The Production of (Un)deserving and (Un)acceptable:

Shifting Representations of Migrants within Political Discourse in Slovakia

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The article examines political discourse in Slovakia, particularly the representations of and ideas about refugees and the relevant topics employed in political, explanations and representations of refugees constructed and employed within political argumentation. The text reveals the main discursive legitimation strategies present in the political framing of refugees, resulting in the non-acceptance of non-Christian refugees. Among these, positive us- and negative other-representation, together with denial, moral evaluation, and discursively declared risk based on religion, prove to be the main ones employed for symbolic and physical boundary construction. In this case, the dividing line between "Slovaks" and "others" has been formed around cultural (religious) adaptability, consequently connected to (un)deservingness of solidarity. Different topics are employed before and after adoption of the European Union refugee redistribution system. Economic interests, border protection, and organized crime are applied as main themes of legitimation strategies in the pre-quota period, while cultural interest, identity protection, and terrorism are employed in the post-quota period. They function as a background for argumentation, knowledge production, political decision-making and wider identity-building and national self-determination processes. In the wider context of globalization and Europeanization trends, Christianity becomes an iconic response to global changes and it is used as a mobilizing tool for invoking nationalist and anti-European Union sentiment. Moreover, as the political strategies and responses employed in other Central and Eastern European countries are similar, the Slovak case might be applied more generally and, thus, provide a deeper understanding of the political responses and state-building processes of other countries in the region.

Keywords: *refugees; political discourse; nationalism; sovereignty; Christianity; CEE*

Introduction

Even though Slovakia is a country in which the numbers of immigrants and refugees are both low, since 2013, national and cultural security have become hot political issues.[1] Such interest had reached a peak in 2015 with the constitutional

adoption of anti-terrorist measures, the refusal of non-Christian refugees, and the Prime Minister's explicit claim for screening and control of all Muslims living in Slovakia.[2] Based on political debate and discussion conducted between May 2015 and January 2016, I introduce the transitions in refugee representations and topics related to migration and refugees as articulated by political actors. In this article, I focus on their arguments, claimed motivations, and perspectives on refugees, demonstrating how meanings evolve within (shifting) representations used in political argumentation, leading to particular political action and decision making.

The key turning point is September 2015, when the European Commission (EC) adopted the decision to relocate 120,000 people.[3] The so-called refugee quota was adopted after several proposals and discussions concerning relocation mechanisms since May 2015. In my article, I distinguish between the periods before and after the release of the EC decision, referring to them as the pre-quota and post-quota periods. I reveal a discursive shift in which the main representations and political framing of refugees change from economic to religious, from an undeserving economic migrant to an undeserving Muslim refugee and from a deserving political refugee to a deserving Christian refugee.

I further formulate some explanations I find vital in the context of the latest changes and trends both at the European and the global level. I argue that invoking nationalism through religious claims in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) is one of the responses to wider political, economic, and cultural developments. Using religion as a mobilizing tool might not be an unusual phenomenon but in the context of CEE, the dynamics of how Christianity is politically used are exceptional. Such a strategy generates particular meanings ascribed to certain groups and invokes, or simply strengthens, existing primordial boundaries. In the political documents and transcripts of political debates I examined, it is notable that one of the layers of the framing of immigrants and refugees is the preservation of Slovak national identity, equated primarily with Christianity. Its political representatives refer to Slovakia as a Christian-Catholic nation, thus seeking to affirm Christianity as an essential Slovak value. Even though Christianity is claimed as a fundamental European value, in the case of CEE, it seems to be used against the idea of European integrity, associating Christianity with a national claim for the state sovereignty. In recent years, religious and cultural identity have been mirrored in political actions in the asylum process, becoming a legitimate evaluation category. Notwithstanding the small percentage of foreign-born residents, refugees have been portrayed in Slovakia as rapists, terrorists, and threats to national and cultural values. The Christian identity requirement has even become a tool for their post-quota denial and exclusion from solidarity.

Another problematic aspect I highlight is the missing human rights perspective in the political debates. Even though, in some cases, Slovak politicians acknowledge the existence of "deserving political refugees" from war zones, they do not frame solidarity in terms of the binding international legal documents on fundamental human rights. Despite the fact that political decision making, in my view, is in this

case pragmatic and it aims at stressing state sovereignty, emotions are invoked in the claims and argumentation. A human rights frame would have been a pragmatic argumentative tool as well. However, politicians and decision makers instead employ representations based on national interests, values, culture, and fear. Even if it initially might seem so, what I discuss in this article is not only a regional issue. On the contrary, as Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic have opted for very similar political strategies in their responses, it has wider political and cultural implications with regard to questions of European (dis)integration, regional and global political relations, the status of the fundamental human rights, and social inclusion/exclusion. Therefore, the following case study might be considered as an illustration of a larger ethnonational state-building process within the post-communist CEE countries.

As existing literature suggests, depending on the context in which representatives present their thoughts, the audience, the character of events, or the aim of the speech/text, representations employed, political narrations and respective arguments may shift.[4] In this article, following the framework of critical discourse analysis (CDA), I describe and discuss the environment in which Slovak policy makers, politicians, and officials have framed refugees. In the analysis, I focus primarily on political discourse in the pre-quota and post-quota periods between May 2015, when the EC released the draft of refugee relocation mechanisms (the so-called quota mechanism) and January 2016, after the official adoption of the mechanism at the European Union (EU) level in September 2015. I base my analysis on twenty political debates and interviews broadcast in three main Slovak (quality) media sources. This period is significant because of the debate about the distribution of refugees among the EU countries and the strong disagreement by the V4 political representatives concerning the quota mechanism.

Ideas, representations, and explanations are important elements of political discourse. They construct arguments used in different strategies to legitimize political decision making. Firstly, if I talk about a strategy, I rely on Wodak's and Reisigl's definition, a "plan of practices, including discursive practices adopted to achieve a particular social, political, psychological or linguistic goal."[5] Secondly, by legitimation, I mean answers to the questions what for and why. More precisely, what are the reasons underlying particular representations of people and social practices used in social practice, including discourse? As van Leeuwen concludes, "Texts not only represent social practices, they also explain and legitimate (or delegitimate, critique) them."[6] Through legitimation they embody meanings and are justified. Thirdly, when talking about themes or topics, I mean the parts of the argumentation connecting arguments with conclusions, in this case, with political claims.[7]

The analysis reveals the main themes present in political argumentation and legitimation of the quota and refugee non-acceptance: (1) border protection and regulation; which is tightly connected to (2) sovereignty (national, cultural) and the selection of deserving refugees; (3) crime and terrorism; and (4) religious cultural values, namely Christianity. Physical and symbolic (cultural) borders seem to

overlap in the political debate, constructing discursive and actual boundaries between deserving and non-deserving people, between included and excluded refugees. Boundaries are established around the categories of cultural and religious adaptability (adaptable former Slovak emigrants vs. unadaptable current refugees; adaptable Christians vs. unadaptable Muslim refugees) and deservingness based on the character of refuge (non-deserving economic migrants vs. deserving persecuted refugees; deserving Christian and undeserving Muslim refugees). I also identify a shift in the main politically employed topics and categories used in refugee framing during the pre- and post-quota periods. While (un)deservingness based on the character of refuge is presented as a significant element in political arguments in the pre-quota period, religious identity and cultural differences gain the prime argumentative position in the post-quota period.

In the first part of the article, I briefly present the Slovak context, including a portrait of the political approach to ethnic and national minorities living in the country, followed by the theoretical framework for my analysis. It represents a nexus of approaches to the construction of an "other" and to the critical discourse analysis of immigration. In the analytical section, I offer insight into the recent political discourse around the refugee relocation system. I present and discuss the main topics and ideas brought up in the political discourse and in the arguments of political representatives. I focus on shifting argumentation and representations in the political framing of refugees and migrants, which construct physical and symbolic boundaries between groups. I conclude the article by highlighting some key problematic aspects and the wider political implications within but also beyond the CEE region.

A Threatening Risky "Other"

Recently, we have witnessed a renaissance in the attention paid to borders. Borders have captured significant interest, playing the role of filters and, thus, sorting out the desirable from the undesirable, the legal from the illegal, and the deserving from the undeserving, posing challenges to equality, rights, and freedom.[8] Vollmer argues that securitization might be observed at political as well as normative levels. What he calls the moralization of bordering is an exclusionary practice that has been morally legitimized over the years by different policy measures and arguments, including the narrative of deservingness.[9] Currently, in light of ongoing global political trends, questions concerning borders and filtering people have radicalized in CEE. Consequently, a previously almost invisible issue such as immigration has become the top security threat claimed by politicians and perceived among the public.[10]

The concept of risk is a useful framework for understanding processes of categorization. Risk can be gendered, ethnicized, and/or racialized, and it can be viewed as an exclusionary strategy used by dominant groups to establish order, purity, and an

in-group's security.[11] People who do not fit into the picture of "normal" and "well known" are categorized as "others." Therefore, marginalized groups considered "risky" are subjected to these strategies and tend to be removed symbolically and spatially in order to eliminate potential risks and threats.

While talking about risks, "othering," and their racial, ethnic, or national grounds, we cannot omit culture. According to van Dijk, an argumentative shift can be traced after World War II, in which not so much race but culture becomes a main component in the construction of *us* and *them*.[12] As Jaworsky argues, culture is a relatively autonomous dimension in boundary work; there is a complex cultural process, allowing groups to define the impure them and the pure us.[13] Within this cultural process, legal and moral criteria are invoked as symbolic inputs. In her accounts of the role of culture in boundary construction, Douglas identifies social groups that are marginalized, stigmatized, and denominated as risky others.[14] These "other" groups are often the reason for fear, mainly if they disrupt the boundaries of the group. Encounters with "them" contain an essence of the unknown, potentially threatening one's identity. Thus, as Douglas and Wildavsky conclude, "Concerns about dangers are about socio-symbolic disorder and the lack of control of a group's boundaries. The control of the body and its margins serves as a symbol of controlling the rules which constitute a social group. Dangers become important for a community as a threat to its boundaries, orders and values."[15] Such a constructivist perspective offers a good starting point in the understanding of the classification process, providing a framework for identification of the socio-symbolic criteria and evaluation characteristics.

We do not need to cross the physical boundaries of a state in order to find examples of such evaluation characteristics. In each of the Central European (CE) countries, there are national or ethnic minorities. It is the Roma in the case of each of the Visegrad countries, Ukrainians and Vietnamese in the Czech Republic, Romanians and Slovaks in Hungary, or Hungarians and Ruthenians in the case of Slovakia. In the region, there has been a long history of multi-ethnic co-habitation as well as of tensions between the ethnic majority societies and ethnic or national minorities.

From an epistemological perspective, the above-mentioned theoretical approaches build upon the constructivist view, examining the constitution of social reality by discourses and practical techniques used to guide the understanding of the social world and action.[16] A risk is constructed when characteristics of threat are attributed to a phenomenon or a group. Ethnic and national minorities become "risky" when framed as a threat to national identity and values, such as Hungarians depicted as a threat to the national majority Slovak language, or the Roma framed as destroyers of the welfare state, unadaptable parents and/or criminals.[17] In the case of refugees, they become "risky" when associated with rape, criminality, terrorism, or a social burden. In Slovakia, on the one hand, refugees have been recently linked to Islam, which threatens the Slovak Catholic culture, and on the other, to terrorism, representing a risk to citizens' security. As the number of Muslims in Slovakia is rather low, they might represent what Douglas called an essence of the unknown, inherently present

within symbolic cultural boundary construction.[18] Discourse is one of the spaces in which these cultural processes with their practical implications occur and these criteria are negotiated.[19] Hence, risk is a part of societal discourses and cultural processes. Through knowledge of risk, representations and arguments are produced in order to define reasonable action and, consequently, to influence practical decision making.

"Othering" in the Discourse

Critical Discourse Studies help to understand the process and function of categorization. They do not represent a single method; on the contrary, as complex approaches with their specificities, they use various methods corresponding to the research questions and aims of the study.[20] These approaches "consider meaning as a product of social practices" and thus, discourse analysts "study the way the social order is constructed in discursive practice."[21] Even though I understand discourse as a complex and interconnected assemblage of verbal and non-verbal practices, in my analysis, I focus on text and therefore, on verbal discursive practices. The analysis of relations between different dimensions of the discourse provides a comprehension of the meanings constituting social practice.

Because CDA takes into account context, ideology, and power relations, it is helpful in revealing forms of hidden racism, cultural criteria, group interests, and power asymmetries. Texts and speeches are shaped by social structures, social practices, and the agency of the actors involved in them.[22] Fairclough further argues that the effects of texts are not just mechanic and regular. On the contrary, they have "causal effects upon, and contribute to changes in, persons (beliefs, attitudes etc.), actions, social relations, and the material world."[23] Fairclough and Fairclough give primary attention to the practical dimension of the discourse, in particular, to practical argumentation.[24] In their account, they do not bypass the role of narratives, representations, and explanation; however, they see representations to be inherently interlinked with human (political) agency. Narratives are important, as an element of political argumentation. What should not be ignored, though, is their function as reason for political decision making. For my analysis, this notion is very important if we take into consideration that discussion at the European and national levels, invoking numerous categories and explanations in political argumentation, has led to certain political actions—among others, to adoption of the refugee redistribution mechanism and to non-acceptance of non-Christian refugees.

As I have already mentioned, discourse is the mediator of boundary construction. As van Dijk explains, actors (including politicians) "use various direct and less direct ways to say negative things about minorities, immigrants or refugees, and hence may contribute to reproduction of racism in society."[25] He discusses the formation of the "economic refugee" category, with its images of invasion, floods, and waves of

refugees. He attributes these categories to the political function of marginalizing, expelling, and keeping out undesired groups. Undoubtedly, discourse is profoundly embedded in society and culture and it is closely related to all forms of power, including the abuse of power, and to social inequality. Van Dijk argues that ethnic prejudices and ideologies are constructed and reproduced by the political and media discourse of elites on a daily basis. They contribute to the reproduction of racism, as well as xenophobia, ethnocentrism, or sexism, having control over mental representation and knowledge.[26]

Discourses limit and enable perceptions, ways of understanding, and practices related to risk. As Lupton stresses, discourse analysis helps to explain the shifting meanings of "others" and the struggle over these meanings.[27] Discourses thus might be understood as assemblages of narratives, arguments, practices, and strategies of normalization, inclusion, or exclusion based on the categories of nationality, gender, ethnicity, class, and religion, among others. Speakers use various strategies while constructing the boundary. Wodak argues that the construction based on the us and them dichotomy is the foundation of prejudiced and racist perceptions.[28] In order to legitimize arguments, tools such as allusions, wordplay, presuppositions, denial of racism, and more complex strategies such as positive self-representation, negative other-representation, mitigation, and disclaimers are used in discourses. So, an anti-immigrant discourse consists of representations of difference, threat, otherness, deviance, fraud, and harm to a country's citizens, and national, cultural, and socio-economic interests. In Slovakia, the identity of ethnic Slovaks has been constructed in political discourse through narratives, representations, practices, and historical and mythical argumentation.[29] Slovakia has been actively adopting nation-building policies, continuing the construction of state in ethnic terms. Such policies are in line with the widely accepted foundational myth of a state of ethnic Slovaks who share a common culture, history, language, past, present, and future and who were finally able to establish their own state.[30]

Ethnonational state-building is a thread connecting the path of the CE countries. The majority cultural heritage, based on ethnicity, language, and religion, seems to play an important role in the state- and policy-building processes since the countries' independence. For instance, the preambles of the Polish, Hungarian, and Slovak constitutions stress the Christian Catholic heritage as the basis for national identities. Even though the constitutions of Hungary and Slovakia recognize ethnic and national minorities, in the text, they are positioned after the majority society.[31] In countries with national and ethnic minorities, ethnocentric claims become strongly resonant. Within such an ethnonational framework, political actors invoke collective identities and sentiments often based on ethnocentrism. Political representatives thus often tend to respond with strong nationalist and anti-immigration discourses, with calls for regulative and control measures.[32] In 2015 and 2016, the Hungarian government, as a response to the so-called quota mechanism and the increased number of asylum seekers crossing the country's southern border, has

launched a massive anti-immigrant campaign, organized a referendum with questions about (non)acceptance of refugees, and set up billboards saying, "If you come to Hungary, you cannot take away jobs from Hungarians," "If you come to Hungary, you have to obey our laws," or "Did you know that Brussels wants to install a city of illegal migrants in Hungary?"[33] The Hungarian government has strengthened the police and the army, built fences on borders, and held immigrants in detention centers, including mothers and children.[34] The Czech government has responded negatively as well; until now, it continues to condemn the EU for the quota system and refuses to accept refugees, with one exception. In 2015, President Miloš Zeman, as well as the government, approved the acceptance of "culturally close refugees," refugees with a Christian background, even though the Czech Republic is considered the most secular CE country.[35] The political decision to consider primarily Christian refugees and conditioning the acceptance with a particular cultural background thus suggests a joint strategy of CE political actors in questions of immigration.

To recall Jaworsky's argument, culture represents an autonomous dimension in boundary negotiation.[36] In the case of Slovak political discourse, criteria are based on language and religion. The dominant position of the in-group and the imposition of attributes on out-groups, such as compulsory use of the in-group's language, sends a clear message about which group membership is desirable.[37] Recently, in the post-quota period, the religious element has become one of the dominant (non)acceptance criteria in Slovakia, imposing a requirement that refugees be Christian. Thus, limitations to religious diversity have underpinned the dominance of the Christian in-group. Such representations of national identity are far from establishing an inclusive society, implying potential (or real) discriminatory behavior.

As I will show in the following sections, in the case of refugees in Slovakia, the "otherness" and (un)deservingness have recently been based upon elements of cultural distance and religion, mixed up in themes of security, border protection, sovereignty, and crime. The threat to national religious identity and Slovak culture, which have been identified as key criteria for belonging, have dominated the discourse and the policy making, leading to the refusal of suggested refugee quotas, adoption of anti-terrorist measures, and acceptance of exclusively Christian refugees. Even though the article considers in detail the case of Slovakia, there is not much variation in the political strategies and reasoning concerning the issue of refugees' (non)acceptance within other CE countries, and ethno-national-religious identity–based state-building might be applied more generally.

Methods

This study builds upon the analysis of political debates and interviews publicly broadcast on the three main Slovak quality media sources, namely, the private news

channel *TA3* and two national public media both having the same director—Slovenský rozhlas (Slovak Broadcasting) and RTVS (Radio and Television of Slovakia). For the analysis, I use the debate and interview transcripts from the period covering May 2015 through January 2016. Guests in the analyzed TV and radio broadcast programs are mostly politicians representing each of the coalition and opposition parties prior to the March 2016 parliamentary elections, including the Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Interior, and the Director of the Migration Office. These are also the political entrepreneurs responsible for political agenda setting and, at least for the members of the Parliament, also responsible for the adoption of political measures. All of the analyzed political debates and interviews are thematically dedicated to (im)migration in the Mediterranean, the Balkans, and CEE, refugees, EU asylum and border policies, and refugee redistribution and relocation mechanisms (the so-called quota system).

The main research questions driving my interest were as follows: (1) What are the main themes, representations, and discursive strategies framing the image of refugees within Slovak political discourse? and (2) What are the implications of the argumentation and decision making of policy makers? Using Atlas.ti qualitative analysis software, in the first phase, I identified and coded the main themes political actors employed in the debates and interviews. In the second reading, I coded the explanations and meanings these actors associated with refugees. I focused on categories they used in order to frame different groups. In the third phase, following the strategy suggested by van Dijk, I identified the actors, their political positions, and their role(s) in the discourse. Particularly, I aimed attention at the language these actors use (on the level of wording, syntax, organization of arguments).[38] I identified the links between codes within each level (horizontal) and across levels (vertical). After the analysis of relations between themes—representations—arguments of political actors, analysis of the construction of categories through various discursive strategies (mainly denial and positive us-representation/negative other-representation) and of the roles particular representations assume, following the approach proposed by van Dijk, I interpreted how the hierarchy and boundaries among groups are constructed within political discourse and what implications it may have.[39] Last but not least, I interpreted my findings in the wider context of ethnonational state-building in the CE region.

Themes of National Interest, Sovereignty, and Crime

In the following section, I discuss the main topics and three themes present in the political discourse in the pre- and post-quota periods. Firstly, it is the regulation of (im)migration and border protection as the overreaching topic in both periods. Political representatives and state officials highlight the priority of border controls, their protection at the national and EU levels, as well as the necessity to regulate who

crosses (or does not cross) the borders. Secondly, tightly interlinked with the previous topics, it is a question of (state) sovereignty and selectivity of (im)migrants. On one hand, sovereignty itself becomes the theme of the political argumentation. However, on the other, it is often brought up within the broader theme of the primacy of national over EU interests, further linked to the right to decide about (un)deserving and (un)desired migrants. Thirdly, connected to sovereignty and selectivity, there emerges the topic of religion within the broader themes of national interest, identity, and cultural values, along with crime and terrorism. As noted by Fairclough and Fairclough, narratives and representations are inherently interrelated with political agency.[40] The practical aspect of the arguments, functioning as the ground for political decision making, is crucial when it results in actual nonacceptance of certain groups of refugees.

Border protection and regulation are the main topics present in the political discourse I examined. Speakers label these as the top priorities for national as well as EU policies. They are calling for stricter regulation of the inflows of immigrants, more extensive sea patrols, better coordination among Member States' police, their armies and FRONTEX, and therefore, more serious monitoring of the external EU border. As one of the opposition MPs (Freedom and Solidarity Party) stated, "Yes, basically, the aim should be to legalize most of those [asylum] processes which, however, does not mean to accept everybody, but to take the control out of the hands of the mafia and strictly regulate the inflow of new immigrants into the EU from the countries these immigrants come from."[41] In border protection, both nation states and the EU emerge as important players. While the nation state remains the key actor in border control and patrolling, the EU is perceived as an actor that should have the same interest in controlling, regulating, and protecting its external borders and citizens.

Border protection and regulation are tied to three different themes: national interest, state sovereignty, and crime. In the case of national interest, the argumentation is built upon two main elements—the protection of Slovaks as citizens and the protection of Slovaks as Christians. As I show later, cultural closeness, and primarily Christian values, represent an integral part of the argumentative logic of political representatives in the discussion about refugees, and they are tightly interconnected with the themes of national interest and crime and terrorism.[42]

Ideas about state sovereignty and the related selectivity of immigrants/refugees represent the second overarching narrative within the political discourse over the analyzed period. Political actors use the sovereignty narrative to advocate for the authority to decide whom to (not) let into the country. Through these narrations, not only physical but also symbolic boundaries are created. As Douglas and Wildavsky argue, the construction of borders between those included and excluded serves as prevention against socio-symbolic disorder and lack of control over a group's boundaries.[43] Therefore, the authority to control and regulate (im)migration serves not only as a physical dividing frontier but also as a symbol of controlling the rules constituting a social group. In this regard, dangers and risks become important. They function

as argumentative instruments in the construction of a threat to community's boundaries, orders, and values. From what I have presented thus far and what follows, according to van Leeuwen's categorization of legitimation strategies, the political entrepreneurs rely mainly on legitimation based on authorization, that is, "legitimation by reference to the authority of tradition, custom, law, and/or persons in whom institutional authority of some kind is vested"; moral evaluation, which means legitimation by reference to value systems; and mythopoesis, that is, "legitimation conveyed through narratives whose outcomes reward legitimate actions and punish nonlegitimate actions."[44] This range of legitimation strategies takes part in the moralization of borders, as well as policy and normative exclusionary processes.[45]

Let me now spotlight the discursive strategies used in refugee framing. Tools such as scary numbers, exaggerations and hyperboles are used in the process of meaning-making. As van Dijk states, discourse is a functional and strategic part of the political process.[46] It can assume multi-layered structures in order to inform and to effectively persuade. Therefore, the language might follow the official decorum as well as engage narratives and rhetoric figures to emphasize, manipulate, constitute, or legitimize opinion or political power. Demonizing, or the strategy of positive self-representation and negative other-representation, is applied in boundary-building as positive characteristics are ascribed to in-group and negative attributes to "others." Positive self-presentation might involve forms of nationalist self-glorification (glorification of the country and the "nation"), denial of racism, denial and reproach (attacks against anti-racists), reversal (accusing anti-racists of being responsible for the existing racism).[47] Demonizing thus further functions as an argumentative strategy for legitimation of the politics of inclusion/exclusion. On 12 May 2015, the Migration Office (MO) director stated,

> Basically, there is a topic in front of us, 10 points the European Union must adopt to handle such an *exodus* that we are currently seeing in the Mediterranean. For several reasons, it happened that the numbers of people crossing and coming through the Mediterranean has *increased tremendously* and, worst of all, because organized crime transports these people to Europe and uses insufficient means of transport, it causes a *huge number* of deaths.[48]

The political discourse on stricter control and regulation thus often incorporates rhetorical hyperboles and expressions such as exodus, tremendously increased numbers, wave of incomers, burden, crazy dimensions [of immigration], or scary numbers, framing immigrants as people threatening Slovakia. They are semantic figures used in order to frame political approaches and ideologies, and they help construct mental models of immigrants.[49] Following a particular interest, the picture might be complemented with other kinds of figures, including numbers and statistics such as the one in which the director of the MO uses seemingly exact, though exaggerated, numbers while talking about the quota: "Those numbers are not stated yet but we

were introduced to ideas about the quota redistribution and it is strange. The lowest number is 500 but I estimate 2,000. And I am sorry, but it is scary, 2,000 people."[50] Using numbers serves as an illustration. However, in the political discourse, they might be used to manipulate people.[51] Numbers and statistics imply facts and, thus, seem professional and reliable. Using such tools makes presenters look objective.[52]

In order to legitimize the restrictive policies and forms of derogation of minorities, elites rely on various strategies such as denial, positive self-representation, foregrounding/backgrounding, defense, trivialization, and/or justification. These strategies function as inhibitors in seeing elites or the "in-group" as negative elements but assume also the objective of blaming or derogating members of the "out-group." In this regard, denials may assume forms of accusation of others, reproach, suspicion, or attacks on moral or cultural values. In the RTVS debate in May 2015, the leader of the Freedom and Solidarity Party claims, "Muslims who come to Europe want to live according to Sharia [law] or they want beating women to become normal or practice fratricide or other blood revenge; this all is already happening. And they want to be veiled or I don't know what."[53] Such strategies establish and delimit social boundaries and re-affirm social and ethnic identities. Moreover, they are applied in order to self-attribute moral superiority to the in-group.[54] As a result, they assume a symbolic or cultural function by contrasting the values of one group to those of another and, again, used to legitimate the dominant status and consequently to legitimate the forms and practices of social and cultural inequality.

The third overarching theme, crime and associated subtopics, represent one of the emerging links in the discussion about (im)migration/refugees, sovereignty, and protection. I briefly sketch the intersections among crime, terrorism, and refugee framing, leading to the practical non-acceptance of non-Christian, primarily Muslim, refugees.

Within the crime narrations, immigration and refuge are discursively interlinked with organized crime (smuggling), citizens' security, and "Islamic" terrorism. At the end of November 2015, the Prime Minister states,

> The presence of terrorism in Europe at the beginning of the migration crisis was the result of the military operations of Western countries in Iraq, Afghanistan, or Libya. Despite the fact Schengen was closed down, and people could not come so easily, it happened that terrorists were able to attack and cause great damage. After that, something I do not have words for and what I have been criticizing since the beginning had happened; someone had wide open arms and had said everyone who wants could come to Europe. But no one had asked who were these [people], what they wanted. No one took their fingerprints. No one looked into their backpacks. Today, we can actually establish that, within the migratory waves, many fighters of the Islamic State came to European territory.[55]

Political representatives and state officials tend to frame refugees and immigrants in terms of security problems, as groups responsible for rising crime rates. In Slovakia,

on the one hand, refugees have recently been linked to Islam threatening the Slovak Christian Catholic culture, and on the other, to terrorism representing a risk to citizens' security. Associating refugees with terrorism, and with crime in general, is a textbook example of negative other-representation, "othering," and boundary construction, involving the establishment of the picture of a dangerous refugee. The essence of danger is ascribed to refugees, aiming at the most fundamental emotions, morals, and senses of the in-group, resulting in fear and non-acceptance of these menacing "others." The negative representation strategy of "others" is combined with the authorization and moral evaluation legitimation strategies.

Next, I present and discuss the discursive shift that occurred between the pre-quota and post-quota periods. Very different themes and representations are employed in these periods. After the adoption of the final redistribution mechanism in September 2015, the themes and narrations operating within the political framing of refugees shift from economic to religious, which in turn result in the evolution of the perception of (un)deservingness and solidarity from an undeserving economic migrant to an undeserving Muslim refugee.

From an Undeserving Economic Migrant to an Undeserving Muslim Refugee: The Story of Shifting Themes

As described above, politicians and state officials stress the primacy of national interest in their reasoning. Arguments are anchored in themes of protection, sovereignty, and/or crime. Such arguments usually underline the selectivity of immigrants based on their qualification, skills, and cultural or religious affiliation. In the period before the EU adopted the quota on refugees, the character of refuge presents a core dividing line between the "undesired" and "potentially acceptable" refugees. Political actors discursively sort the incoming people into political refugees and economic migrants. On the one hand, there are people pictured as persecuted for their political opinions, and on the other, people leaving their home countries on purpose in order to find better economic conditions. According to Slovak political representatives, only people persecuted in their home countries deserve governmental assistance and potential acceptance. On the contrary, people nominated as "economic migrants" are labeled as ineligible for solidarity and asylum. In the pre-quota period, the process of "othering" is built primarily upon political narrations of protection, national economic interest, and crime, especially organized crime. Moreover, the category of deservingness is based upon the ascribed character of migration. Correspondingly, political actors employ representations framing refugees in terms of economic fraud (in the case of economic migrants) and of threat (certain political refugees).

One of the discursive inconsistencies emerging within the political narration and explanation is noticeable when current immigration to Slovakia is contrasted with

the emigration of Slovak nationals during the two World Wars and under the Communist regime. Between the end of nineteenth century and the end of the Second World War, around 800,000 Slovak residents left Slovakia, and more than 130,000 left the territory between 1948 and 1989.[56] As the Minister of the Interior stated, "also our emigrants emigrated from the Communism, but each one of them, and we can definitely generalize this, adopted the rules and values of the country in which they arrived. Whether these people became Americans, Germans, Austrians or Swiss, they fully respected the rules of that state and they left behind our [values]."[57] I mentioned before that political elites tend to use the strategy of positive representation of "us" and negative representation of "others." We can trace its strategic use in the Slovak political discourse when emigrants from Slovakia (or more accurately, Czechoslovakia) are framed as hard-working deserving people seeking a better life. In contrast, current refugees from African and Middle Eastern countries are presented, although seeking a better life, as "others" who do not necessarily need help or who do not even deserve it. As Jaworsky argues, within the cultural process of boundary constitution, legal and moral criteria are invoked as symbolic inputs.[58] The legitimation strategy of moral evaluation based on values, particularly their acceptance, is applied here in combination with positive self- and negative other-representation. As van Leeuwen explains, "in some cases, moral value is asserted by troublesome words such as 'good' and 'bad.'"[59] Here, moral superiority is associated with the in-group. Both strategies evaluate the morals of in- and out-groups, evaluate the "good" and "bad" values of these groups, imply the supremacy of fleeing Slovaks and contrast "our" with "their" refugees. Within this frame, cultural "othering" and boundary construction becomes more visible as Slovaks are associated with qualities of hard work, honesty, and adaptability while the incoming non-Christian refugees are associated mainly with fraud and crime. Moreover, continuity in identity and ethnonational policy-building is evident here. The ethnonational pathway built over the course of history and after Slovak independence continues here in framing the political agenda and defining policies based on identity claims.

These themes are exploited in practical argumentation, having influence on political decision making and, consequently, on the inclusion and exclusion of people. What we can note from the Interior Minister's statement is the call for an integration model based on assimilation practices. Although he does not articulate the idea explicitly, he presents the necessity to fully accept and adopt the cultural values of the host country. Such an idea had already been declared in the migration policy strategic document from 2011 that states: "The Slovak Republic inclines to an integration model based on the *full acceptance* by migrants of the current situation in the Slovak Republic."[60] In the political discourse on refugees, the call for assimilation becomes the primary rationality for solidarity, invoking the cultural values of in- and out-groups. It frames the supremacy of Slovak values and conditions potential solidarity on their full adoption, forming a strong dividing line between "our" and "their" values and culture, between acceptance and refusal and between deserving and undeserving refugees.

The post-quota period reveals some significant changes in the characteristics and themes concerning refugees employed by political actors. The most significant discursive shift occurs between June and September 2015, the period when the adoption of a redistribution mechanism for refugees in EU started to become clear. The quota system approval in September 2015 obliged Slovakia to process 785 asylum applications. The decision has led to a substantial change in the character of the political discourse on refugees. Themes such as protection and national interest are complemented more strongly with ones of sovereignty, national cultural identity, national cultural interest, and crime, namely terrorism. The rhetoric remains dismissive, condemning the EU for the violation of Member States' sovereignty.[61] However, the discursive categorization of refugees has transformed, creating a dividing line not based on the economic/political character of the refuge, as in the pre-quota period, but a boundary based upon cultural values, primarily religion.

Opposition between the categories of "undeserving economic migrant" and "deserving political refugee" have been reformulated based upon the opposition of Christian and non-Christian refugees. The non-Christian group is primarily associated with Muslims and Islam. At this point, non-Christian refugees are ascribed the essence of threat and of inherent terrorism. Linking immigration to radical Islam, fundamentalism, and terrorism has become an often-used discursive strategy of negative other-representation. For instance, the Slovak Prime Minister claims, "[I]t is our obligation to monitor not only what the Muslim community does, if there are any Muslims at the Slovak territory, but we must check also the extremists, because both groups can cause a great tragedy."[62] In one sentence, Muslims and extremists are repeatedly put together. Not only the Muslim group is given the primary place in the statement, putting thus a bigger emphasis on the necessity to control them, but they are also brought together with extremists. Such statements imply a relation between religious groups and radical extremists, hence constructing the mental representation of an "extremist Muslim." Furthermore, other characteristics are associated with non-Christian refugees coming to Europe, while the reflection of differences among Muslims or Christians themselves, inside Islam and Christianity, is entirely missing. The strategy of negative other-representation is employed in its clearest form, again, hand in hand with moral evaluation depicting Muslims as "bad." In January 2016, the Prime Minister calls for prevention and protection against immigrants (namely Muslims) sexually assaulting "our [Slovak] women" in public.[63] Refugees become perceived as "risky" when they are implicitly associated with rape, criminality, terrorism, or fraud. Such representations frame refugees in a very negative way by underlining characteristics provoking fear among the in-group. It is then easy to legitimize the non-acceptance of members of these groups when politicians employ extreme representations and argumentative tools in order to achieve such a goal. The identitarian policy agenda-setting assumes the most extreme form in the sense of employed legitimation strategies.

In this discursive shift, political actors frame Christian refugees as those who face real persecution and, thus, are more endangered. As one of the opposition MPs

claims, "But there are those other refugees, to whom we should give a hand, and to really separate the wheat from the chaff, in this case, to those who are persecuted Christians for instance in Syria and in Iraq, where literally whole villages are cast out by the Islamic State." The discourse reveals the difference in the character of information political actors offer in cases of Christian and non-Christian Syrian and Iraqi refugees. The perception and presentation of the latter groups is primarily based on the images of threat, terrorism, and Islamization, while Christian refugees are portrayed through personal stories, filled with images of persecution, rape, and violence. Thus, religion, as a part of culture, and its respective values have become the key dividing line between acceptable and unacceptable, deserving and undeserving refugees. The discursive strategy of negative other-representation (threatening terrorist Muslims) and positive us-representation (deserving threatened Christians) proves to be the most significant in the post-quota period. In the boundary construction and political agenda legitimation, actors invoke the most fundamental moral criteria, aiming at the deepest fears of the in-group. The "risky other" is discursively constructed around images of extremism, crime, and terrorism. Within this cultural "othering" and ethnopolitical agenda legitimation, religion plays an important role; it has been set as the symbolic and practical boundary between deserving and undeserving or included and excluded groups. As the leader of the Ordinary People and Independent Personalities Party states, "it is Christian love, something we should do. Of course, we should not import Muslims here, an entirely different culture."[64] Moreover, religion has become the discursive tool of political entrepreneurs chasing their own political interests. Ascribed characteristics associated with Muslims are perceived as something undesirable and distant but also a tool for pushing forward policies based on (ethno)national sovereignty.

Coming Back to Basics

Based on the analysis of political debates and broadcast interviews between May 2015 and January 2016, what I have called the pre-quota and post-quota periods, I have presented how political discourse is organized in terms of employed themes, legitimation strategies, and shifting meanings through which refugees are framed. As Lupton states, discourses constitute social subjectivities and identities of individuals and groups, constituting relations between and among them.[65] Analyzing discourses helps to identify these shifting meanings and relations between different categories ascribed to different groups, in this case to refugees. In my analysis, I have identified key categories and topics applied by relevant actors supporting political claims and adopted policies. Political actors in Slovakia interlink (im) migration, including refuge as such, with themes of economic interest (in the pre-quota period) and cultural interest (in the post-quota period) that must be protected. In this regard, themes of protection, particularly border protection, regulation, and

control (in the pre-quota period), but also identity and value protection (in the post-quota period), are the leading elements within the broader ethnonational narrative. Themes of state sovereignty, the right to select deserving and desired qualified immigrants/refugees, are closely related to the above-mentioned topics. Finally, the theme of crime (specifically organized crime and terrorism) as well as religious cultural values prove to be the most discussed and used in political argumentation, particularly in the post-quota period. Generally, without any differentiation, non-Christians (Muslims) are explicitly associated with cultural distance, organized crime, terrorism, and unwillingness to adopt Slovak, ergo Christian, values. Following van Leeuwen's taxonomy of legitimation strategies, the strategy of moral evaluation seems to be the most prominent within the political discourse, evaluating events and people based on values and morals, defining what/who is "bad" or "good." Thus, together with what van Dijk or Wodak call the positive us- and negative other-representation strategy, they are complementary in political reasoning.[66]

Further, I have presented various shifts in the political selection of topics, categories, and representations associated with refugees before and after the refugee redistribution mechanism was adopted. In what I called the pre-quota period, the process of "othering" is built primarily upon themes and arguments concerning protection, national economic interest, and crime, particularly organized crime. The borderline between undeserving and deserving, desired and undesired is constructed around the character of the refugee—deserving political refugees versus undeserving economic migrants. On the other hand, in the post-quota period, the categorization of the "other" shifts based on themes of national cultural interests, cultural (religious) values, and crime, primarily terrorism associated with non-Christian refugees.

As Anderson argues, international borders are commonly presented as filters, sorting out the desirable from the undesirable, the genuine from the bogus, and the legal from the illegal, permitting only the deserving to enter state territory.[67] She further argues that "these challenges run far deeper than risk to cohesion, benefit fraud, or unemployment, and go to the heart of liberal principles of equality, rights, autonomy, freedom and membership."[68] The Slovak case shows that not only physical borders protected by police, cameras, and the army are such filters but also symbolic borders constructed around cultural values, thus separating "the wheat from the chaff." As Jaworsky explains, culture is an autonomous aspect of boundary construction.[69] These cultural processes are complex, and via the employment of legal and moral criteria, they allow groups to define who is acceptable and who is not. Symbolic boundaries, however, seem to be associated directly with physical borders. In case of the political framing of refugees, cultural difference/closeness becomes the reason behind keeping some groups out of the country and depriving them of solidarity. In this study, risk, danger, and threat offer grounds for the formulation of these overlapping physical and symbolic boundaries. Groups of non-Christian refugees, as out-groups, acquire discursively the essence of risk, acting thus upon the basic emotions of fear and protection-seeking among the in-group. Such negative other-representation strategies

facilitate the process of boundary construction and assist in the practical process of political decision making. To recall Douglas, marginalized groups considered risky are subjected to these strategies and tend to be removed symbolically as well as spatially in order to eliminate the risks and threats they represent.[70]

In the process of "othering," different criteria are invoked. As Douglas points out, encounters with "others" contain an essence of the unknown and, thus, are perceived as potentially threatening to individual or group identity. Constructing an "other" is a discursive process during which mental representations are formed and during which people are framed in a certain way. If this "other" is framed as someone alien, threatening the integrity of cultural identity, the group is concerned with the cultural-symbolic disorder and lack of control over both physical or symbolic borders.[71] This essence is the key element in symbolic/cultural border construction and, consequently, in political decision making and its legitimation. Perhaps more importantly, the example of Slovakia reveals the continuation of a longer historical state-building process built on ethnonational elements that condition belonging as well as practical policy making. As I have shown, (political) discourse is one of the spaces in which this boundary construction and identitarian policy making occurs. In case of Slovak political discourse, themes of national interest (economic and cultural), protection, sovereignty, and crime constitute societal discourse. Within this frame, knowledge is produced and arguments are formulated in order to define reasonable action and, consequently, to influence policy-making processes and mental representations.

In this study, I have focused on the topic selection, legitimation strategies, and representations present in Slovak political discourse for several reasons. First, they provide grounds for particular political argumentation and the explanations political actors use in order to explain and support their ideas. Second, they function as facilitators in knowledge production and the constitution of mental representations, which fuel the achievement of particular political goals, and third, they contribute to the wider cultural background within which political decisions are made. They assist a broader cultural process in which identities are constructed and moral criteria applied. Fourth, the case of Slovakia is not isolated and unique. Rather, it illustrates a more general political development in the post-communist countries within the CEE region based on identitarian and ethnonational grounds. Nevertheless, as Fairclough and Fairclough correctly argue, political discursive practice does not remain at the level of narrations and representations. Regardless of their key importance, as a frame for political arguments, in the analysis we need to move beyond them. As critical discourse analysts, we should not bypass the practical dimension of political argumentation and focus more on its function as reasoning for political decision making.[72]

To Conclude

Based on the analysis of recent political discourse in Slovakia, I have presented different complementary ways political actors reason the legitimacy of their agendas,

as well as several contrasting categories established as a dividing line between Slovaks and migrants and among different types of refugees. These categories are based upon cultural and religious adaptability (adaptive former Slovak emigrants vs. unadaptable current refugees; adaptable Christians vs. unadaptable Muslim refugees) and deservingness (non-deserving economic migrants vs. deserving persecuted refugees; deserving Christian and undeserving Muslim refugees). As I argue, the discursive strategy of positive self-representation and negative other-representation, together with moral evaluation, are the most significant within recent political framing of migrants in Slovakia. Themes of risk to national economic and cultural interests, religious values, and identity present the key constitutive elements of political narrations and explanations. They function as a governmental tool to control and regulate populations, to promote national and religious identities, to create and legitimize the symbolic and real borders between us-Slovaks and them-refugees, and consequently, to exclude non-Christian refugees from solidarity. In this particular case, national identity overlaps with Christian (Catholic) religion, constructing thus a primordial boundary line between groups. The above-mentioned themes appear in the legitimation of restrictive policies based on the control and regulation of people identified as "others." Such means of legitimation, however, are neither unique nor novel; on the contrary, they are a continuation of historical state-building processes in CEE based on ethnonationalism and identity claims.

Political leaders use discursively national culture and the image of threat as legitimating elements in their argumentation, symbolically emphasizing the uniqueness and superiority of Slovak values, creating asymmetries in power relations between those defined and "us Slovaks" and those "others" whose morals and values are characterized as inferior or risky. The stress on control, regulation, national interest, and border protection in policy and legal frameworks, together with the exclusively negative political discourse, creates an environment in which xenophobia and ethnocentrism are reproduced and assimilation remains a preferred mode of incorporation. Such dismissive conditions, the process of value preservation, and securitization of minorities and migrants leave insufficient space for the inclusion of a significant portion of the refugee population. The political call for identity preservation and border protection, and the discursive framing of refugees in terms of threat, illegality, and non-deservingness creates a reduced and simplistic picture about these proclaimed "others." It offers and legitimizes a twisted picture in which exclusion is promoted as a positive step within the political agenda. Political discourse has the power to form opinions and construct mental models. According to these mental representations, people tend to link particular characteristics to certain groups and events, which further affects their behavior. Moreover, political claims reveal the ongoing demand for preservation of cultural integrity through the necessary assimilation of incoming people, while creating a strict physical and symbolic line between good and bad, superior and inferior, deserving and undeserving, and included and excluded. The discourse on refugees, as others, remains racist even though it does not use biological categories. Ethnonationalism remains the key component of policies and discourse

framed by these political entrepreneurs. They reproduce this racism, replacing biology with ethnonational claims and religion, and implying that being a Christian means not being a Muslim. Again, superiority/inferiority, good/bad, deservingness/undeservingness are closely tied to these ethnonational and religious claims and practices.

In the debate about (un)deserved assistance to refugees, the concept of fundamental human rights, as adopted by the signatories of the UN Charter, is left out entirely. It seems different principles are being applied in the political decision making about solidarity for people in need. The negative evaluation of refugees thus seems to have multiple goals. Firstly, it aims to legitimize pragmatically the non-acceptance of groups defined as non-suitable. Secondly, it mobilizes the public to support these decisions. Thirdly, it serves as a means for the self-determination of in-group qualities, superiority, and sovereignty, while creating significant asymmetries in power relations. Last but not least, it serves as legitimation for the continuation of the ethnonational political agenda in the region. In order to achieve such goals, new meanings are becoming tied to Christianity in CEE. Within the discursive clash between human rights and nationalism, Christianity as a key value is connected to nationalism and statehood. It has thus become the most recent and iconic mobilizing tool in the hands of primarily political actors, pushing the idea of human right to the margins of the discourse. Not only are the fundamental rights of migrants and refugees denied by not allowing them to enter the country but even those accepted are chosen based on their cultural background, or they are asked to abandon their values and to adopt the values and culture of the host country entirely. However, such primordial boundaries are not permeable, and even though CEE countries are not isolated and they have experience with expats, international companies, or international schools, political representatives cannot, or do not want to, imagine another type of inclusion but assimilation. With such a frame, there is only a low chance to grant fundamental rights and be inclusive.

The results of this analysis point to some significant changes in political trends, responding to wider global developments. One of the explanations of the above-discussed discursive shift might be exactly grounded in the increasing anti-Europeanization and demand for national sovereignty in CEE. The dynamic political and discursive use of Christianity tied to different meanings, and leaving human rights out of the picture, seems to create some kind of a protest voice. The rationality of ownership and sovereignty through Christianity might imply a deeply rooted claim to national self-determination. Invoking nationalism through religious requirements in CEE seems to support recent anti-EU and anti-global tendencies. In this region, such a strategy generates particular meanings ascribed to certain groups and strengthens existing primordial boundaries.

The case of Slovakia does not present an isolated island in the ocean of nation states. Rather, it illustrates the ongoing state-building processes that characterize former communist countries in the region. In all four Visegrad countries, there has not

been much difference between political responses to the refugee redistribution mechanism adopted by the EC. All of them are negative and dismissive. The majority of the Visegrad countries stresses Christianity as the key value and condition of statehood. And even the Czech Republic, which is considered the most secular country in the region and is the only one not mentioning Christianity in the preamble of its constitution, conditions the acceptance of asylum applications on a religious requirement. Thus, such processes are based on the identitarian and ethnonational claims of political actors who pursue their own agendas. Moral evaluation of values is crucial in their legitimation strategies, giving them the discursive power to accomplish their aims. The refusal of refugees does not emerge out of the blue; instead, it is simply a continuation of historical state-building and policy-building strategies in the region based on ethnicity, nationalism, and culture.

Funding

Notes

1. Around 84,787 foreign nationals live in Slovakia, which represents just 1.56 percent of the overall population. Out of these, two-thirds are EU and EEC nationals. Slovakia is one of the EU28 granting the lowest number of asylum permissions to refugees. In 2015, 330 asylum applications were submitted and only eight were approved.

2. Currently, eighteen churches and religious societies are legally recognized in Slovakia, mostly representing Christianity, Judaism, and Bahá'í. According to the 2011 census and data provided by the International Organization for Migration, the Muslim community in Slovakia comprised around 2,000 members, compared to almost 3,350,000 Roman Catholics. In 2007, Act no. 201/2007 Z.z. restricted the recognition of churches in Slovakia, increasing the number of "members" required for the official registration to 20,000 (previously it was 20,000 "sympathizers").

Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, "Cirkvi a náboženské spoločnosti," http://old.culture.gov.sk/cirkev-a-nabozenske-spolocnosti/registrovane-cirkvi (accessed 7 March 2017); Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, "Cirkvi a náboženské spoločnosti," http://www.mksr.sk/posobnost-ministerstva/cirkvi-a-nabozenske-spolocnosti-/registrovane-cirkvi-a-nabozenske-spolocnosti-f9.html (accessed 1 May 2017); IOM Migration Information Center, "Atlas of Migrant Communities," http://mic.iom.sk/atlas/islamska-komunita/ (accessed 10 November 2016).

3. European Commission, "European Commission Statement following the Decision at the Extraordinary Justice and Home Affairs Council to relocate 120,000 refugees," http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-15-5697_en.htm (accessed 20 March 2017).

4. Teun van Dijk, *Racism and Press: Critical Studies in Racism and Migration* (London: Routledge, 1991); Teun van Dijk, "What Is Political Discourse Analysis," in *Political Linguistics*, ed. J. Blommaert and C. Bulcaen, 11–52 (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1997); Teun van Dijk, *Discourse and Power* (Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Isabela Fairclough and Norman Fairclough, *Political Discourse Analysis. A Method for Advanced Students* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

5. Ruth Wodak, "'Communicating Europe': Analyzing, Interpreting, and Understanding Multilingualism and the Discursive Construction of Transnational Identities," in *Globalization, Discourse, Media: In a Critical Perspective*, ed. A Duszak, J. House, and L. Kumiega, 17–60 (Warsaw University Press, 2010), 13.

6. Theo van Leeuwen, *Discourse and Practice. New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 20.

7. In argumentation theory and in the work of a significant number of discourse analysis scholars, this would be the definition of a topos (*topoi*). See, e.g., Manfred Kienpointer, *Alltagslogik* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommannholzboog, 1992); Martin Reisigl and Ruth Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination. Rhetoric of Racism and Antisemitism* (London: Routledge, 2001). In my analysis, I do not work with argumentation theory as such. However, I find the definition useful in understanding what I call topic or theme instead of topoi.

8. Bridget Anderson, *Us and Them?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

9. Bastian A. Vollmer, "New Narratives from the EU External Border—Humane Refoulement?," *Geopolitics* 21, no. 3 (2016): 717–41.

10. SITA, "Najväčším problémom Slovenska je nezamestnanosť," http://domov.sme.sk/c/7936858/prieskum-najvacsim-problemom-slovenska-je-nezamestnanost.html?utm_source=link&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=rss (accessed 10 April 2017); SITA, "Prieskum: Slováci odmietajú prijať utečencov, vidia v nich hrozbu," http://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/358731-slovensko-by-nemalo-prijat-utecencov-mysli-si-70-percent-respondentov/ (accessed 10 April 2017).

11. Pat O'Malley, *Risk, Uncertainty and Government* (London: The Glass House Press, 2004); Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky, *Risk and Culture: An Essay on the Selection of Technical and Environmental Dangers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1991).

12. van Dijk, *Racism and Press*.

13. Bernadette Nadya Jaworsky, "Immigrants, Aliens and Americans: Mapping out the Boundaries of Belonging in a New Immigrant Gateway," *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 1, no. 2 (2013): 221–53.

14. Douglas and Wildavsky, *Risk and Culture*; M. Douglas, *Risk Acceptability According to the Social Sciences* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1985); Douglas, *Purity and Danger*; Mary Douglas, *Risk and Blame: Essays in Cultural Theory* (London: Routledge, 1992).

15. Douglas and Wildavsky, *Risk and Culture*, 169.

16. Jens O. Zinn, *Social Theories of Risk and Uncertainty: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008).

17. In the campaign ad for the 2002 national parliamentary elections, Robert Fico, the SMER-SD party leader, states, "We have the courage also to talk about the irresponsible Roma population. Even though we will be criticized by the international community, we are ready to enact such a social policy that will require parents' responsibility for the education and living standard of their children. Unadaptable parents will get social benefits only based on a confirmation of the regular presence of their children in school. We will do everything in order to prevent the ticking bomb of the increase in the Roma population from exploding, and that the ethno-tourism of speculating groups of inhabitants wouldn't discriminate the whole Republic. Stay with us and for order." SMER, Election ad 2002 no. 1, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l6A_82-p3tM (accessed 11 September 2017); Juraj Marušiak, "Fenomén strany Smer: medzi 'pragmatizmom'a sociálnou demokraciou," *Středoevropské politické studie* 8, no. 1 (2006): 19–55.

18. Douglas and Wildavsky, *Risk and Culture*.

19. Teun van Dijk, "Editor's Introduction: The Study of Discourse: An Introduction," in *Discourse Studies*, vol. 5, ed. T. van Dijk (London: Sage, 2007), xix–xlii.

20. van Dijk, *Discourse and Power*; Ruth Wodak, "Discourses of Exclusion: Xenophobia, Racism and Anti-Semitism," in *The Discourse Studies Reader: Main Currents in Theory and Analysis*, ed. J. Angermuller, D. Maingueneau, and R. Wodak (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2014).

21. R. Wodak, *The Discourse Studies Reader*, 3.

22. Norman Fairclough, "A Critical Agenda for Education," in *The Discourse Studies Reader: Main Currents in Theory and Analysis*, ed. J. Angermuller, D. Maingueneau, and R. Wodak (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2014).

23. Ibid., 382.

24. Fairclough and Fairclough, *Political Discourse Analysis*.

25. van Dijk, *Political Linguistics*, 39.

26. van Dijk, *Discourse Studies*, vol. 5.

27. Deborah Lupton, *Risk*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2013).

28. Wodak, *The Discourse Studies Reader*, 403.

29. Alena Chudžíková, "National Identity in the Political Discourse in Slovakia," *Sociologie Românească* 9, no. 1 (2011): 10–27.

30. Elena Gallová Kriglerová, Jana Kadlečíková, and Jarmila Lajčáková, *Migranti: Nový pohľad na staré problémy* (Bratislava: CVEK, 2009).

31. See, e.g., the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, which states: "*We, the Slovak nation, mindful of the political and cultural heritage of our forebears*, and of the centuries of experience from the struggle for national existence and our own statehood, *in the sense of the spiritual heritage of Cyril and Methodius* and the historical legacy of the Great Moravian Empire, proceeding from the natural right of nations to self-determination, *together with members of national minorities and ethnic groups living on the territory of the Slovak Republic*, in the interest of lasting peaceful cooperation with other democratic states, seeking the application of the democratic form of government and the guarantees of a free life and the development of spiritual culture and economic prosperity, that is, we, citizens of the Slovak Republic, adopt through our representatives the following Constitution" (emphasis added). "The Constitution of the Slovak Republic," http://www.slovakia.org/sk-constitution.htm (accessed 11 October 2017).

32. See, e.g., Karsten Grabow and Florian Hartleb, eds., *Exposing the Demagogues: Right-Wing and National Populist Parties in Europe* (Brussels: Centre for European Studies, 2013); Mesežnikov Grigorijov, Oľga Gyarfášová, and Daniel Smilov, eds., *Populist Politics and Liberal Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe* (Bratislava: Institute for Public Affairs, 2008).

33. The billboards and politicians used a more derogative term for a migrant. Instead of "migrant," "bevándorló" was used in the anti-immigrant political campaign before the referendum. See, e.g., Nick Thorpe, "Hungary's Poster War on Immigration," *BBC News*, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-33091597 (accessed 12 October 2017).

34. See, e.g., Tom McTauge, "Hungary Hardens Immigration Line," *Politico*, http://www.politico.eu/article/hungarys-new-hardline-immigration-scheme-viktor-orban-refugees-migration-crisis-europe/ (accessed 12 October 2017).

35. ČT 24, "TOP 09 navrhuje přijmou uprchlíky s křesťanskými kořeny," http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct24/domaci/1532648-top-09-navrhuje-prijmout-uprchliky-s-krestanskymi-koreny (accessed 12 October 2017); ČT 24, "Zeman podpořil přijetí 'kulturně blízkých' syrských křesťanů," http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct24/domaci/1561000-zeman-podporil-prijeti-kulturne-blizkych-syrskych-krestanu (accessed 12 October 2017).

36. B. N. Jaworsky, "Immigrants, Aliens and Americans."

37. A. Chudžíková, "National Identity in the Political Discourse in Slovakia."

38. Teun van Dijk, "Analyzing Racism through Discourse Analysis. Some Methodological Reflections," in *Race and ethnicity in Research Methods*, ed. J. Stanfield (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1993).

39. van Dijk, *Discourse and Power*; van Dijk, "Analyzing Racism through Discourse Analysis."

40. Fairclough and Fairclough, *Political Discourse Analysis*.

41. TA3, 12 May 2015.

42. The preference for immigrants from culturally close environments is explicitly stressed also in the main strategic document entitled "Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspectives until the Year 2020."

43. Douglas and Wildavsky, *Risk and Culture*.

44. van Leeuwen, *Discourse and Practice*, 105–6.

45. Markus Rheindorf and Ruth Wodak, "Borders, Fences, and Limits—Protecting Austria from Refugees: Metadiscursive Negotiation of Meaning in the Current Refugee Crisis," *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies* (2017): 1–24.

46. T. van Dijk, *Political Linguistics*.

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56. Miloslav Bahna, *Migrácia zo Slovenska po vstupe do Európskej únie* (Bratislava: VEDA, vydavateľstvo Slovenskej akadémie vied, 2011).

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58. B. N. Jaworsky, "Immigrants, Aliens and Americans."

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61. The Slovak and Hungarian governments decided even to push the "quota issue" to the European Court of Justice (ECJ) and formulated an official complaint about the refugee redistribution mechanism adopted in 2015. In September 2017, the ECJ dismissed the countries' complaints. As the Hungarian foreign affairs minister stated, "This decision jeopardises the security and future of all of Europe. Politics has raped European law and values." *The Guardian*, "EU Court Dismisses Complaints by Hungary and Slovakia over Refugee Quotas," https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/06/eu-court-dismisses-complaints-by-hungary-and-slovakia-over-refugees (accessed 12 October 2017).

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