = 1), \text{ where "migrant" } = 1] = f (S, T, \ln W)$

Methods

- Migrant vs. refugee?

The Russian state-run propaganda uses a special discourse pattern that aids in dehumanizing refugees.

1. They use the word “migrants” instead of “refugees”, because the latter has a strong positive meaning and the former has a rather neutral one.

[refugees (run away from something) → need help → help them!]

2. In the second step, they interconnect “migrants” with a negative label (“terror”, “violence”, “disaster”, “flood” etc.).

The inventor of this type of discourse strategy ultimately achieves dehumanization. The receivers (the recipients of the propaganda) interconnect “migrants” with negative meanings, and they accept the implicit statements *“if migrant, then violence/terror/disaster”* and so on.

Methods

- The dehumanisation

refugee + terror; refugee + violence; refugee + crime
are oxymorons, thus they are „bad solutions”

but

“migrant-terror”

“migrant-violence”

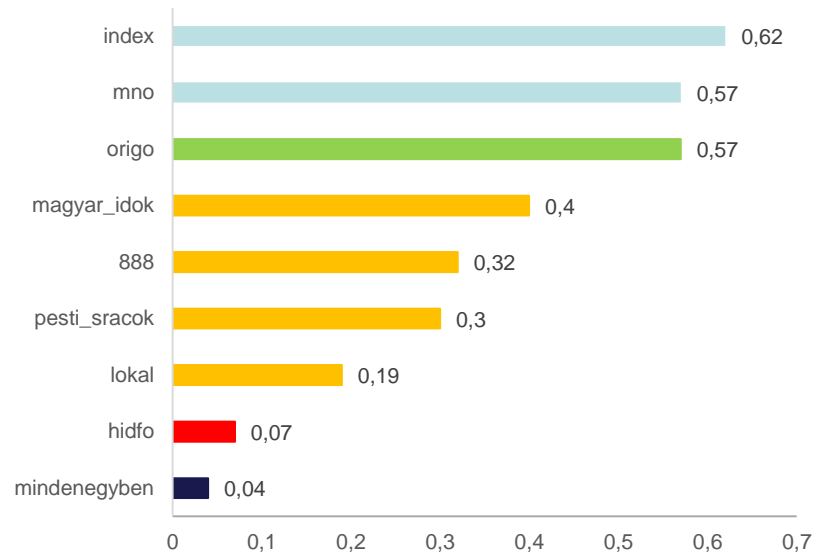
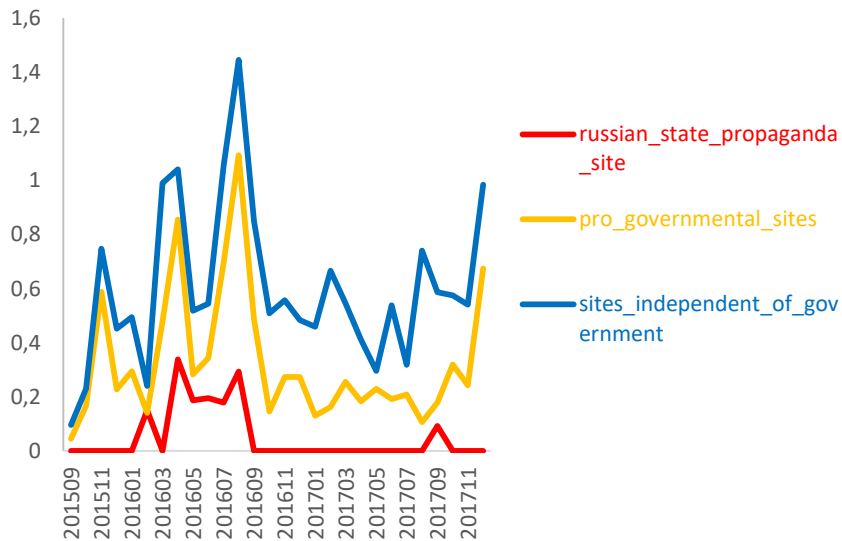
“migrant-crime”

are appropriate solutions (neutral + negative)

“refugee / asylum seeker” → “migrant” → “migrant & (negative label)”

Negative or sensitive topics

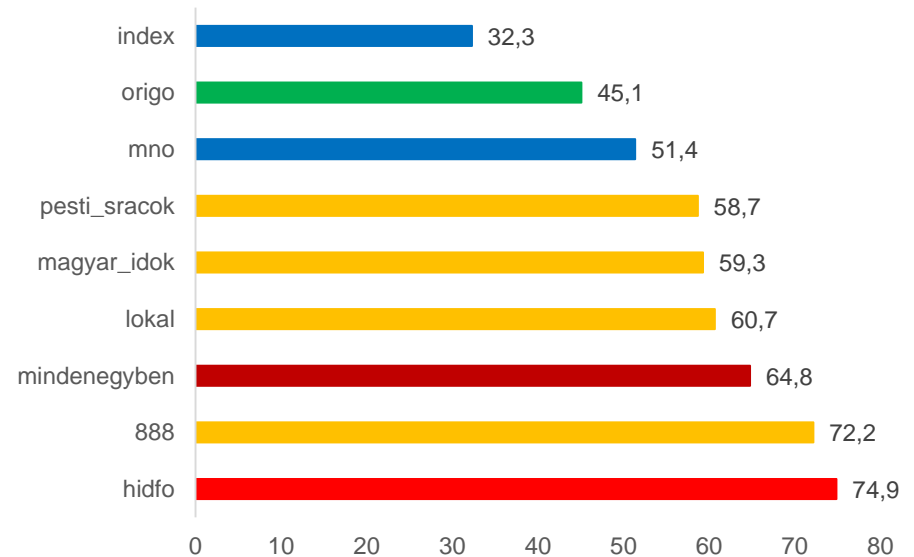
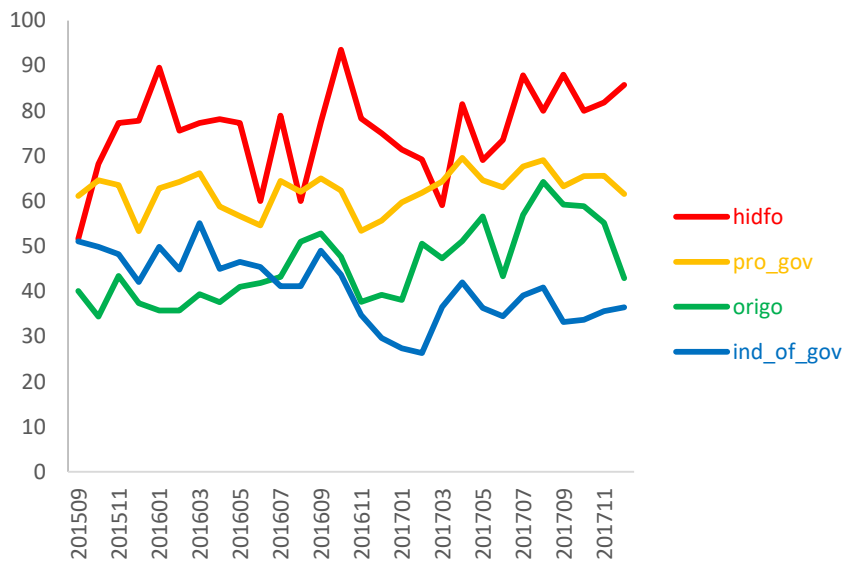
NEGATIVE = {"doping" & RUSSIAN | "Panama" & RUSSIAN | "Nemtsov" | "Malaysian" | "Montenegro" & "putsch" | "Navalny" | "Politovskaia" | "Berezovski"}



Refugee vs. migrant

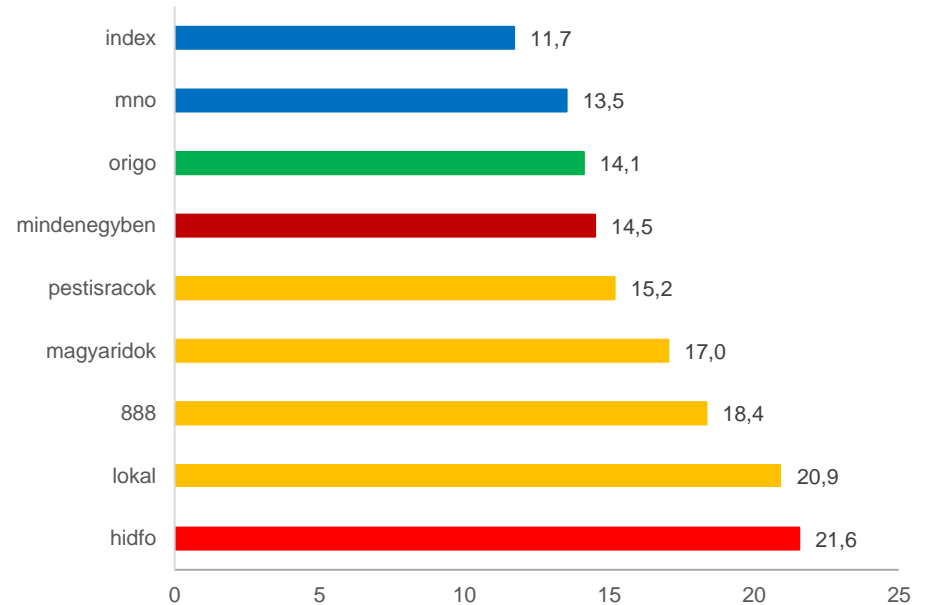
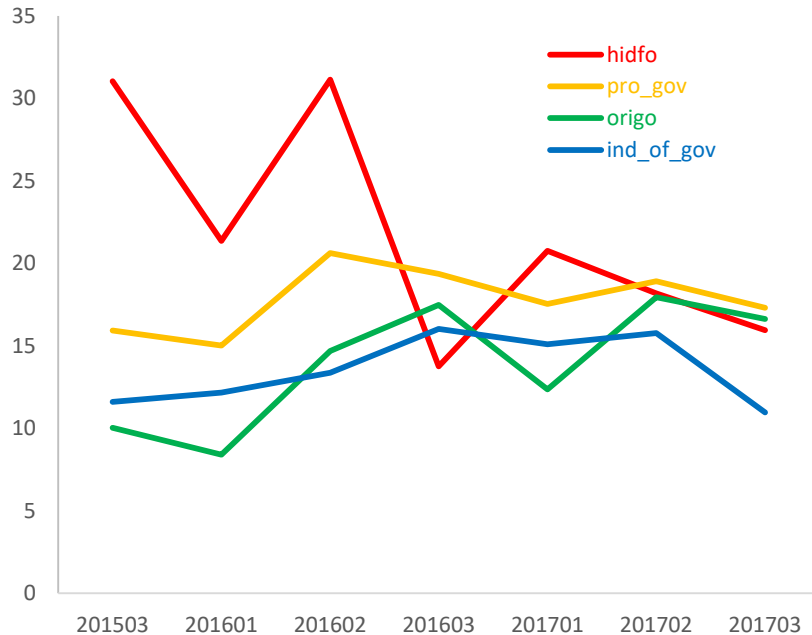
The steps of dehumanisation:

“refugee / asylum seeker” → ”migrant” → “migrant & (negative label)”



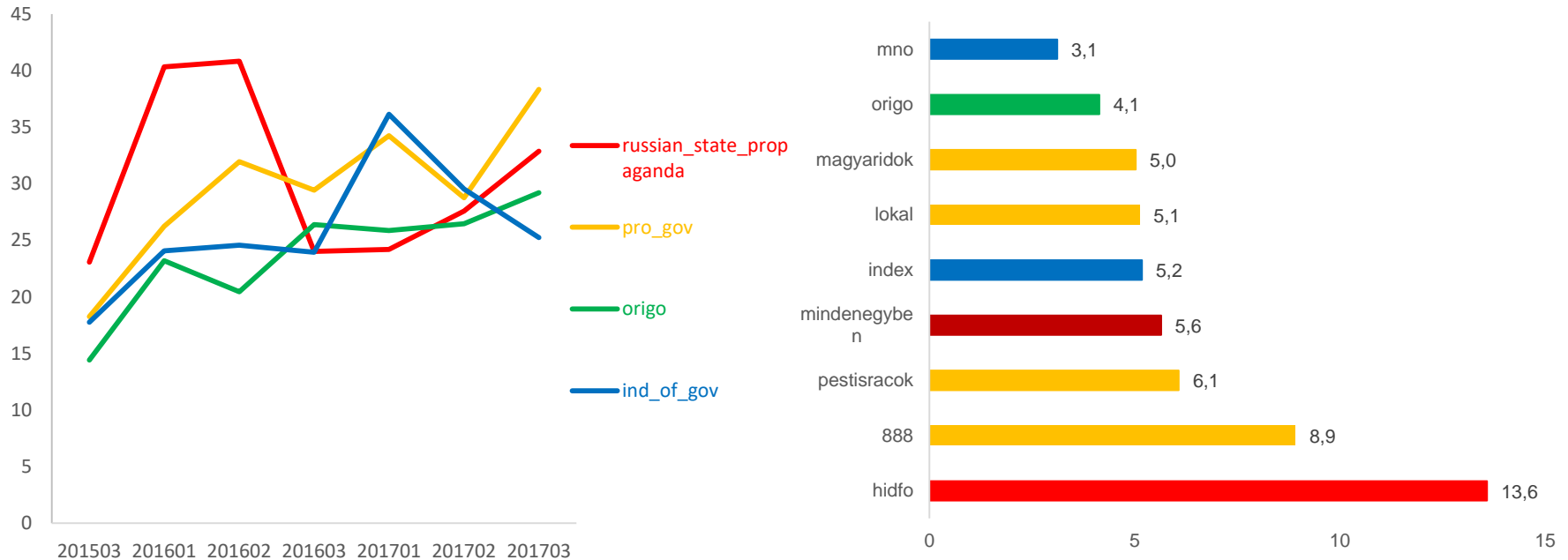
Migrant & terror

„If migrant, then terror”; $pr(TERROR, if\ migrant=1)$



Migrant & violence

„If migrant, then violence”; pr (VIOLENCE, if migrant=1)

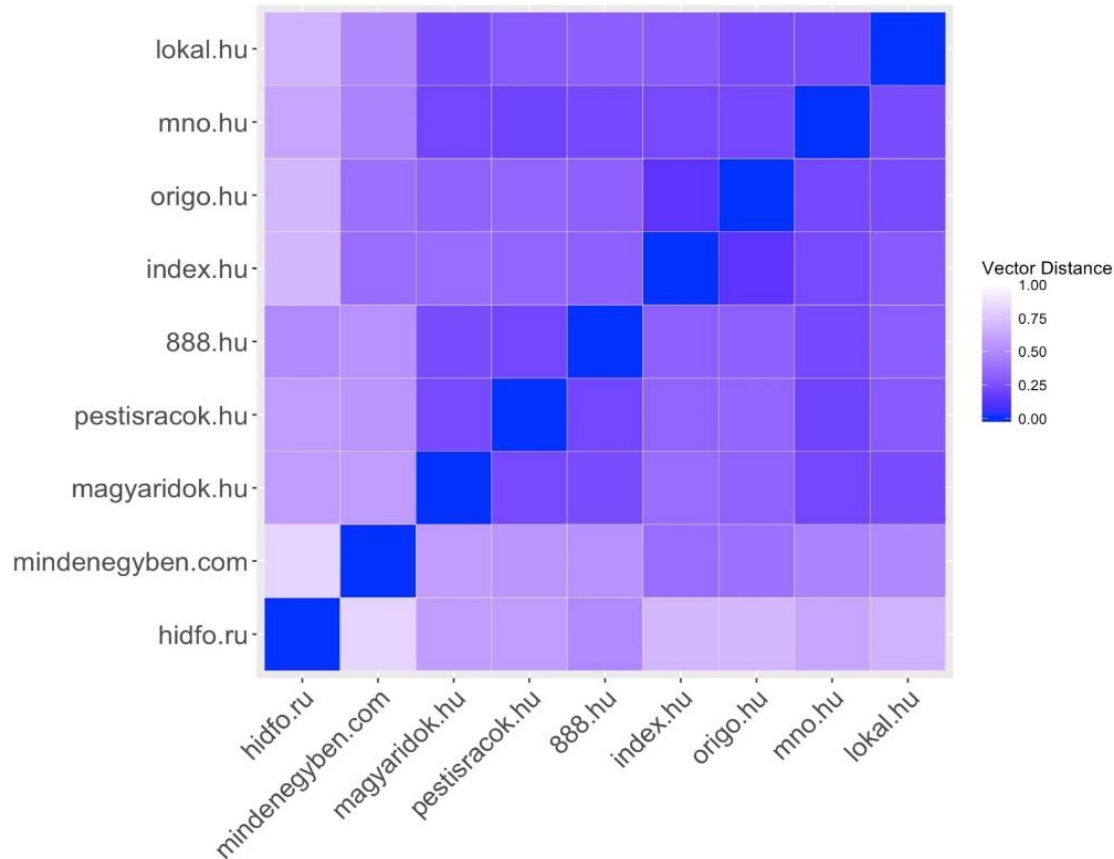


Estimations

	NEGATIV=1	mig_d=1, where REFUGEE = 1	TERROR=1, where mig_d=1	VIOLENCE=1, where mig_d=1
	coeff.	coeff.	coeff.	coeff.
mindenegyben	-0.4872	-0.4661**	-0.3550	-0.6317**
888	1.5019*	-1.1284	-0.0570	-0.5519**
magyaridok	1.6289*	-0.7095**	-0.3093**	-1.1208**
lokal	1.1123	-0.6599**	0.0049	-1.2782**
pesti_sracok	1.3429	-0.7287**	-0.4583**	-0.9757**
origo	2.0526**	-1.2825**	-0.4196**	-1.2953**
index	2.0873**	-1.8192**	-0.8539**	-1.1675**
mno	1.9623**	1.0242**	-0.6700**	-1.3506**
Ref.: hidfo.ru	-	-	-	-
Trimesters (QDRM)	Y	Y	Y	Y
(LNWCNT)	Y	Y	Y	Y
N	475,617	52,143	28,813	28,813

Similarity – distributive semantics

Vector distances based on total words used in all articles

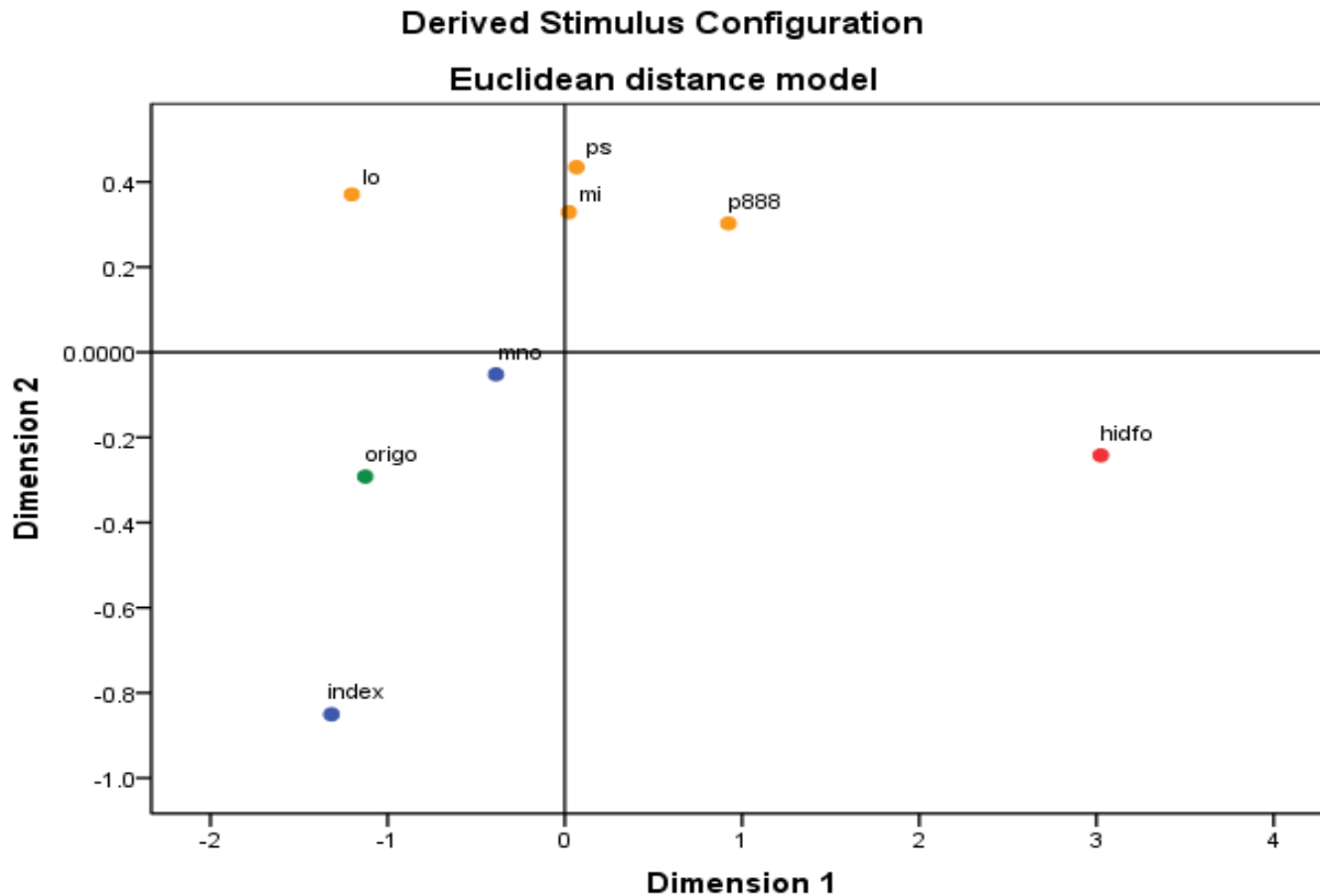


The Russian Propaganda Vector (RPV)

	kategóriák / szavak	hidfo	Me	888	mi	lokal	ps	origo	index	mno
1	ttkssz_d	8,3	0,1	2,5	1,6	0,6	3,2	0,7	1,2	1,5
2	A_SOROS	0,3	0,0	0,4	0,3	0,5	0,4	0,1	0,1	0,1
3	orban_d	5,1	0,9	8,5	6,0	4,9	14,2	2,6	5,3	8,7
4	krrpc_d	2,6	0,1	2,1	2,4	1,6	4,1	1,3	1,9	3,4
5	nato_d	17,6	0,2	2,7	2,2	0,8	2,0	0,7	0,9	1,8
6	POLIT1	17,3	0,6	16,5	7,0	3,2	8,8	2,9	4,8	7,0
7	OROSZ	29,9	3,1	12,0	10,7	5,3	9,6	8,1	11,7	11,3
8	USA	31,9	2,0	19,6	11,7	6,6	11,4	9,4	13,3	12,5
9	MAGYAR	45,0	17,2	50,5	65,8	45,3	65,4	46,3	44,9	63,3
10	soros_d	6,1	0,2	5,5	3,1	3,3	6,3	1,0	1,3	2,0
11	KATONAI	50,0	6,8	34,3	26,7	16,8	30,6	20,9	21,5	26,8
12	EU	61,0	4,9	38,2	39,6	20,9	37,8	24,5	22,6	31,7
13	NEMET	35,8	2,6	21,7	16,9	9,6	16,9	12,7	13,0	15,6
14	mig_d if c_ref=1	74,9	64,8	72,2	59,3	60,7	58,7	45,1	32,3	51,4
15	NEGATIV	0,07	0,04	0,32	0,40	0,19	0,30	0,57	0,62	0,57
16	c_ter if mig_d=1	22,8	17,3	20,8	19,8	23,6	18,1	18,0	17,3	18,2
17	c_viol2 if mig_d=1	15,3	7,8	9,4	5,8	5,0	6,7	4,6	6,6	4,9
18	IZRAEL	3,4	0,4	5,5	3,1	1,8	3,4	2,3	2,4	3,5
19	ISZLAM	15,4	1,2	18,3	10,4	4,1	10,4	4,9	5,0	8,5
20	SZIRIA	14,1	0,6	11,4	6,7	2,2	5,7	2,7	3,2	5,3
21	LIBERALIS	13,9	0,2	8,8	4,3	1,2	7,5	1,2	1,5	3,6
22	nyugat_d	22,2	2,5	9,3	10,2	4,4	8,9	5,4	5,9	9,6
23	ISIS	8,2	0,5	10,7	6,6	2,5	6,1	2,7	2,9	5,1

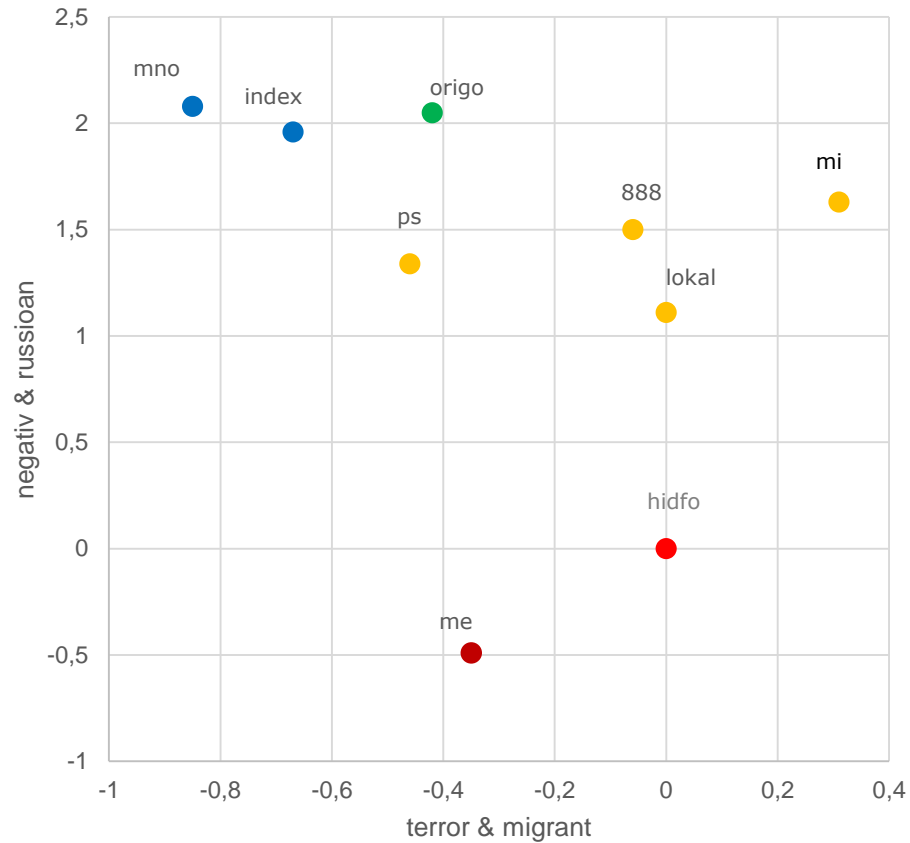
Similarity – RPV

*Russian Propaganda Vector (RPV): 23 words and categories,
Multidimensional Scaling (MDS)*



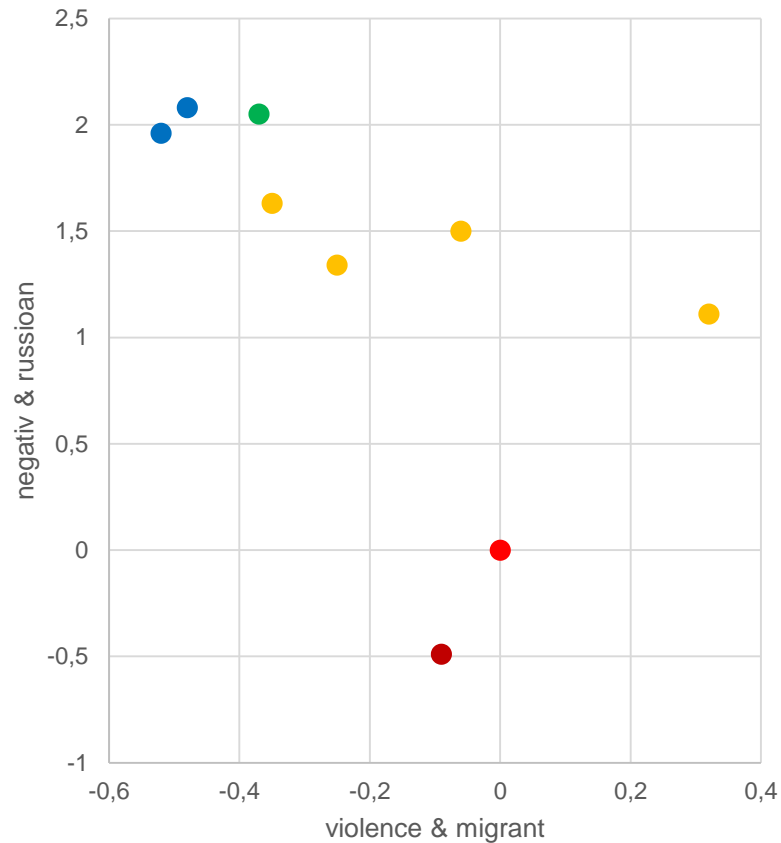
Similarity: NEGATIVE & MT

NEGATIVE & MIGRANTTERROR, coeff. of logit estimations



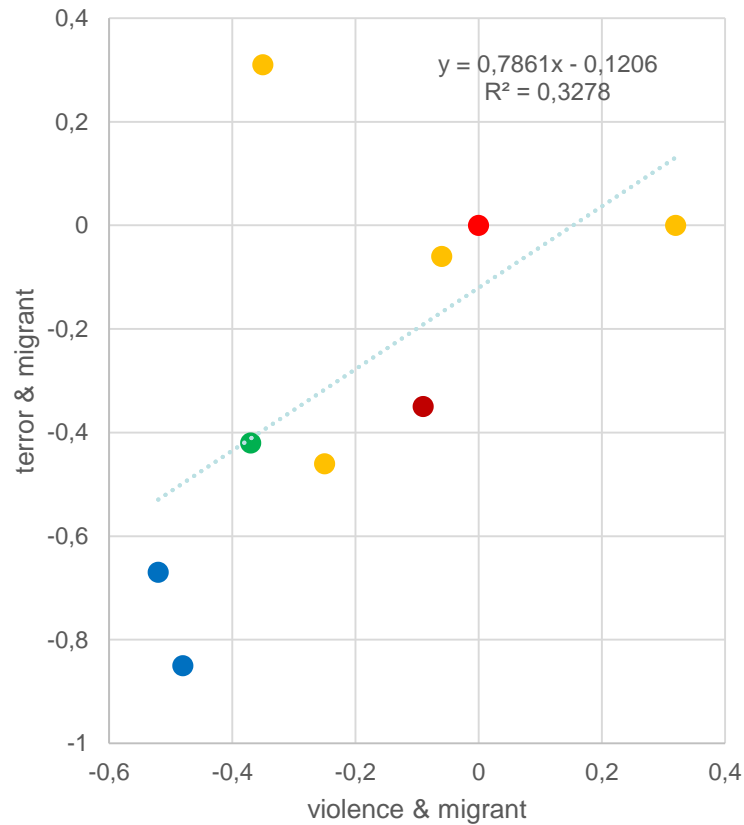
Similarity: NEGATIVE & MV

NEGATIVE & MIGRANTVIOLENCE, coeff. of logit estimations



Similarity: MT & MV

MIGRANTTERROR & MIGRANTVIOLENCE, coeff. of logit estimations



How far is Moscow?

hidfo.ru = Moscow, distances are based on coeff. of logit estimations

Sites	d(x,hidfo.ru) %	Cities	d(x,Moszkva) km	d(x,Moszkva) %
index.hu	100	Budapest	1480	100
mno.hu	92	Miskolc	1353	91
origo.hu	57	Volgograd	895	60
pestisracok.hu	54	Zhytomyr	830	56
magyaridok.hu	48	Chernobyl	680	46
mindenegyben.com	37	Penza	541	37
lokal.hu	33	Voronezh	464	31
888.hu	9	Dubna	112	8
hidfo.hu	0	Moscow	0	0

Conclusions

- the results did not align with our null hypothesis;

lokal.hu, pestisracok.hu	≈ hidfo.ru (<i>NEGATIVE</i>)
lokal.hu, 888.hu	≈ hidfo.ru (<i>migrant vs. refugee</i>)
lokal.hu, 888.hu	≈ hidfo.ru (<i>TERROR if migrant</i>)

- we must also reject the weaker assumption, that there is no difference between the pro-government and independent news portals in how they use and follow the language and logic of Russian state propaganda;

the independent news portals, index.hu and mno.hu, are the farthest from the content of the Russian state propaganda portal (hidfo.ru), and the pro-government news portals are the closest to it.

Thank you for your attention!

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