THE MIGRATION AND REFUGEE CRISIS IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE IN SLOVAKIA: INSTITUTIONALIZED SECURITIZATION AND MORAL PANIC

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Abstract

Immigration was a minor political topic in Slovakia before the outbreak of the refugee crisis in Europe in 2015. However, security discourse with regard to migration was institutionalized and represents the dominant view of migration. This paper analyzes the institutional basis for the dominant security discourse in Slovakia, using the concept of moral panic. It argues that the dominance of security discourse results from a consensus among politicians about cultural questions connected to migration and from a technocratic consensus among security professionals, experts and politicians who prioritize the security view of migration.

Keywords: Slovakia; migration; European migrant crisis; political discourse; securitization; moral panic

Introduction

Slovak parliamentary elections do not usually draw much attention beyond Slovakia's immediate neighboring countries. The elections held on March 5, 2016, were an exception. One of the most significant, or perhaps the single

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most significant topic of the election campaign was refugees, immigrants and the so-called "refugee (or migrant) crisis." Slovakia's approach towards immigrants, refugees and solutions to the refugee crisis (especially those advanced by certain controversial politicians) captured attention from abroad, mainly from the European Union and its member states' officials. One of the most significant manifestations of Slovakia's controversial approach was the rejection by a majority of Slovak politicians of the quota-based system for redistributing refugees proposed by the European Commission,[1] coupled with the government's subsequent decision not to implement Commission's decision and to file a lawsuit against the EU-mandated mechanism in the European Court of Justice. This resolute attitude was in no doubt influenced by the approach of the 2016 national elections in Slovakia. Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico, leader of the social-democratic party Smer-SD, actively used anti-immigration rhetoric in his campaign. His statements concerning refugees (especially those of Muslim origin) caught the attention of the foreign media as well as of his political partners and colleagues from the EU's supra-national Party of European Socialists.

This sudden interest in the topic of immigration, marked by the prioritization of national security questions connected to migration, was somewhat surprising given that Slovakia has not been among the countries significantly touched by the refugee crisis. Slovakia has neither been a destination country nor a country of transit for immigrants and refugees. In my paper, I will show that even before the outbreak of the refugee crisis, security discourse about migration had dominated and had become institutionalized in Slovakia.

The general methodological framework for my paper is discourse analysis. There are plenty of different approaches to discourse analysis; however, there are certain principal features common to all of them. The most important is that language as discourse creates performative effects in the social reality. That is to say, words may significantly change and influence the non-language world of social practice. Language is thus not only the description of a social practice but it is a social practice itself: To speak means to act.[2] Through analysis of the language employed, it is possible to reconstruct the meaning of a social action.

This is not to say that non-language practice can be revealed solely through language practice and is reducible to it. For me, analyzing discourse means

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[1] This system was approved by the EU Council in September 2015 with the intention to resettle 120,000 refugees who "evidently need international protection." According to the system, Slovakia should have received 2,300 refugees over the following two years. Four countries voted against the Council's action (Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania).

[2] John Langshaw Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (New York: Harvard University Press, 1975).

searching for the rules that constitute social practice: to analyze why, how and where those rules apply. This is not possible without analysis of the language itself – by examining relevant texts that shape practice – although it is always important to take into account non-language institutional practice as well. We can say that discourse is the whole of the meanings forming the rationality of social action. It means certain frameworks of rules that specify which things are good, correct, true and meaningful. This approach is typical of, for example, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's theory of discourse,[3] but also for Michel Foucault's.[4]

In defining the political discourse, I call upon Teun Van Dijk's definition.[5] According to Van Dijk, there are two ways of determining the political discourse. First, we can study political practices by all participants involved in the political process. Another way of delimiting the object of study is by focusing on the nature of the activities or practices being effected by political texts. I apply a combination of both ways of delimiting the political discourse. Sometimes, important political texts, like official documents and laws, are my foremost interest; other times the choice of an actor, mostly a politician, was the priority, because of his or her position and activity in the discursive field of migration.

This paper is divided into three main parts. The first deals with the period before the outbreak of the refugee crisis and describes the general situation in Slovakia with regard to immigration, in order to explain the causes for the dominance of security discourse in the discursive field of migration in that country. In this part, the analysis is based on some three hundred different text sources (laws, political documents, parliamentary debates, statements of politicians in the media and interviews with selected representatives of the state administration), dating from 2004 when Slovakia joined the EU until the outbreak of the refugee crisis at the beginning of 2015.[6] In the second part, I analyze migration discourse in Slovakia from the outbreak of the refugee crisis in April 2015 until the parliamentary elections in March 2016. This part is based on a selected segment of political discourse in Slovakia, namely politicians' statements to the

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[3] Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 2001).
[4] Michel Foucault, *L'Ordre du discours* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971).
[5] Teun Van Dijk, "What is Political Discourse Analysis," in *Political Linguistics*, ed. Jan Blommaert and Chris Bulcaen (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1997), 13–14.
[6] This analysis draws on my previous research; see Jarmila Androvičová, "Migrácia a migračná politika na Slovensku – analýza diskurzu" (Doctoral Dissertation, Masaryk University, 2015).

media (television debates, press conferences, speeches; press; internet news portals), comprising some 90 sources in all. The main aim is to analyze the representation of immigrants and refugees in political discourse in Slovakia in this period, and the shift in the framing of the topic of migration compared to the previous period. In the third part, I explain the situation after the outbreak of the refugee crisis in Slovakia as an example of securitization, using the concept of moral panic.

Migration Discourse in Slovakia: Dominance of Security Discourse

The number of foreigners living legally in Slovakia has been continuously growing, particularly after its accession to the EU. It increased from 22,108 in 2004 to 84,787 in 2015.[7] The largest share of foreigners comes from the countries of the European Union and the European Economic Area. In 2015, they accounted for 58.4% of all foreigners legally residing in Slovakia. The share of foreigners in the total population of Slovakia was 1.6% in 2015 – a share which has risen only slightly since then.[8] Despite the fact that the Slovak Republic has no policy of active immigrant recruitment, economic immigrants are the largest group of immigrants in Slovakia. Refugees and asylum-seekers are specific, less numerous categories of immigrants. The number of asylum-seekers in Slovakia peaked in 2004, with more than 11,000 applicants. Since 2005, the situation has changed and the trend has been in the opposite direction – the number of asylum seekers has fallen continuously. The Slovak Republic has often been criticized for maintaining a strict asylum policy compared with neighboring countries. Refugees represent only a small proportion of immigrants living in Slovakia and that situation has not changed even since the outbreak of the refugee crisis.[9]

Although migration was not a major political topic in Slovakia before the outbreak of the refugee crisis, we can say that the security discourse of migration dominated long before that.[10] Security discourse has been identified in other, mainly Western European countries and in the EU itself by several

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[7] *Štatistický prehľad legálnej a nelegálnej migrácie v Slovenskej republike* (Bratislava: Úrad hraničnej a cudzineckej polície, 2015), 9, http://www.minv.sk/ swift_data/source/policia/hranicna _a_cudzinecka_policia/rocenky/rok_2015/2015-rocenka-UHCP-SK.pdf.

[8] Ibid.

[9] In 2015, 330 people applied for asylum in Slovakia while in 2014 it was 328.

[10] See e.g. Jarmila Androvičová, "Sekuritizácia migrantov na Slovensku – analýza diskurzu," *Sociológia* 47, No. 4 (September 2015): 319–39; and Karolína Koščová, "Ako naši politici rozprávajú o imigrantoch?" *Menšinová politika na Slovensku,* No. 3 (2012): 7, http://cvek.sk/wp-content /uploads/2015/10/32012-sk.pdf.

authors.[11] According to Didier Bigo, the popularity of the securitization view cannot be explained as a response to a real threat. "The securitization of immigration then emerges from the correlation between some successful speech acts by political leaders, the mobilization they create for and against some groups of people, and the specific field of security professionals." As Bigo says, securitization also comes from a range of administrative practices such as "population profiling, risk assessment, statistical calculation, category creation, proactive preparation, and what may be termed a specific habitus of the security professional with its ethos of secrecy and concern for the management of fear or unease."[12]

Securitization is, according to Bigo, significantly promoted by that discourse. "The securitization of migrants derives from the language itself and from the different capacities of various actors to engage in the speech acts."[13] Ole Wæver emphasizes that "the security is a speech act, in which the securitization actor marks the specific referential object as a threat and declares an emergency condition that implies the right to use the extraordinary means to handle the issue."[14] A particular problem is, however, securitized only after the relevant public accepts its definition and recognizes the right of the securitization actor to use extraordinary means beyond the common political practices. Bigo, on the other hand, does not consider the salience of an issue in some dominant discourse accepted by the public to be a prerequisite for securitization. Securitization is also possible without discourse, by non-discursive practices only – institutionalized processes and routines that influence perceptions of the issue.[15] These are primarily the activities of administrative officials and bureaucratic networks, involved in the legislative process for immigration

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[11] Alessandra Buonfino, "Between Unity and Plurality: The Politicization and Securitization of the Discourse of Immigration in Europe," *New Political Science* 26, No. 1 (2004): 23–48; Didier Bigo, "Security and Immigration: Toward a Critique of the Governmentality of Unease," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 27, Special issue (2002): 63–92; and Jef Huysmans, "The European Union and the Securitization of Migration," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 38, (2000): 751–77.

[12] Bigo, "Security and Immigration," 65.

[13] Ibid., 64.

[14] Ole Wæver, "The EU as a Security Actor: Reflections from a Pessimistic Constructivist on Post-sovereignty Security Orders," in *International Relations Theory and the Politics of European Integration: Power, Security, and Community*, ed. Morten Kelstrup and Michael Charles Williams (London: Routledge, 2000), 250–94, here 251.

[15] Didier Bigo, "When Two Become One: Internal and External Securitisations in Europe," in *International Relations Theory and the Politics of European Integration: Power, Security, and Community*, ed. Morten Kelstrup and Michael Charles Williams (London: Routledge, 2000), 171–204, here 193–94.

and internal security. Unlike government speakers, these actors are presumed to be only marginally interested in securing public legitimacy. They rather act according to a power-maximizing logic. Their interest is in expanding their influence through exporting technological and technical practices into other policy domains. Thus, they infiltrate the field of migration by applying policing and surveillance methods in order to confirm their role as providers of security.[16]

The key difference between Bigo and Wæver is that while Wæver emphasizes the need to voice the use of extraordinary means to eliminate a threat, Bigo advocates for conceptualization of securitization based on everyday practices. Bigo refers to the concept of the security "risk" while Wæver refers to the "threat" as a basis for securitization. Arne Niemann and Nathalie Schmidthäussler emphasize that a "threat" is much more concrete, requiring both the specification of its origin and its immediate removal because of its uncontrollability, whereas a "risk" does not have to be specified in detail and is usually defined as manageable. Based on analysis of key political documents, the authors claim that for migration into the EU, conceptualization of migration as a risk is more typical and more adequate.[17] On the other hand, the discourse of some politicians and political parties of the far right (on the EU and national levels) is securitized differently, i.e., closer to the concept of threat. Moreover, security discourse is usually used exclusively and the logic of securitization is applied to all aspects of migration and to all political solutions in the cultural and/or economic areas. For this reason, I consider securitization as something scalable and gradual. This scalability can be judged on one hand by the prevalence of the logic of threat or the logic of risk in a particular discourse, and on the other hand by the prevalence of the security logic as a unique one or its use in combination with other discourses, be it economic, human rights, or other. At the same time, it is necessary to note that the use of more subtle forms of securitization does not mean that security discourse is not dominant.

Apart from the scalability of securitization, we can talk about its narrower and broader definitions. The narrow definition usually refers to a connection between migration and terrorism or crime, while the broad definition refers to the connection between migration and the entire, complex notion of security, considered in all its different dimensions (cultural, economic, political). In this

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[16] Arne Niemann and Natalie Schmidthäussler, "The Logic of EU Policy-Making on (Irregular) Migration: Securitisation or Risk?" (Paper presented at the UACES Conference, Passau, Germany, September 3–5, 2012), 64.
[17] Ibid., 16–17.

paper, I work with the broader definition of securitization, in which migrants are constructed as cultural, economic or social risks (in the sense that it is "risky" to build social relationships with them).[18] This conceptualization creates social distance from immigrants and leads to direct discrimination against them. At the same time, negative representations of migrants form the basis for their securitization in the narrow sense as well – connecting them with terrorism and criminalizing them. These two perceptions of immigrants are especially interconnected with regard to some categories of immigrants, mainly those of Muslim origin, since their culture is often seen as inherently violent.

Political rhetoric in which immigrants were increasingly described as a threat or risk to the cultural integrity of the state and/or the nation was not very common before 2015 in Slovakia. However, it was the major framework with which immigrants were described by government officials. That is to say, if migration was discussed anywhere (e.g., by politicians), it most probably was in connection with security issues. Immigrants were described as a threat to the Slovak economy, culture and/or well-being. Analysis of parliamentary debates shows that those who were speaking about it most frequently were the Ministers of Interior – heading the ministry that is mainly responsible for the questions of security. Thus migration was most often framed in terms of security.

In the relevant period, from 2004 until now, January 2017, representatives of only two political parties held the position of Minister of Interior: two representatives from the Christian-Democratic Party (*Kresťansko-demokratické hnutie*, KDH) and one representative from the social democrats (*Smer-sociálna demokracia,* Smer-SD). Especially for the KDH ministers, migration was an important topic not only from the security point of view but as well from that of culture. They were the first to bring certain topics to the floor of Parliament, e.g., the problematic integration of certain categories of immigrants, especially non-European ones, the danger posed by marginalized immigrant communities, the danger of Islamization and the concomitant fading of the "traditional" Slovak culture and way of life – in particular Christianity. In the words of Vladimír Palko, a KDH Minister of Interior, "another upcoming huge problem, that Western Europe has already heavily experienced, but which we are also starting to experience, is the migration of millions of people from different cultures (...) by which the problem of the coexistence of different cultures and civilizations in a common space arises. There arises the serious task of determining a leading

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[18] Similar broad definition applies e.g. Buonfino, "Between Unity and Plurality," 23–49.

culture, the original culture of the European majority population, that all who come to Europe must respect."[19]

It is important to note that this conservative rhetoric was adopted by other politicians from different political parties and affiliations, including Smer-SD (which always remained in the opposition). Their framing of the topic of migration has been predominantly restrictive and has never encountered significant opposition from their political and ideological opponents. Those who did not openly support this kind of rhetoric did not openly oppose it either. We can say that the discursive, or ideological, struggle in Slovakia around immigration cannot be compared to the situation in Western European countries, where social democratic parties were usually more open to immigration and opposed conservative rhetoric. Polarization on the issue in Slovakia has not been significant inside the political spectrum, e.g. between political parties, but has been noticeable between individual politicians and other actors (mainly representatives of human-rights organizations, some NGOs, think-tanks, etc.)

While two Ministers of Interior from the Christian-Democratic KDH, Vladimír Palko (2002–2006) and Daniel Lipšic (2010–2012), actively framed the topic of immigration as a cultural threat, the two-term Minister of Interior from Smer-SD, Róbert Kaliňák (2006–2010; 2012–present), was not so much concerned about the cultural questions connected to migration (although he did not question this kind of rhetoric) as he was about the technical problems of border security. Approaching immigration predominantly as a security issue does not inevitably lead to the voicing of other political concerns. This is the case with Kaliňák, who has been rather preoccupied by practical questions of security, approaching immigration as a neutral, technical and apolitical problem. This strategy does, however, lead to the strengthening of security discourse, legitimizing placement of a high priority on the security dimension of migration. At the same time, it also legitimizes a broad scope of activities by different security professionals and experts, building discursive constructions in which their activities are seen as highly professional, very important, albeit costly and requiring sufficient financial resources. These discursive constructions are also easily adopted by other politicians; they are rarely questioned by political opponents or other relevant organized segments of society (as this would be highly unpopular). They are spread and legitimized by other important actors, including the

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[19] Transcript of the 3rd sitting of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava, August 2, 2006, *Společná česko-slovenská digitální parlamentní knihovna*, http://www.psp.cz/eknih/2006nr /stenprot/002schuz/s002008.htm.

security professionals themselves, security experts, other institutions and organizations including think-tanks and parts of the academic sector, and also by the EU itself.

Not only state actors are involved in the reproduction of security discourse. In the civil sector, the new area of security studies has been gaining importance. The formation of new organizations, think-tanks, governmental and nongovernmental institutes, and university departments has been supported by immense financial inflows, partly of domestic, but mainly of foreign origin. Established organizations and institutions have expanded their focus into the area of security and strategic studies. At different conferences and security forums, analysts from the civil sector and universities, together with members of the army, the police and politicians sit side by side and discuss and mutually confirm the privileged position of security topics and the security view with regard to migration. Thus, migration is well represented as an example of so-called societal threats and risks. Moreover, if migration is discussed somewhere else (e.g. in political programs) it is usually in the chapters dedicated to security.

To conclude, we can say that the consensus (that is, the political consensus around cultural questions connected to migration, together with the broad political and professional consensus about the very high priority of the security aspects of immigration) has led to the institutionalization of security discourse in Slovakia regarding migration. The dominance of this security discourse can be documented by analyzing the language of official political documents and laws. In official strategic documents (governmental documents and directives), we find an accent on security and on framing immigrants as a possible threat. The strategic documents talk about "protecting society from increased migration,"[20] and about an "enormous increase of numbers of immigrants,"[21] even though in the relevant period official statistics contradict that claim. In a government strategic document, the "Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic – Perspective to 2020," it is stated: "The main criteria for the admission of foreigners in the management of economic migration is their potential for the development of the Slovak economy and society, with a preference for admission of migrants who have the necessary skills and competencies to cover the sustained demand in the national labor market for scarce professions, with an emphasis on

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[20] "Dôvodová správa k zákonu č. 404/2011," Official Site of the Economic and Social Council of the Slovak Republic, hsr.rokovania.sk/data/att/ 114533_subor.rtf.

[21] *Koncepcia migračnej politiky Slovenskej republiky* (Bratislava: Ministerstvo vnútra SR, 2005), http://www.minv.sk/mumvsr/koncepcia.htm.

culturally-related countries."[22] The emphasis on "culturally-related countries" can no doubt be seen as contradicting the principle of non-discrimination. The rhetorical formulations, and the strict asylum policy that Slovak politicians are so proud of, together with the competence of the foreign police to refuse different kinds of stays in the country, or even citizenship without declaring any reasons, when they can apply the formula of "a danger to national security" – all have created a suspicious image of immigrants and foreigners, especially those of non-European origin. Important parts of immigration policy – such as proactive governmental recruitment policies and integration policies – are in fact missing. This suggests that Slovakia does not count on receiving immigrants nowadays or in the future.

In Slovakia, two main sources of the dominance of security discourse in the migration field are relevant. First, security discourse is based on political activity, which uses populist "enemy-seeking" strategies. Second, the rise of security discourse is a technocratic process, connected with the growing power of different professionals in the field of security, which penetrates into the civil sector.

Slovak Politicians and the Refugee Crisis

The dominance of security discourse in an institutionalized form has been an important factor underlying the character of the political debate in Slovakia since the outbreak of the refugee crisis in Europe. One important situation which stimulated the rhetoric was the up-coming parliamentary election campaign and the pre-election period in general. The refugee crisis started less than one year before the parliamentary elections in Slovakia held on March 5, 2016. The government at that time consisted of one party, the social democratic Smer-SD. Its leader, Prime Minister Robert Fico, had not previously commented on the topic of migration, with a few exceptions when Slovakia was preparing to enter the Schengen Area.[23] Suddenly, during the refugee crisis, he commented intensively on everything concerning migration and refugees. During the celebration of the 71st anniversary of the Slovak National Uprising in summer 2015 he dedicated more than half of his speech to the topic of migration, warning against its negative impact and against neglecting or underestimating

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[22] *Migračná politika Slovenskej republiky s výhľadom do roku 2020* (Bratislava: Ministerstvo vnútra, 2011), http://www.minv.sk/?zamer-migracnej-politiky-slovenskej-republiky.

[23] Slovakia entered the Schengen Area in December 2007. Fico's first government was formed on July 4, 2006.

its threat.[24] Similarly, Richard Sulík, leader of the liberal opposition party SaS and a member of the European parliament, also commented extensively on the topic.[25]

The topic of migration was actively used in the campaign by the political parties from which we might expect it. First was the nationalist party *Slovenská národná strana* (SNS), whose leader, Andrej Danko, had already spoken about Islamization in 2011. Secondly, the right-wing extremist party *Kotleba – Ľudová strana Naše Slovensko* (Kotleba – ĽSNS), whose leader, Marian Kotleba, formerly a neo-Nazi activist, employed far more radical rhetoric. The main difference between him and "mainstream" politicians was that Kotleba openly spoke about a goal of zero immigration. He also addressed different fora. He preferred speaking "to the street" during anti-immigration demonstrations, making direct contact with the people.[26]

In the following text, I analyze the statements of the above-mentioned politicians concerning migration, refugees and connected problems and topics. My analysis is qualitative. To me, it was not important to gather all the relevant data for the studied period and quantify the results, but it was necessary to have enough data that would reveal certain regularities and provide answers for given research questions. I stopped gathering new data at the moment when it had not provided any substantial new information for a long period and did not change the research conclusions; rather, it just confirmed or slightly enriched them (in other words, the sample was saturated). I analyze statements by politicians in the media, but at this moment I am not interested in the role of the media in transferring and interpreting information. Prime Minister Robert Fico was the most active in speaking about immigrants and refugees in the media. That is why his statements and those of his party colleagues form the basis of my analysis and determine the structure of the following text. The statements of other politicians

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[24] "Vystúpenie Roberta Fica na oslavách SNP v Banskej Bystrici," online video, *Smer TV*, August 2015, http://www.smertv.sk/c/940/1/0/vystupenie-roberta-fica-na-oslavach-snp-v-banskej -bystrici.htm.

[25] While the Prime Minister had more space in the mainstream media, Sulík used more alternative media spaces such as blogs and participated in different public discussions. See e.g. a discussion about refugees, "Celá diskusia Denníka N o utečencoch," YouTube video, 1:36:00, posted by *Denník N*, August 5, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTh9xvJsQoM; Sulík's interview for Radio Express "Richard Sulík – 800 utečencov na Slovensku je len začiatok," YouTube video, 12:25, June 1, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CTKWTwYo2U&t=6s; and Sulík's articles on his personal website Richard Sulík – Spravme Slovensko lepším!, www.sulik.sk.

[26] See e.g. Kotleba's speech on demonstration against Islamization of Europe, "STOP islamizácií Európy – Marián Kotleba," YouTube video, 10:19, June 20, 2015, https://www.youtube.com /watch?v=B5-KxuO6bsM.

are taken into account in relation to the "big picture" painted by Fico. In my analysis, I focus on representations of refugees and immigrants, as well as on other important collective identities involved in migration.

An important consequence of political discourse on power is how collective identities are represented. These are very important to those who are governed, i.e. those who are at the core of the analyzed discourses. During the campaign, immigrants and refugees were referred to as "they," as opposed to "us." Their otherness was seen mainly in their different ethnicity, culture or religion. But another way they were "othered" is that they were not portrayed as the subjects of proposed policies; they were perceived mainly as passive objects – something with which politicians had to cope. Their subsidiary position was openly articulated by Slovak politicians, who stated that for them, it is the interests of Slovak citizens that always come first. This was presented as an absolute priority. It means that politicians promoted the idea that they would not do anything that might endanger Slovak citizens in any way. Slovak citizens, in other words, were not expected to give up any share of their comfort and safety. This was a very important promise implied in the election campaign – that politicians would secure an unchanged status quo. In this view, refugees and immigrants must not change anything in the current way of life and living standards of the domestic inhabitants, because they are not entitled to do so; they are not citizens, not part of the society. "We" can help "them" only if it will not limit us at all.

The main idea advanced by most of the Slovak politicians (the strongest voice being that of Prime Minister Fico) was a restrictive, cautious attitude towards a potential "influx of immigrants." This eventuality was seen as a potential threat to national security and to the traditional Slovak way of life. Most politicians, of course, did not directly demand that Slovakia not accep t a single person. But they claimed the government must select very carefully, arguing that most of the refugees coming into Europe are undeserving "economic maneuverers,"[27] expecting only "social benefits,"[28] and that they have no chance to succeed in the labor market because they are "mostly uneducated."[29] A characteristic suggesting that refugees do not need help was attached to them: "they are mostly

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[27] "Vystúpenie Roberta Fica."

[28] SITA, "Fico: Obávam sa, že EÚ nechce zastaviť migráciu," *Pravda,* January 26, 2016 http://spravy .pravda.sk/domace/clanok/381254-fico-obavam-sa-ze-eu-nechce-zastavit-migraciu.

[29] SITA, "Krajiny majú právo povedať, že utečencov nechcú, tvrdí Sulík," *HN online,* May 31, 2015, http://dennik.hnonline.sk/slovensko/583632-krajiny-maju-pravo-povedat-ze-utecencov-nechcu -tvrdi-sulik.

young men."[30] This demographic category was also quite important to portraying immigrants as possibly dangerous, because "young men" are often associated with a higher risk of radicalization.

On the other hand, most politicians claimed from time to time that they were willing to help "deserving" immigrants, the real escapees from war and vulnerable categories of people like mothers with children, etc. At the same time, however, Fico stated that Slovaks will accept only those who are able to integrate to live on their territory. According to him, that would be only Christians. This attitude was criticized from some places (mainly from abroad) as "discriminatory." The official reaction from the Ministry of Interior to this criticism was that "only Christians have good chances to integrate transparently into our society. We are not against religion and this is not discrimination. From the Slovak point of view it is just an effort to succeed with integration."[31] Islam was seen as inherently violent and thus all Muslims were potential terrorists. Robert Fico drew attention with his statement that "we are monitoring every single Muslim" on Slovak territory.[32]

The Roma people were the most important example supporting the claim that Slovakia would not be able to culturally integrate different immigrants. "After all, we are not able to integrate our own Roma citizens, of whom we have hundreds of thousands. How can we integrate people who are somewhere else with their traditions, religion, and way of life?"[33] This argument was quite popular in Internet discussion groups. The comparison of refugees and Roma people highlighted certain immigrant characteristics, namely their "backwardness" and inability to work, which are the main characteristics connected with Roma people in Slovak popular discourse. Immigrants were also marked as people about whom Slovak society knows nothing. This was important not only culturally but also from the security point of view.

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[30] "Fico po summite: Kvóty sa neriešili. Zhodli sme sa však, že musíme zabrániť ďalšiemu prílevu migrantov," *HN online,* September 23, 2015, http://dennik. hnonline.sk/svet/572531-fico -po-summite-kvoty-sa-neriesili-zhodli-sme-sa-vsak-ze-musime-zabranit-dalsiemu-prilevu -migrantov.

[31] ČTK, "Slovensko je kvôli 'kresťanským utečencom' pod paľbou kritiky," *O médiách*, August 21, 2015, http://www.omediach.com/tlac/item/7267-slovensko-je-kvoli-krestanskym-utecencom -pod-palbou-kritiky.

[32] TASR, "Fico: Bezpečnosť Slovákov je na prvom mieste. Monitorujeme aj tábor v Gabčíkove," *HN online,* November 15, 2015, http://dennik.hnonline.sk/ slovensko/554133-fico-bezpecnost-slovakov -je-na-prvom-mieste-monitorujeme-aj-tabor-v-gabcikove.

[33] SITA, "Fico na oslave SNP: Príliv utečencov je hrozba pre európsky spôsob života," *Pravda,* August 29, 2015, http://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/366080-fico-na-oslave-snp-priliv-utecencov -je-hrozba-pre-europsky-sposob-zivota-tradicie-a-hodnoty/.

This imaging, which portrays immigrants as substantially different and external to "us," springs from the ideal of a cohesive society where "we all know each other." According to Christian Joppke and Ewa Morawska, this ideal "rests on the premise of an already integrated, bounded society, which faces the risk of disintegration and unbinding due to immigration." According to them, the underlying picture is of a society composed of domestic individuals and groups (the antithesis of "immigrants"), who are "integrated" (normatively by consensus and organizationally by the state). "Postclassical sociology, even before the arrival of 'globalization,' has shown that such a society does not exist anywhere, except in the imagination of some (especially political) actors."[34] Contemporary culture is characterized by a plurality of lifestyles, so it is unclear into which of these cultures immigrants are actually supposed to integrate.

Something important in the discussion of "integrability or non-integrability" of immigrants into Slovakia is missing here. That is discussion about the role of the state, state policies and other domestic actors involved in the process of integration. Debate about what tools should be adopted to help the process along was completely missing. This lack resulted from the idea that Slovaks need do nothing and will not give up even a bit of comfort. It was also connected to the idea of zero-migration – if Slovakia admits no immigrants, no integration policy is needed. If Slovak politicians had discussed the active participation of the state in the integration process, they would have had to admit the possibility that at least a few immigrants would come. People might regard this as encouraging their arrival.

It is also important to analyze other collective identities involved in the process of integration. The self-definition of "us" is closely connected to the representation of the "others." In this case "us" is mainly connected to national, ethnic, cultural and religious characteristics that make "us" Slovaks. Only in few cases is this self-definition broadened to "us" as Europeans. On the contrary, in some cases Europeanism was discursively distinguished. Partly it was excluded into "otherness" as I will discuss later. The representation of the Slovak nation as "us" was associated with several characteristics in politicians' claims. Firstly, it was "our" Christianity, as already discussed above. Christianity was viewed as incompatible with the Muslim religion and thus with all immigrants of that faith. An interesting aspect of "us" was the ostensible parallel of Slovaks as refugees

[34] Christian Joppke and Ewa Morawska, "Integrating Immigrants in Liberal Nation-States: Policies and Practices," in *Toward Assimilation and Citizenship. Immigrants in Liberal Nation-States*, ed. Christian Joppke and Ewa Morawska (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 3.

fleeing the former communist regime. This parallel was used mainly by those who sought to refute the need to show solidarity towards refugees because Slovaks had benefited from foreign refugee policies in the past. Many times, it was claimed that "we," unlike current refugees, "have always accepted the rules of the state to which we had come with full respect for domestic norms."[35]

Another important, explicit or implicit, category was "small," in the sense of a small and poor nation that does not have enough resources to take care of immigrants and refugees and that has enough problems of its own. "Small" was also associated with having a weak voice in the European Union. Politicians claimed that the EU in Brussels and its bigger member states do not take sufficient account of the opinions and needs of smaller states like Slovakia. "The problem of migrants has escalated because the big countries solve it at the expense of the small ones," Fico said.[36] European identity was thus on some occasions considered as an "in-group," mainly when talking about common policies and attitudes towards guarding the external borders of the EU, as well as when talking about endangered European culture. On the other hand, on some occasions, Europeanism was constructed as something external to Slovakia – something that usurps power and competences naturally belonging to nation states, a big machinery unable to work effectively. Solutions proposed by the EU administration were mostly seen as something opposed to Slovak interests.

Another important self-definition is connected with a narrower scope of "us" – that is, "us" as those responsible and rational persons who will not permit the decay of Slovakia and its culture, nor allow the security of its citizens to fade. Politicians related this definition to themselves and to similar "right-thinking" people. On the other hand, their opponents were emphasizing the "irresponsibility" of openness and solidarity – because they ignore or obscure true danger. Those opponents were explicitly or implicitly marked as irresponsible or even dangerous to Slovakia. "If today another government were in power in Slovakia, thousands of migrants would have been brought here into our country," Fico said during a TV discussion. "Mr. President is not responsible for anything; thus, it is easy for him to talk like that. If something happened, he would be the first to criticize the government that we did not handle the problem."[37] Other opponents

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[35] SITA, "Krajiny majú právo."

[36] TASR, "Fico o utečeneckých kvótach: Zaútočil na veľké krajiny," *Pluska*, June 25, 2015, http://www.pluska.sk/spravy/z-domova/fico-uteceneckych-kvotach-zautocil-velke-krajiny.html.

[37] TASR, "Fico straší moslimskými getami: Iná vláda by sem navozila tisícky migrantov," *Denník N,* January 16, 2016, https://dennikn.sk/344942/fico-strasi-getami-ina-vlada-by-sem-navozila-tisicky-migrantov.

from NGOs and media were denigrated as "sanctimonious human-rights advocates."[38] "Let's not pretend we do not see the people's fear because the media and NGOs force us to not to."[39] Some other collectivities and individuals were included into the realm of the irresponsible – the EU itself, some European leaders (first among them Angela Merkel) and some countries like Greece and Italy that, according to Minister Kaliňák, "failed to do their homework" while Slovakia did its own very responsibly.[40]

To conclude, we can say that in that period migration became a politicized topic for the first time, actively used in the campaign by key political actors. Moreover, there was substantial interest among the media and the public (although the level of public involvement can be measured only partially and indirectly from discussions in the media and on the Internet – especially on social networks – and from shared personal experience). Comparing the level of interest dedicated to migration with that of the previous period, it seems like a sudden, intense, effusive interest (despite the fact that Slovakia was not directly stricken by the refugee crisis). The shift in the way the issue was framed was alarming – from institutionalized cautiousness towards immigrants, organized around the concept of risk, to emotionally-colored anti-immigration rhetoric used in an election campaign.

Immigrants as a Threat: Example of Moral Panic

As I have already stated, security discourse has been institutionalized in Slovakia (just as it has been in many other EU countries, albeit in different variants and usually with more significant political opposition to the security view). This means that practices based on the security view of migration have become part of the legal framework as well as of everyday dealings with immigrants and refugees. Viewing immigrants and refugees as a possible risk or threat to society is now widely accepted and an everyday reality in some specific sectors of Slovak society (the police, the academy, politicians, and bureaucrats).

On the other hand, migration was not such an issue of public concern that it became a major topic for politicians or the media before the outbreak of the

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[38] Miro Kern, "Keď Fico a Mečiar hovorili o mimovládkach: zahraničný kapitál, ľudskoprávni svätuškári (citáty)," *Denník N,* May 26, 2016, https://dennikn.sk/471500/ked-fico-meciar-hovorili-mimovladkach-zahranicny-kapital-ludskopravni-svatuskari-citaty.

[39] "Vystúpenie Roberta Fica."

[40] Interview for Radio Express, "Robert Kaliňák – Povinné kvóty na presídľovanie utečencov nepodporíme," YouTube video, 12:16, May 15, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TyxY5vDMMN4.

refugee crisis. The sudden interest in the topic was not caused by an actual influx of immigrants, but it increasingly influenced agenda-setting by some media and political analysts and campaigning connected to 2016 parliamentary election. As I have already explained in this paper, security discourse can be reproduced in different ways and at different intensities. In the period before the outbreak of the refugee crisis, security discourse manifested itself mainly through everyday practices and was addressed in connection with the concept of risk. After the outbreak of the refugee crisis it became a priority topic for some politicians (mainly the leaders of particular political parties) and as well for the media. The framing of a connection between security and migration has changed and the concept of threat has become more prominent. Politicians started to call for extraordinary measures to cope with the problem. This way of securitizing the issue was close to Wæver's conceptualization of securitization, while before the crisis, Bigo's conceptualization would have been more appropriate. Wæver's conceptualization, with its emphasis on declaration of an emergency situation by politicians, public, media and other actors, can be in fact be considered as close to a so-called moral panic. Stanley Cohen describes a situation of moral panic as follows: "A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved… or resorted to."[41]

Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda introduce several definitional criteria for the concept of moral panic.[42] First is *concern.* "There must be a heightened level of concern over the behavior (or supposed behavior) of a certain group or category and the consequences that the behavior presumably causes for the rest of the society."[43] Concern about migration in the studied period in Slovakia has been closely tied with the question of immigrants' behavior, or more precisely their supposed behavior, based on selected experiences with them in other European countries having large immigrant communities and in countries that have been significantly touched by refugee flows. Incidents such as the terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels and violent attacks on women in Cologne, Germany, were used as examples of behavior typical of a whole group. Although it was

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[41] Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (London: Routledge, 2002), 9.
[42] Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda, "Moral Panics: Culture, Politics, and Social Construction," *Annual Review of Sociology* 20 (1994): 149–71.
[43] Goode and Ben-Yehuda, "Moral Panics," 156–57.

sometimes admitted that not every immigrant or refugee behaves that way, it was emphasized that "you never know" who can be dangerous, and thus everyone in the group is suspect. Consequently, a risk was seen in every single immigrant entering the territory of Slovakia. Minister of Interior Kaliňák emphasized the impossibility of identifying the terrorists among the refugees. "He does not tell us anything. You don't know who he is. He can say, e.g., that he is 20 and in fact he is 40. For ten years he can be the most beautiful person in the world and then we will be surprised. These are gigantic risks."[44]

The heightened level of concern can be easily measured. Although I do not quantify the indicators here, one example could be an increased number of articles dedicated to the issue by the media. Examination of the period before March 2015 and period from April 2015 until the election in March 2016 would no doubt show a huge difference. Another indicator could be the number of politicians' speeches dedicated to the topic. Over the studied period, the politicians showed nearly zero interest at the start, but later you can hardly find a speech, press conference, or discussion where, for example, Prime Minister Fico did not mention migration and problems connected to it.[45] The indicators also show a decline in concern after the election, although it did remain bigger than before the refugee crisis hit. Other relevant indicators showing the level of concern could be activity by action groups (such as anti-immigration demonstrations) that previously were either not seen at all, or did not focus exclusively on migration. Likewise, the interest of the people can be observed from social networks like Facebook and in various on-line discussions.

The second indicator, according to Goode and Ben-Yehuda, is *hostility*.[46] An increased level of hostility is developed towards the category of people seen as engaging in threatening behavior. In Slovakia, fortunately, hostility has not manifested itself in a massively violent way, although a number of small incidents have taken place. For example, a group of anti-immigration demonstrators threw stones at a Muslim family (who were not immigrants but just attending the graduation ceremony of their son) and shouted "go home," an incident that was

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[44] Monika Tódová and Juraj Čokyna, "Kiska o utečencoch: Tým, čo ide o život, by sme mali pomôcť," *Denník N*, June 11, 2015, https://dennikn.sk/156931/kiska-o-utecencoch-tym-co-ide-o-zivot-sme-mali-pomoct.

[45] Viera Žúborová, "Politika dvoch tvárí: vládny migračný diskurz," in *Interpolis 16. Zborník vedeckých prác, medzinárodná vedecká konferencia doktorandov a mladých vedeckých pracovníkov, Banská Bystrica, 10. 11. 2016*, eds. Barbora Kollárová, Dominika Cevárová, Martin Čapliar a Vladimír Muller (Banská Bystrica: Fakulta politických vied a medzinárodných vzťahov, 2016), 120–28.

[46] Goode and Ben-Yehuda, "Moral Panics," 157.

recorded on video and uploaded to the Internet.[47] Hostility, however, does not only mean sudden expressions of disgust or rejection. It can also be found in the creation of distance and a more radicalized dichotomization between "them" and "us," including generating stereotypical "folk devils" on the one hand and "folk heroes" on the other. As I have already showed in this paper, this dichotomization was very significant during the analyzed period.

The third definition criterion advanced by Goode and Ben-Yehuda is *consensus*.[48] They claim there must be a certain minimum level of agreement in society as a whole or in designated segments of society that the threat posed is real, serious, and attributable to the behavior or wrongdoing of group members. This sentiment must be fairly widespread, although the proportion of the population that feels this way need not make up a majority. In the case of Slovakia, a consensus appeared not only among the public, but quite importantly, also among politicians and political parties. The truth is that the Slovak political elites in general agreed with the basic attitudes of Slovaks towards the problem and its solution, or perhaps toward what should not be its solution. In September 2015, the Slovak parliament adopted a resolution rejecting the system of redistributing refugees proposed by the European Commission. The resolution was all but unanimously supported by 115 of the 119 members of the parliament present for the vote. The voices emphasizing anything other than the security view, mainly those of the Slovak President, Andrej Kiska, the leader of the minority party *Most-Híd*, Béla Bugár, and of Monika Flašíková Beňová, a Member of the European Parliament for the party Smer-SD, were much weaker than the others. Proving the extent of a consensus among the Slovak public is more difficult; nevertheless, we can use the results of certain opinion polls showing that the majority of Slovaks are rather cautious about immigrants and agree with the strict immigration policy of the government.[49]

Disproportionality is the fourth criterion. It is connected with exaggerations that overestimate the scope of the problem. The overestimation often results from the generation and dissemination of numbers and evidence that are imprecise or that are misinterpreted. Disproportionality is also connected to situations

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[47] "Arabská rodina, ktorú napadli extrémisti, prišla na Slovensko synovi na promócie," *Pravda*, June 23, 2015, http://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/359421-arabska-rodina-ktoru-napadli-extremisti -prisla-na-slovensko-synovi-na-promocie.

[48] Goode and Ben-Yehuda, "Moral Panics," 157.

[49] See e.g. "PRIESKUM: Prijmeme utečencov za svojich? Takýto je postoj Slovákov," *Pluska,* September 16, 2015, http://www.pluska.sk/spravy/z-domova/prieskum-prijmeme-utecencov -za-svojich-takyto-je-postoj-slovakov.html.

where the traits (e.g. the behavior) of one group are treated differently than the same traits in another group. A very good example of this is the case of criminality among immigrants. Many studies in different countries have shown that the crime rate among immigrants (especially asylum seekers) usually does not exceed the rate among the domestic population.[50] Still, violent crimes committed by immigrants call forth more attention than those committed by the domestic population and are understood to be general features of the behavior of the whole group.

In the Slovak case, disproportionality can be seen in alarming reports about the number of immigrants Slovakia was supposed to receive according to the proposed EU quota system. Fico described it as "one whole village," suggesting that the number was too large without any real argumentation for why the proposed number (1502 asylum seekers in the first year) is too large for Slovak capacities for integration. The intensity of feeling around the quota issue was no doubt increased by the arrival of a new player on the political scene. The previously marginal far-right party ĽSNS, with its leader, Marian Kotleba, became significant when Kotleba won election to be the head of the Banská Bystrica region in 2013. His rhetoric was very radical, accusing other politicians of being traitors to the national interest. Politicians consciously or unconsciously tried to reassure the public that they were resolute and decisive on the issue of migration. Consequently, the answer to the entrance of an extremist party onto the political stage has been the radicalization of mainstream politics.

The fifth criterion of moral panic is *volatility*. Moral panic erupts fairly suddenly (often remaining latent for long periods of time and reappearing from time to time) and then, nearly as suddenly, subsides.[51] To describe moral panic as volatile and short-lived does not imply that it does not have structural or historical antecedents. In Slovakia, structural preconditions were in fact formed by institutionalized security discourse, as described above. Historical antecedents for moral panic can be seen in various politicians' more or less successful use of enemy-building strategies in Slovak public discourse, related to Slovakia's Hungarian, Roma and sexual minorities. Interest in the topic of migration arose

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[50] See for example Brian Bell, Francesco Fasani, and Stephen Machin, "Crime and Immigration: Evidence from Large Immigrant Waves," *Review of Economics and Statistics* 95, No. 4 (October 2013): 1278–90; and Milo Bianchi, Paolo Buonanno, and Paolo Pinotti, "Do immigrants cause crime?" *Journal of the European Economic Association* 10, No. 6 (December 2012): 1318–47. See also "Kriminalita a migrácia v grafoch – mali by ste sa báť svojho suseda cudzinca?" *Denník N*, January 15, 2017, https://dennikn.sk/634945/kriminalita-a-migracia-v-grafoch-mali-by-ste-sa-bat-svojho-suseda-cudzinca/.

[51] Goode and Ben-Yehuda, "Moral Panics," 158.

suddenly, then significantly decreased after the elections in 2016, although it remains bigger than before the outbreak of the refugee crisis. Periods of moral panic, even though they subside after a period of time, usually leave marks on a society, and elements of panic may even become institutionalized.[52] The situation in Slovakia after the outbreak of the refugee crisis can be described as being very close to a moral panic. In the analysis above, I have focused on domestic factors, but of course further attention should be given to the European and global contexts, which I do not discuss here. Episodes of moral panic have occurred elsewhere in Europe and the world on the national and the local level.[53]

The concept of moral panic highlights certain important aspects of the political debate about migration and the refugee crisis in the period under study. In order at least to indicate possible directions of interpretation of the causes for the eruption of a moral panic, I will apply three models of moral panic proposed by Goode and Ben-Yehuda. Their theory is based on a typology that combines two relevant dimensions. The first dimension is that of morality vs. interest. This dimension addresses the question of motive: do concern and activism coalesce around a given issue because of a world-view, an ideology, or morality – that is, because of deeply and genuinely felt attitudes and sentiments – or because certain actors stand to gain something of value – a job, power, resources, respectability, wealth, recognition – if they can convince others to become concerned about that issue. And second, are there many actors who are responsible for the creation and maintenance of a panic, or just a few? Does a panic start from the bottom and progress upward, or does it operate from the top-down? Or does a panic begin not from the elite at the top nor from the undifferentiated general public but rather in the middle of a society's status, power, and wealth hierarchy, with representatives and leaders of specific middle-level organizations, agencies, groups, institutions, or associations?[54]

Goode and Ben-Yehuda propose three explanations applying relevant combinations of these dimensions. First is *the grassroots model*. The grassroots model argues that panics originate with the general public. Concern about a particular threat in this case is a widespread, genuinely felt concern. Thus, even if

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[52] Currently (December 2016) amendments to the law on registration of churches have increased the number of members needed by a church for official registration by the state from 20.000 to 50.000. The official reason given was to prevent speculative registrations, but we believe that one of the important motives was to prevent Muslim groups from registering officially.

[53] See e.g. Greg Martin, "Stop the boats! Moral Panic in Australia over Asylum Seekers," *Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 29, No. 2 (February 2015): 304–22; and Sarah Adjekum, "Violence in any Other Name" (Master thesis, McMaster University 2016).

[54] Goode and Ben-Yehuda, "Moral Panics," 159.

politicians or the media seem to originate or "stir-up" concern, in reality, that concern must have been latent in the public to begin with. Politicians and the media cannot fabricate concern where none exists initially. A panic is simply the outward manifestation of what already exists in more covert form. Politicians give speeches and propose laws they already know will appeal to their constituency, whose views they have already sounded out, and the media broadcasts stories that their representatives know the public is likely to find interesting or troubling.[55]

In Slovakia, popular attitudes towards migration, immigrants and refugees were cautious and rather negative long before the outbreak of the refugee crisis.[56] It is very probable that politicians (such as Fico) knew that. As well as publicly available opinion polls, they have their own polls and sources of information that focus on their existing constituencies and possible new voters. Using this information, they can decide which political strategy is best for them.

The data shows that actual and possible voters for Smer-SD have been shifting from very intersectional (i.e., including all demographic categories) in the first years after the formation of the party and that nowadays, older voters and the inhabitants of small towns and rural areas predominate.[57] The latter categories of voter are often people with few experiences with immigrants and foreigners. They often hold low socio-economic status and low education levels. These are group characteristics which carry a (statistically) high possibility of rejecting immigrants and feeling significant social distance from foreigners. Thus, they are a group of voters that is possibly interesting to the far right. From this point of view, we cannot claim that Fico, in deciding to use anti-immigration rhetoric during the election campaign, created xenophobia among Slovak citizens. His political decision was rather based on good reason to believe this strategy would be successful for his party. However, that is not to say he did not significantly exacerbate xenophobia and anti-immigrant attitudes. He certainly did, not only during the refugee crisis but also previously, with some of his political steps and statements. It is nonetheless clear that there is receptivity to this kind of politics in Slovakia. Both politicians and the public share a negative attitude towards immigrants.

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[55] Ibid., 161.

[56] See e.g. Michal Vašečka, *Postoje verejnosti k cudzincom a zahraničnej migrácii v Slovenskej republike*. (Bratislava: IOM, 2009).

[57] Oľga Gyarfášová and Tomáš Slosiarik, *Voľby do NR SR 2016: Čo charakterizovalo voličov*, Working Papers in Sociology 1 (Bratislava: Sociologický ústav SAV, 2016), 2–11, http://www.sociologia .sav.sk/pdf/Working_Papers_in_Sociology_012016.pdf.

At the same time, to emphasize that Fico's decision (or that of any other politician) to use anti-immigration campaign rhetoric is pragmatic is not to say that his genuine opinions are in fact the opposite. It may have partially come from a personal attitude and predisposition to perceive certain political questions in a certain way. Politicians emerge from the population and more or less stay in interaction with the public. They thus share similar attitudes and values, although they are forced to act pragmatically in order to be re-elected. In the case of immigration, however, noting that politicians' interest in the topic erupted in the pre-election period and subsided after the election, their concrete interest in winning that election can be considered to be their basic motivation for participation in such a massive way in the creation of a moral panic.

The second theory is *the elite-engineered* model. This theory sees a moral panic as the result of a small and powerful group of people, or a set of such groups, that deliberately and consciously undertakes a campaign to generate and sustain fear, concern, and panic on the part of the public about an issue they consciously recognize is not terribly harmful to the society as a whole. Typically, this campaign is intended to divert attention away from real problems in society, whose genuine solution would threaten or undermine the interests of the elite.[58] This thesis is also worth consideration with regard to Slovakia. Shortly before the refugee crisis, Fico lost a presidential election to Slovakia's current president, Andrej Kiska. We could mention problems Fico had during the election campaign, namely the protests of teachers and nurses who were seeking a wage increase. We can say that the resonance of the immigration issue with the public might have been considered by Fico as coming in handy and that it may have enabled him to renew his image as a defender of the Slovak nation against threats from abroad. For Fico, and certainly for other politicians as well, this was an occasion to show their competence by proposing solutions for a relatively new problem.

The third theory is *the interest group* theory. The central question posed by the interest group approach is *cui bono?* – to whose benefit? Who profits? Who wins if a given situation is recognized as a threat to society? At first sight this model is not very relevant to the Slovak situation. It would fit another issue better, which is the referendum on banning same-sex marriages, or "referendum on the family," that took place in Slovakia in 2015. That referendum was promoted

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[58] Craig Renarman and Harry G. Levin, "The crack atack: politics and media in America's latest drug scare," in *Images of Issues: Typifying Contemporary Social Problems*, ed. Joel Best (New York: Aldine, 1989), 115–37, quoted in Goode and Ben-Yehuda, "Moral Panics," 164.

by conservative segments of society in order to prevent the establishment of the equality of homosexual relationships with traditional marriage.[59]

In the case of immigration, it is hard to accuse any interest group of exacerbating moral panic in order to profit from it. However, we can think about the above-mentioned technocratic dimension of securitization in this regard. There are certain segments of society that act in the area of security whose prestige and finances can be positively influenced by an outbreak of moral panic concerning immigration. That is not to say they were the principal agents of moral panic in this case. However, by not questioning whether panic was justified, they directly or indirectly supported that outcome. A good symbolic example was the situation on June 20, 2015. That day, the annual Globsec Conference took place in Bratislava.[60] An anti-immigrant demonstration promoted mainly by the far right and extremist forces took place at the same time. Both events were completely separate and the proponents and participants of each event distanced themselves from the other group. However, the import of both events, as read by the people, was very similar: immigrants and terrorism are huge security threats. Although they were said in different words to different audiences, very similar ideas were expressed by participants from both events and were presented on the evening TV news.[61] In a sense, security professionals and security experts can be understood as an interest group that profits from moral panic around immigration. Even though they may have distanced themselves from panic, they did not contradict the basic premises that directly or indirectly contributed to it.

To conclude, the arguments for the *elite-engineered* model are the strongest in the case of the moral panic that accompanied the Slovak response to the 2015 refugee crisis. The fact that it coincided with the pre-election period suggests that the temptation to use the immigration question for political purposes was strong, and probably much stronger than the "naturally" felt concern or fear of the population. At the very least we can plausibly argue that this concern was significantly elevated by politicians' characterizations of events. A central role here can be attributed to mutual interaction between politicians and the

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[59] Michal Smrek, "The Failed Slovak Referendum On 'Family': Voters' Apathy and Minority Rights in Central Europe," *Baltic Worlds*, March 4, 2015.

[60] International conference that takes place in Bratislava since 2005 dedicated to the issues of security that has become in the last years attended by very important guests like current or former heads of states.

[61] "Správy RTVS," online video, June 20, 2015, https://www.rtvs.sk/televizia/archiv/11580/68387; TASR, "O migrácii hovoril Kaliňák s americkým exministrom pre bezpečnosť," *Sme*, June 19, 2015, https://domov.sme.sk/c/7869194/o-migracii-hovoril-kalinak-s-americkym-exministrom-pre-bezpecnost.html.

public (with the politicians displaying stronger and quicker reactions), together with the ongoing activities of some interest groups involved in the process, all of which contributed directly or indirectly to the prominence of the issue. It is however necessary to remind that in this paper I have focused on domestic factors and did not study the external factors that are important for complete analysis of the topic.

Conclusion

The dominance of security discourse in Slovakia with regard to immigrants and refugees is based on the prioritization of national security interests and security measures in the different migration policies and administrative procedures devised to deal with migration and refugee issues. It is taken for granted that immigrants represent a risk to Slovakia's domestic society. As a result, the main policies and administrative procedures concerning migrants' stay on Slovak territory are restrictive. Institutionalized securitization based on the concept of risk manifests itself in everyday practices towards immigrants and has been typical of Slovak migration policy from the beginning of the studied period in 2004. On the other hand, until the outbreak of the refugee crisis in 2015, migration was a marginal issue for politicians, the public and the media. The "enemy-seeking" strategies adopted by some politicians with regard to immigrants and refugees were outgrowths of existing policies for dealing with certain demographic categories, such as Roma people, the Hungarian minority and sexual minorities.

However, these two preconditions, institutionalized security discourse and the success of enemy-building strategies towards autochthonic minorities, were important to the outbreak of moral panic around a possible "influx" of immigrants and refugees to Slovakia in 2015. The broad consensus on the political scene that migration is first of all a security issue allowed politicians to believe that their opponents would not significantly criticize their anti-immigration rhetoric. Their previously successful use of securitization strategies towards autochthonic minorities allowed them to think that if such opposing views did appear, they could easily be dismissed as unpatriotic.

Anti-immigration rhetoric became an integral part of the 2016 parliamentary election campaign. The leaders of the relevant mainstream political parties, mainly Smer-SD and SaS, adopted anti-immigration rhetoric typical of the far right. They actively tried to instill a sense of danger among the public and to persuade voters that they were best able to protect the nation from the threat. A perceived need for immediate action became obvious not only in the rhetoric,

but also in certain measures adopted by the Slovak government. The Slovak parliament, for example, ratified counter-terrorism legislation that included extending the period of detention allowed for persons suspected of terrorism. The government, for its part, convened its Security Council, increased the number of police officers, and prepared mobile barrier fencing for a possible big wave of immigrants at the borders. All these measures were presented as a response to what was going on in other European states and as a preventative against similar incidents taking place in Slovakia. However, the intensity of the political activities aimed at persuading the public and the media indicate the extreme politicization of the issue. Thus we can say that the primary agents of moral panic in this case were (some) Slovak politicians.

Migrants were stigmatized in politicians' statements as "others" in a significant sense – as people who endanger ordinary Slovaks with their different culture and different (read violent) behavior. Moreover, those Slovaks who declared their solidarity and willingness to help immigrants and refugees were also subjected to "othering" themselves, branding them as "irrational," "irresponsible," and even "dangerous." In this way, new discursive borderlines were drawn between Slovak citizens – between those who are only talkers, "sanctimonious human-rights activists," and intellectuals on the one hand and on the other hand, real hard-working Slovaks who have no time to think about human rights because they are striving for their "daily piece of bread." The politicians, consciously or unconsciously, helped to strengthen the symbolic barriers. Moreover, the politicians' statements indicated that they do not consider migration to be a natural process that concerns the entire nation and will as a matter of course concern Slovakia even more in the future. When politicians refuse to admit that fact, they can avoid preparing adequate policies, measures and a social climate of integration, which are all important preconditions for the peaceful and safe coexistence of different groups in liberal democratic societies.