Securitisation of Migration in the Language of Slovak Far-Right Populism[1]

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Abstract

Although the Slovak Republic is not a country of immigrants, since 2015 the topic of international migration has dominated its political discourse. Due to the migration situation in 2015, Slovak politicians have also begun to use the topic of migration to mobilise their voters. Paradoxically, there are no significant differences among the relevant Slovak political parties on this topic, hence Slovak politicians take a similar approach to the issue of migration. This article focuses on the People's Party Our Slovakia as a leading representative of far-right populism. We intend to explore how Slovak far-right populists articulate the issue of international migration. Our analysis has found that the language of far-right populists reflects a dichotomy of "we/us" (good) vs. "they/them" (evil). Far-right populists emphasise the negative consequences of migration, as they perceive migrants as a threat to national security. In-depth analyses of political texts have revealed that the securitisation of migration by far-right populists has several dimensions. Migrants are perceived as a threat to the economic, political and cultural security of the state.

Keywords: *Migration; securitisation; far-right populism; political discourse; Slovakia*

Introduction

Although the emphasis on security in migration discourse has been observed in typical immigrant countries for several decades, it has gained momentum since the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States (Neuscheler, 2004; Humphrey, 2013; Lazaridis and Wadia, 2015). Representatives of the far right are extremely active in presenting migration as a threat. While examining the attitudes, platform priorities, and goals of far-right representatives has a long tradition in Western Europe (Backes, 1989; Pfahl-Traughber, 2001; Mudde, 2007; Jesse and Thieme 2011; Wodak, 2016; Shehaj, Shin and Inglahart, 2021), in Slovakia, there is a significant lack of research on the attitudes of far-right parties to migration, for two reasons. The first is related to the limited experience of the population with immigration. As we show in the text, Slovakia used to be a country in which society was not confronted with substantial immigration flows. On the contrary, political, economic and social conditions were key push factors that encouraged the inhabitants of Slovakia, or before 1989, Czechoslovakia, to emigrate. After the transformation of the regime in 1989, completely different topics such as the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, problems with the consolidation of democracy and the

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socio-economic transformation of society dominated the political discourse (Gbúrová, 2010). According to the European Commission's Eurobarometer Survey, the interest of Slovaks in migration was well below the average compared to other member states of the European Union until 2015 (European Commission, 2020). The second reason for the deficit in research into the attitudes of right-wing extremists towards migration was the absence of interest of Slovak far-right parties in migration. In the 1990s, the Slovak far right pursued completely different goals (primarily Slovakia's political independence) and did not focus on migration at all. During this period, the far right, represented by the Slovak National Party (SNS) (Kitschelt, 1995), articulated an extremely negative attitude towards Hungary and the approximately half-million Hungarian minority, who live mainly in the southern regions of Slovakia on the border with Hungary. The representatives of SNS were the first in Slovakia (SITA, 2005) who associated migration, especially the migration of Muslims, with a threat to Slovak society, but without a noticeable response from the public. [5]

The beginning of a significant political discourse on migration, i.e., engaging, in addition to the far right, other relevant political actors, dates back to 2015 in Slovakia (Androvičová, 2017). The interest of Slovak politicians in migration was triggered by two factors. The first factor was related to the migration situation on the European continent. Europe was experiencing the mass migration of refugees from countries from Africa and Southwest Asia (Liďák, 2016), and Slovak media devoted extensive coverage to it and the quota system within which the European Union aimed to redistribute refugees among individual member states, including Slovakia (Žúborová and Borárosová, 2017). The second factor was linked to the domestic political situation. The campaigns leading to the parliamentary elections in Slovakia, which took place in early March 2016, began in the summer of 2015. Despite the fact that refugees did not consider Slovakia as a destination country[6] but as a short term transit location, Slovak politicians actively leveraged this topic. The heretofore-peripheral issue of migration emerged as a central topic of political debate for several weeks (Csanyi, 2020). One of the main actors in the political debate on migration was the then ruling party Direction-social democracy (SMER). The opposition, as well as many civic activists, blamed the government for its corrupt behaviour which could have negatively affected the ruling party's election results. For this reason, it was suggested that the government attempted to divert attention from its corruption issues to refugees by articulating an extremely negative attitude to international migration.

Although the number of migrants in Slovakia was extremely low compared to that of Western European countries, the attitudes towards migration appeared to shape political party preferences. However, everything turned out differently. Shortly before the elections, nurses and teachers went on strike and called for wage increases, drawing the attention of the media and the public back to issues that had a vital impact on citizens' lives. Since then, migration has continued to be discussed in political discourse, although less intensely.

Slovak politicians were not experienced in articulating the topic of migration before 2015, but they soon became actively engaged in its analysis. Most politicians viewed refugee migration between 2015 and 2016 in a negative sense. There were only a few opinion-forming politicians who referred to migration in a neutral way, or even highlighted its positive aspects. In this

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[5] This party dropped out of Parliament in 2012. In 2016, SNS became a parliamentary party again for one election period, but the topic of migration had already been articulated by other relevant parties.
[6] In Slovakia, 330 refugees applied for asylum in 2015, and 146 in 2016 (more in Table 1).

article, we will focus on the People's Party Our Slovakia (ĽSNS) as a leading representative of far-right populism (Hvasta and Koziak, 2019), and which first entered parliament in 2016,[7] immediately after the start of the migration debate. According to German author Pfahl-Traughber (2001: 14-16), the features of far-right parties include the rejection of the principle of equality, the overestimation of one's own ethnicity, anti-pluralism and authoritarianism. We also identify these features in our research (Štefančík 2020). We believe that they can also be identified in research into the political communication of far-right representatives on migration and migrants.

We assume that the articulation of negative attitudes towards migration is an important part of the communication strategies of Slovak far right politics. Up to 2015, other topics such as the glorification of the non-democratic first Slovak Republic (1939-1945) and its clerical-fascist regime, nationalism, anti-Semitism, and a negative attitude towards international organisations such as NATO or the EU (Kluknavská and Smolík, 2016) dominated their political discourse. Since 2015, their main message has become intertwined with anti-immigration policies.

Since 2015, research has focused on migration discourse within party politics but only limited attention has been devoted to the far right (Androvičová, 2017; Zvada, 2018). Although we document studies focusing on the Slovak far right (Kluknavská and Smolík, 2016; Kluknavská and Hruška, 2019), they do not primarily consider attitudes towards migration. We aim to fill this gap in research by focusing exclusively on the far right and its attitudes towards migration and migrants. In this article, we aim to explore how far-right politicians from Slovakia articulate their attitudes towards migration. As the approach of far-right populists in Western Europe is negative, and their main communication strategy is to present migration as a threat (Wodak, 2016), we presume that a similar attitude will prevail in Slovakia. However, it remains questionable how Slovak far-right populists will construct the factors of threats, what types of threats they will emphasise and what means of expression they will use in their communication strategies.

Methodology

Political discourse analysis will be used to develop answers to the above-mentioned questions. The study of political discourse incorporates a wide range of topics and utilises a broad spectrum of analytical methods. According to Wilson (2001: 410) "one of the core goals of political discourse analysis is to seek out the ways in which language choice is manipulated for specific political effect." The term "manipulated" requires special attention. Migration discourse is not the reflection of reality in which migrants are a real threat, but involves communication strategies of political actors who pursue power goals primarily by securitising migration (Kostlán, 2014). And as migration has become one of the central topics of the electoral debate in Slovakia since 2015, migration discourse has been incorporated into

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[7] To enter the Slovak Parliament, a party must obtain at least 5 percent of the vote. In 2016, OĽaNO won 8.04 percent and in 2020, as the fourth strongest party, it received 7.97 percent of the vote. According to Focus Agency survey (2021), ĽSNS with its 4.3 percent was below the eligibility threshold in April 2021. This drop in preferences was influenced by two factors. In October 2020, Marian Kotleba, the chairman of ĽSNS, was sentenced to 4 years and 4 months in prison for supporting and promoting a movement aimed at suppressing fundamental rights and freedoms (Mikušovič, 2020). The judgment has yet to be upheld by the Supreme Court of the Slovak Republic. The second reason for the fall in preference lies in the break-up of ĽSNS in January 2021, after which several media-famous members left the party. However, we do not believe that the topic of migration will disappear from political discourse, because the members who resigned were among the main representatives of the anti-immigration and anti-Muslim movement in Slovakia. In the meantime, they have announced the establishment of a new party.

political discourse. Migration discourse is a political discourse not only because it is reproduced by politicians or because it is involved in political documents. It is political because it reflects the interpretation of national identity and the definition of community (Androvičová, 2015). Van Dijk (2018) claims that migration discourse is not only about migration, but about an essential part of migration as a phenomenon. Contemporary discourse studies highlight the fact that discourse is not only a form of language use, but a form of social and political (inter)action. "Migration as a social phenomenon not only consists of (groups of) participants, institutions and many types of social and political (inter)action, but also, quite prominently, of many genres of migration discourse as social and political acts and interaction" (van Dijk, 2018: 230).

According to van Dijk (1997), the purveyors of political discourse are not only politicians, but also non-governmental organisations, academics and scientists. Although they affect this discourse, they have no interest in gaining political power through their statements. Far-right populists are among the many actors in the migration discourse in Slovakia, and they have significantly contributed to the securitisation of migration discourse through their communication strategies. We will focus on the attitudes of this group of political actors towards the policies of immigration and asylum. The topic of migrant integration is embedded in migration discourse (Goodman, 2010; van Dijk, 2018), however, it is on the fringes of Slovak migration discourse. To date, the need to discuss immigration policy in Slovakia has been emphasised primarily by academics (Letavajová, 2018).

Data for our research were obtained from primary sources such as parliamentary speeches between 2015 and 2021 (NR SR 2021). We selected the texts of parliamentary speeches using keyword searches in the digital archives of the National Council of the Slovak Republic. The issue of migration was addressed by Slovak MPs in diffuse speeches on various topics and in integrated speeches during the debate on two declarations related to the migration situation in September 2015 and the UN document entitled Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, discussed by Slovak MPs in November 2018. Additional data were obtained from manifesto documents, mainly election manifestos from 2016 and 2021 and pre-election radio and television programs. We also examined party newspapers which were published approximately every three months. Most of the analysed contributions were from the ĽSNS website. Social networks, especially profiles on Facebook, were also analysed. After some time, Facebook blocked the profiles of the party and some of its top representatives, but we managed to archive some statements relevant to our research. As the Slovak party system and political parties are weakly institutionalised (Filipec, 2019), which is reflected in the fragmentation of political parties and changes in party affiliations, some of the cited representatives are no longer members of the examined political party. However, this aspect cannot preclude the inclusion of their statements in the analysis, since they figured as party members at the publication time of their statements.
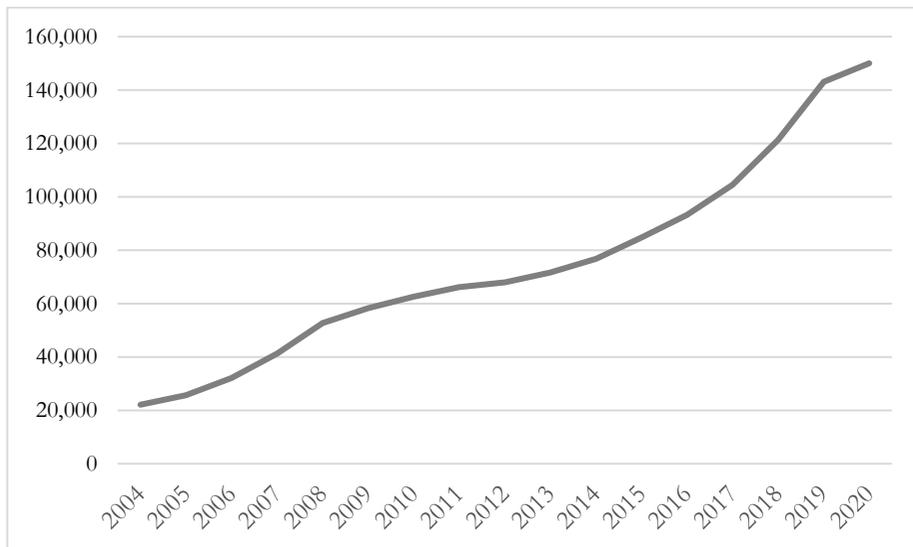
Overview of migration data

In this part of the article, we will present the most important data on the development of migration to Slovakia. This part of our text is important as it provides a more detailed look at those categories of migration and migrants that far-right populists present as a security threat. These data reflect migratory movements over the past decades. We will also consider the statistics on asylum procedures with a focus on the Muslim community.

Leading up to the country's accession to the European Union in May 2004, there were not enough pull factors in Slovakia to attract immigrants. The political and economic transformation in the late 1980s, the subsequent consolidation of democracy during the 1990s, economic reforms reflected in rising gross domestic product and living standards and European integration transformed the country of emigration into an attractive destination, especially for economic migrants from former socialist states (Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine) (Divinský, 2010; Letavajová and Divinský, 2019; Přívara 2021). The number of migrants in Slovakia grew rapidly, although these numbers were not comparable to other countries of immigration. The number of migrants grew rapidly until 2019. In 2020, under the influence of the global pandemic of COVID-19, the growth in the number of migrants slowed. As Graph 1 shows, at the end of 2020, a total of 150,012 foreigners with residence permits were registered in Slovakia; this represents less than 2.8 percent of the total population, while in typical immigrant countries such as Germany, Austria or the Netherlands, the share of immigrants in the total population is more than 10 percent (Eurostat, 2021). Of these, 90,806 were migrants from outside the European Union. The most migrants were from Ukraine (42,162), Serbia (16,005), Vietnam (6,798), Russia (5,658), and China (2,695).

Graph 1. Number of foreigners with resident permits by years

Source: BBFP – Bureau of border and foreign police, 2021.

The second category of actors of migratory movements crucial for migration discourse in Slovakia, consists of refugees. The topic of migration was placed at the centre of political debate as a result of the migration situation associated with the movement of refugees in 2015 and 2016 in Europe. Although the media reported on the movement of hundreds of thousands of refugees from African and Middle Eastern countries towards Western Europe, they bypassed Slovakia. Available sources have shown that 330 refugees applied for asylum in Slovakia in 2015 and only 146 refugees did so in 2016. Compared to previous years, the number of applications in 2015 and 2016 was even lower. Table 1 reveals the low interest of refugees in coming to Slovakia, and the extremely restrictive nature of Slovakia's asylum policy. 2016 was the only year in which Slovakia exceeded its average in terms of the number

of persons who where granted asylum. This number included 149 Assyrian Christians from northern Iraq. The Slovak government considered the granting of asylum to these immigrants to be Slovakia's contribution to resolving the migration situation between 2015 and 2016 (the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic, 2016). However, refugees were not selected on the basis of urgency, but primarily on the basis of religion; thus, they were refugees of the Christian faith. This approach was a political decision and openly declared by the government. For this reason, we conclude that Islamophobia is not only an aspect of the far right's discourse.

Table 1. Number of asylum applications and number of asylums granted for the relevant years

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number of applications	441	331	330	146	166	178	232	282
Asylums granted	15	14	8	167	29	5	9	11

Source: BBFP – Bureau of Border and Foreign Police, 2021.

The last category of migrants in Slovakia is represented by Muslims. They are not exclusively migrants, since the Muslim community in Slovakia involves domestic converts. The exact number of Muslim migrants is not known. According to the 2011 census, 1,934 Muslims live in Slovakia, but experts claim that the Muslim community has approximately 5,000 members (Lenč, 2019). Muslims, many of whom arrived in Slovakia before 1989 either as students or as cheap labour (Štefančík, 2010), are relatively well integrated. They have a good command of the Slovak language and many have married Slovak women and identified with the Slovak legal system and cultural traditions (Letavajová, 2018). However, Islam is not recognised by the state. The legislation discriminates against this religion since it requires the Muslim community to meet unrealistic demands. As a result, it is not entitled to state financial support, unlike other, much smaller religious denominations that are recognised by the Slovak state. We can thus claim that not only far right politicians, but also representatives of other political parties who articulate an anti-Muslim position because they are not interested in changing this discriminatory approach to Muslims living in Slovakia.

Securitisation of migration from the perspective of Slovak far-right populists

The concept of security has been analysed in contemporary studies of various social science disciplines. Security issues are addressed in several schools within critical security studies. Representatives of the Copenhagen School, such as Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde (1998), are particularly active in this context. They have re-evaluated the traditional perception of the concept of security. They interpret and analyse it as a speech act (Wæver, 2007). In linguistic theory, a speech act is the expression of an idea not only to give information but also to act (Bayat, 2012). According to Wæver, security functions not as a sign sent to a referee, but as an action through a statement. A concrete statement is therefore an act as well. In the case of security, the state does not act as a passive observer (Wæver, 2007).

Buzan et al. (1998) perceive securitisation as a discursive strategy that creates an existential threat to which a security response needs to be accepted. Securitisation occurs when a political actor attributes a security aspect to a phenomenon through the rhetoric of an existential threat to justify the adoption of emergency measures outside formal and established policy procedures (Karyotis, 2007: 24). According to Weiner (1993), the reasons for which some

groups of migrants are considered as cultural threats are complex. The answer to this question depends on how the society of the destination country perceives itself. Indeed, individual cultures differ according to the criteria used by the destination countries of migration to determine who and under what conditions can be admitted to their community, to whom they will allow entry and which groups of migrants they will consider as a potential threat. The violation of accepted norms (for example, by illegal immigrants) can be considered as a threat to core values and national security. A threat is realised through a number of arguments, which, according to Ceyhan and Tsoukala (2002): 1), are usually articulated around four main axes: socio-economic, where migration is associated with unemployment and the use of the social system; 2) security, where migration is associated with the loss of national sovereignty, 3) identity, where migrants are presented as a threat to national identity, and finally 4) political, where anti-immigration, racist and xenophobic statements serve to gain political advantage. According to Hainsworth (1992: 7), migration is an "issue par excellence" for far-right populists. They consider migrants as enemies who threaten the national identity of the society of the destination state, and thus, it is necessary to take action against them. Direct components of xenophobia are often present in extremist statements (Lazaridis and Tsagkroni, 2015). However, international migration as a threat is not only associated with far-right populism. Such conclusions have been reached by authors who analyse migration discourse in several countries, without focusing on radical parties alone (Ibrahim, 2005; Androvičová, 2015, 2017; Krotký, 2019; Cingerová and Dulebová, 2019; Çilingir, 2020). Migration is presented in the communication strategies of many politicians as one of the decisive factors that threaten the sovereignty of the European nation-state, national traditions and social homogeneity. Many political actors highlight the internal and external dangers of migration. These dangers threaten the survival of the nation and Western European civilisation. Such discourse relies on the political myth of homogeneous national communities that can be restored if migration from culturally and religiously diverse states is eliminated or halted (Huysmans, 2000).

The nation is a central category in the ideology of far-right politics (Spier, 2006). It is perceived as a homogeneous ethnic mass, not as an internally heterogeneous entity. Far-right populists define the nation as a domestic, ethnically homogeneous population based on "biological purity" (Schellenberg, 2009). In their ideology, the nation is threatened both from within and without (Kmeť, 2021), despite the non-existence of such homogeneous nation due to internal ethnical, religious, cultural and social heterogeneity. According to Uwe Backes (1989: 305), far-right parties "create an image of the enemy into which they project all kinds of negative qualities. The image of the enemy strengthens a group of individuals and emphasises their missionary role." This is the perception of the enemy by far-right populists in Slovakia (Smolík, 2013). Internal enemies of far-right populists in Slovakia include national politicians from the democratic centre, mainstream media, some ethnic minorities, and homosexuals. International organisations such as NATO and the European Union, the World Bank, well-known personalities of Jewish origin and, since 2015, migrants have been generally perceived as external enemies (Štefančík, 2020). Their communication strategy is to arouse fear in the population. Under the influence of fear, one does not think rationally, it is easier to succumb to emotions, one is prone to believe in conspiracy statements and simple explanations of complex problems. According to the German psychologist Wiebke Putz-Osterloh (2000), fear is a classic emotional reaction that triggers defensive behaviour. Thus, fear does not paralyse people, on the contrary, it motivates them to take further action. The fear of migrants and

foreign intrusion thus motivates voters to support the political party that itself offers solutions to this problem, or that offers solutions (albeit often unrealistic) for eliminating or stopping migration.

Far-right populists perceive migration as a threat to health and life, culture, the economy and the sovereignty of the state. Thus, the migration threat has four dimensions in the communication strategies of far-right populists: personal, cultural, political and economic. In the following section, we will analyse these four dimensions based on the example of discursive strategies of representatives of the Slovak far-right party ĽSNS.

Threat to health and life

In this dimension, far-right populists perceive migrants as threats to health security (as carriers of foreign diseases) or even to human life (as potential terrorists). Migrants are not only depicted as potential terrorists, but also as those who can endanger the domestic population through ordinary physical violence. Since similar cases have been absent in Slovakia, far-right populists use examples from abroad to validate their arguments, such as the migrant attacks on women in the German city of Frankfurt am Main at the turn of 2015 and 2016.

> *"The problem only arises when illegal immigrants stream across open borders; many of them do not migrate as a result of actual emergencies, but only come to leverage, steal, rape and kill for free" (ĽSNS, 2018).*

> *"Violent Africans, Turks and Asians have completely occupied many cities and dozens of white women are being raped every day. Crime is skyrocketing and gangs of immigrants are shooting at each other in cities with machine guns. The west and north of Europe are already lost, let us not allow this to happen in Slovakia" (ĽSNS, 2018).*

Cultural threat

Representatives of Slovak far right politics often describe migrants as followers of Islam. Thus, migrants are aliens, persons who are unable to integrate because they cannot adapt to Slovak cultural (and religious) traditions. The inability to integrate results in segregated and closed migrant communities, which are usually located on the outskirts of large urban areas in Europe. Islam is a symbolic image of "foreignness" that threatens a homogeneous domestic society with a foreign culture, and the image of a violent foreign power. Some parts of the Slovak population consider Islam as a violent religion that is incompatible with the Christian faith (Letavajová, 2018); these are the voters of interest to the far right.

> *"[Migrants] displace Christianity and European culture and convert every society that has accepted them to their image" (ĽSNS, 2016).*

> *"Every ordinary European, Christian or atheist must be afraid of Satan-worshipping paedophiles of the devil, it is the Islamic religion" (S. Mizík, MP, NR SR 2016).*

> *"Islam is more than a religion, it is a cruel, abominable and inhuman political system" (Milan Mazurek, MP, SITA, 2017).*

Purveyors of migration discourse from the ranks of far-right populists often exploit the term Islamisation. In historiography, this refers to the spread of the Islamic religion to originally non-Islamic countries. In current political discourse, the term is applied in a negative context. It is generally referred to as the radical spread of Islam (Hierl, 2012).

In the communication strategies of far-right populists, the term "Islamism" is used as a synonym for the violent and unsolicited penetration of the Islamic religion into Europe, including Slovakia. The aim of Islamisation is to destroy the national, cultural and religious (Christian) identity of European communities, and the result of Islamisation is the demise of European civilisation, i.e. Christianity. In religious Slovakia, where the majority of the population professes the Christian faith and retains a historical and cultural subconscious image of the Muslim, far-right populists present Muslims as violent barbarians who want to destroy the cultural and religious essence of Slovakia.

> *"We consider it our duty to resist the growth of Islamisation and prevent the penetration of radical Islam into our society" (ĽSNS, 2016).*

> *"Let all Islamists see that they are not welcome here, that we will defend our Slavic women and families and that our Slavic country does not belong to them" (M. Mazurek, MP, Warsaw 2017).*

Far-right populists hold a negative attitude towards multiculturalism and Islam. Multiculturalism is defined in many ways; in professional discourse it is a model of integration policy based on the recognition of the traditions, culture and religion of immigrants by the target country (Runblom, 1994). Demagogic rhetoric provides a simplified black-and-white perception of integration policy. Far-right populists use multiculturalism to refer to societies which, in addition to the native population, are inhabited by Muslims and immigrants from African states who cause the decay of traditional values and traditions of indigenous societies or endanger the indigenous nation.

> *"The fact is that every country in Western Europe that has given in to the pressure to adopt a policy of multiculturalism, i.e. the mass acceptance of foreign non-European immigrants, is now in trouble" (M. Mazurek, MP, ĽSNS, 2015).*

Political threat

The third dimension of the threat of international migration is political in nature. Far-right populists claim that the creation of migration policy, including the question of who will enter and under what conditions a person shall remain in the territory of another state, is the sovereign competence of national governments, not international organisations. Far-right populists note that the European Union's proposal to redistribute migrants to the Member States according to binding quotas undermines the sovereign right of a nation state to formulate its own immigration policies. The migration situation and the response of the European Union to it would threaten Slovakia's political sovereignty and it would thus become a vassal to the European Union. By taking a negative approach to the migration policy of the European Union, the Slovak far right is deepening its Eurosceptic attitude. Euroscepticism is an important identifying symbol of far-right political parties, and this characteristic feature also applies to ĽSNS.

> *"The European Union wants to destroy us not only economically but also socially. Under the threat of sanctions, more than 120,000 immigrants from Africa and Asia are being imposed on us! Muslim immigrants do not know and do not want to adapt to our laws and social norms. They commit many crimes and are a huge burden on indigenous inhabitants" (ĽSNS 2016).*

> *"It was Marian Kotleba who stood up against immigrants to defend Slovakia at a time when other politicians were silent or betrayed Slovakia by voting for mandatory quotas in the European Parliament" (ĽSNS, 2019).*

The term *dictate* often appears in far-right populist strategies of communication on international migration. It has a negative connotation and suggests that the Slovak Republic will lose its national sovereignty in response to the migration situation.

> *"We put Slovak interests above the dictates of Brussels" (ĽSNS, 2016).*

> *"The Dictate of Brussels liquidates Slovakia" (ĽSNS, 2017).*

Economic threat

This threat is multidimensional. It is not just the usual stereotype that migrants reduce the cost of labour because they have lower pay requirements than the domestic population, or that they increase the unemployment rate because they are rivals on the labour market. Migrants with residence permits are economically well integrated in Slovakia, so these stereotypes are less prevalent in political discourse (Letavajová and Divinský, 2019). When far-right-populists articulate the economic threat of migration, they refer to something else. First and foremost, they refer to the costs associated with migrants. They claim that the state must spend funds on accommodation, meals and daily allowances, which would otherwise support Slovak kindergartens, schools, healthcare and homes for the elderly. Thus, migration threatens the social system. One ambiguity has been identified in the communication strategies of far-right populists in this dimension. The participants in the migration situation of 2015 and 2016 were generally described by far-right populists as "economic migrants" and not as refugees, even though these migrants were forced to travel across several countries in order to receive social support in the destination countries.

> *"All decent people will have to pay for this and can look forward to nothing, no programmes, no help for their children" (M. Mazurek, MP, NR SR, 2018).*

> *"If we recognise migration in Slovakia as a human right, Slovakia will subsequently be obliged to materially secure other rights for the migrant. […] The migration flow, similar to the Italian one, would devastate our Slovak social and health security system in a very short period of time" (S. Drobný, MP, NR SR, 2018).*

Conclusion

In this article, we have focused on the attitudes of far-right populists towards international migration. Far-right populists and politicians from the democratic centre in Slovakia have focused on this topic since the migration situation in 2015 and 2016. It has become the core of their ideologies, even though the number of migrants in Slovakia is not as high as those in the immigration countries of Western Europe.

Studies examining migration discourse in typical immigrant countries conclude that the securitisation of migration is a hallmark of European far-right communication strategies (Wodak, 2016; Kaya, 2020). We have reached similar conclusions, despite the fact that Slovakia is not a typical immigrant country and is one of the countries with an extremely restrictive asylum policy. A restrictive asylum policy combined with worse macroeconomic indicators does not make Slovakia a country in which refugees would apply for asylum.

However, as our analysis shows, since 2015, migration has become one of the most important topics of political discourse that has managed to attract public attention.

Our analysis shows that far-right populists from ĽSNS perceive migration as a threat in four dimensions: personal, cultural, political and economic. The first dimension indicates that migrants endanger the health and even the lives of the people of Slovakia. The second dimension considers migration as a cultural threat, claiming that migrants threaten the cultural and religious traditions of Slovakia. According to the ideas of the representatives of the Slovak far right, immigrants would make Islam the dominant religion in Slovakia. The third dimension suggests that the common position of the European Union regarding immigration and asylum policies threatens the political sovereignty of Slovakia. Finally, the economic dimension treats migrants as a threat to the Slovak social system in which public finances are redistributed in favour of migrants and at the expense of the domestic population.

We have shown how far-right populists communicate the topic to their voters. We obtained data for research mainly from the website of the surveyed entity, from social networks, and parliamentary speeches of the representatives of ĽSNS. We have found that Slovak far right politicians regularly raise the factors of threat and danger to create fear among the electorate. Fear is an important driver of political action; for far-right populists it is an important means of electoral mobilisation. Extremist formations generally legitimise their political goals by reference to security requirements (Wodak 2016). Every crisis creates a sense of threat, and extremists can leverage that sense of fear. However, their entire communication strategy does no attempt to articulate ways to eliminate threats, because the nation–society is often endangered only fictitiously. The primary aim is to convince the voter regardless of whether the arguments are informative and can be convincingly verified, or whether the threat is real or rather fictitious.

The argumentation of far-right populists on migration reflects a friend-enemy dichotomy. Their aim is to deliberately create an image of the enemy, into which several negative qualities are then projected. On the other hand, the category of the enemy is emphasised to strengthen the cohesion between their own group of voters and supporters. Given the fact that extremists offer simple solutions for defeating the enemy, such a communication strategy helps to reinforce the importance of their missionary role. Thus, they help to build the idea that the nation is surrounded by enemies, against whom it is necessary to move forward and lead a relentless fight. Simultaneously, they offer solutions to deal with international migration, even if they do not specify them afterwards. As a rule, they use popular phrases (we will protect Slovakia, we will protect our women, we will prevent migrants from entering the territory of Slovakia, we will create barriers to radical Islam), but they do not provide specific details of their migration policies. With this attitude, they confirm the fact that migration policy is used by far-right representatives primarily to mobilise voters, not to solve real problems.

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