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EUROPEAN MIGRATION CRISIS: POSITIONS, POLARIZATION AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT OF SLOVAK POLITICAL PARTIES

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ABSTRACT

This paper studies the different positions and the polarization among Slovak political elites due to the European migration crisis and the Union's migration policy. The inability of collective action at the supranational level is first grounded at the national level. From this basis, the authors differentiate the various standpoints of the selected political leaders and parties towards the current migration wave. Based on this cleavage, we seek to demonstrate

the patterns of modern day political party leadership in Slovakia and, secondly, to compare the political response and agendas across the Slovak party system.

KEYWORDS

Migration, crisis, European Union, Slovak party system, political leadership

INTRODUCTION

Following the massive refugee influx from Syria, Africa, Afghanistan, Iraq and other countries across the Mediterranean Sea who seek shelter and asylum in the European Union, the political leaders of the European Union (EU) continued to struggle to reach a consensus on how to cope with the new situation and refugees' resettlement. This issue reached its peak during the summer months of 2015 where there was a visible interest by political leaders both on the national and international level to resolve the migration crisis. Nowadays, the stability and integrity of the EU is being tested, questioned mostly from the different positions of the nation states as well as by the EU political leadership. Additionally, political elites are also polarized at the national level. This article presents the case study of Slovakia to demonstrate the different positions and attitudes of parties and their leaders toward the migration crisis. The political polarization and inability of collective action has also helped to account for some of the negative outcomes of the crisis, namely, the rise of nationalism and extremism in particular member states, economic recession and stagnation, the fear of terrorism, and limitations or failures of essential EU politics such as Common Foreign and Security Policy or the Schengen Agreement. We can also observe the crisis of fundamental values which have essential meaning to EU.¹

In this article we discuss the problems of the migration crisis that escalated from 2014 through 2015 onwards in relation to the case study of political party leadership in Slovakia. The focus here is to demonstrate and capture various standpoints of political party leadership across the Slovak party system in relation to migration crisis management and the occurrence of the most visible topics related to EU migration. These include domains such as national protection, securitization discourse, threats of terrorism and the refugee crisis. The structure of the article reflects the theoretical framework of migration policy and its implications in the Slovak Republic, followed by the contextual analysis of the different positions and resolutions of political leaders to the crisis scenario. We have developed the categorization of the collected data in order to create a division scheme and tabulate the data. The sources of data originate between May and October 2015, and come from nation-wide media reports and resolutions as well as party web pages and leaders' blogs, personal pages, and press conferences. The selection of sources to capture the party positions covers mainly the official press agencies in Slovakia such as SITA and TASR. We use a combined methodological approach. The

¹ Arkadiusz Modrzejewski, "The European Union and crisis of values"; in: Andrei Taranu, ed., *Governing for the Future: Interdisciplinary Perspectives for a Sustainable World* (Bologna: MEDIMOND, 2016).

semi-quantitative part consists of the media visibility of the relevant political parties in Slovakia with regard to their agenda and expressions related to the migration crisis. The qualitative analysis interprets the detailed political statements on the public discourses of securitization, national protection, terrorism, and refugees as reported by the parties, especially by party leaders. From the research perspective, we consider migration into the EU, migration policy of the Slovak Republic and subsequent crisis management as the independent variables in comparison to different approaches and strategies used by the parties and their leaders. We demonstrate the visible differences between the legal normative norm and the practice of the Slovak political parties and the party leadership in their rhetoric and public discourse.

1. MIGRATION POLICY IN SLOVAKIA AND THE EU MEMBERSHIP CONTEXT

From the legal point of view the official document *Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic until 2020*, which determines the context of immigration and integration of foreigners in Slovakia, was adopted as a resolution of the Slovak Government in 2011. The objective of the migration policy is in line with the national interests of the Slovak Republic to create appropriate conditions particularly in the field of legal migration, with regard to the priorities, needs and reception capacities toward migrants, including their integration into society, to enhance the effectiveness of border controls for the movement of persons and the fight against illegal migration, contributing to adoption of the common European asylum system, to participate in building a global partnership with countries of origin and of transit to encourage the synergy between migration and development, thus contributing to improving the quality of citizens' lives in the Slovak Republic. The specific formulation of the migration doctrine is dedicated to EU membership:

In pursuing the objectives of migration policy the mutatis mutandis principle and active participation in the European Union's border control shall be applied. Similarly, this is valid for immigration and asylum, constitutionality and legality, sovereignty, control of migration, human rights and freedoms, flexibility and non-discrimination.²

The EU membership context of migration policy is visible in the institutional framework and legal bindings for Slovakia, and ushering from the principle of membership and the determination and legislative framework of the European

² *Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the year 2020*, The Government of the Slovak Republic Resolution No. 574 (August 31, 2011) // <http://www.minv.sk/?zamer-migracnej-politiky-slovenskej-republiky&subor=153759>.

Union itself. In EU practice, immigration and asylum represent a dynamic agenda together with the demanding and growing need of its harmonization. Since 1999 we have witnessed the political agenda and common policymaking in the area of immigration and asylum, which has its basis in the Common European Asylum System and in further revisions and amendments.³ The European Union has recently adopted several new strategic documents that determine its politics in this area which are also binding for Slovakia in formulating migration policy and its implementation. Specifically, these documents include Treaty on the European Union, European Pact on Immigration and Asylum, The Stockholm Programme, and the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility.⁴

The Slovak commitment to adopt and formulate a migration policy based on the above-mentioned principles and agreements seems to have failed. Alexandra Malangone, a lawyer and researcher of UNHCR implementing partner in Slovakian NGO Human Rights League points out that there is a major discrepancy between the official policy and political practice in Slovakia regarding the migration crisis. She argues that according to the most recent Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX 2015)

Slovakia only minimally applies the EU's basic standards to the integration of foreigners in the country. It also both points to the insufficient monitoring and evaluation of policies that have an impact on the integration of foreigners, and to missing research about immigrants' needs and problems.⁵

This may be in contrast with the intentions and design of the migration policy in Slovakia which, as published, tries to provide:

- protection of national interests of the Slovak Republic and the realization of objectives and priorities in the field of migration as well as the procedure for their assurance on the side of the various actors involved in the implementation of migration policy,
- conditions of human, material and financial resources and the coordination of competent institutions in this field,
- active participation of the Slovak Republic for law-making of the European Communities and the European Union in the field of migration,
- further harmonization of the laws of the Slovak Republic to European Communities and European Union in the field of migration,

³ No author named, "Migration and home affairs" (2015) // http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum/index_en.htm.

⁴ *Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the year 2020*, *supra* note 2.

⁵ Alexandra Malangone, "Slovak Migration Policy Poisoned by Hypocrisy," *Visegrad Revue* (June 2015) // <http://visegradrevue.eu/slovak-migration-policy-poisoned-by-hypocrisy/>.

- development of the institutional framework necessary for the implementation of policies in this area.⁶

At the same time, Slovakia applies the sovereignty principle: the Slovak Republic guarantees the right to protect their national interests and to regulate migration, i.e. the reception, stay and return of foreigners with regard to maintaining social stability, protecting traditional ways of life, on the basis of economic and social opportunities of the Slovak Republic, and respecting the commitments made by its obligations under international treaties and documents, and creating conditions for intensifying the fight against illegal migration and terrorism. Secondly, the principle of legality is based on respect for the Slovak Constitution, international treaties and documents, the rights of the European Communities and the European Union and Slovak legislation with emphasis on guaranteeing the observance and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.⁷

Malangone's criticism continues with regard to the objectives and principles of the Slovak migration policy as stated in the official documents, since

Slovakia was one of the last EU Member States to adopt a concept of integration in 2009 and eventually a policy in 2014. The country has not made any major progress in promoting integration, other than strengthening anti-discrimination laws, since 2007. Slovakia's integration policies raise major doubts about their effectiveness. Integration is weak from the moments the immigrants arrive, with even weaker rights for labor migrants and reuniting families.⁸

This is in line with the experts' analysis from 2011 that Slovak migration and integration policy is lagging and weak compared to other EU Member States and very restrictive and ineffective. According to their recommendation, Slovakia ought to streamline these policies before any crisis scenario. As interpreted by policy specialist Martina Sekulová, "Slovakia does not possess clearly defined migration doctrine and official state position lacks, too." There is also a mood of negativity among ordinary citizens in Slovakia regarding the views towards migrants, considering them a societal threat compared to the possible need for the migrants in the labour market. Although Slovakia might have become a more attractive destination since it joined the EU, politicians tend not to pay attention to such issues. This truth is confirmed by the argument that since 2004 the number of migrants in Slovakia has tripled and comprises around 1% of the total population (Ibid). Based upon the MIPEX results on the migration situation in Slovakia, the

⁶ Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, *Migračná politika* (2008) // <http://www.minv.sk/?zamer-migracnej-politiky-slovenskej-republiky>.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Alexandra Malangone, *supra* note 5.

implementation of integration of migrants in Slovakia represents a long-term marginalized and neglected area.⁹ A current overall assessment of MIPEX results shows that the existing integration policy is moderately unfavorable and Slovakia lags in reforms and development behind its Central European neighbours such as the Czech Republic and Poland. The study also points to inadequate monitoring and policy evaluation with impact on the integration of foreigners, the lack of research of the needs and problems of this target group in the different study areas. According to the MIPEX results, a wide and deliberative discretion of state administration and civil servants in issues related to application of integration policy is considered a serious problem in Slovakia.

According to Ministry of Interior documents, the Slovak Republic's full support of all activities aims at the adoption of a Common Asylum System of the European Union, making use of the best experience of individual member states; this system respects, at the same time, the right of each member state to decide independently on the terms and conditions of provision of international protection to aliens. Therefore, the migration policy of the Slovak Republic complies with the traditional pillars of the asylum policy and, at the same time, it also supports new forms of provision of protection in reaction to new initiatives of the international community.¹⁰ From the legislative framework, it is rather clear that Slovak migration policy lacks substantial measures, such as the real provisions for asylum seekers from the perspective of labour market, citizenship issues, healthcare and education. The migration policy is thus constructed to emphasize the national interests and principles of country sovereignty, while preserving the legal status of common European framework de jure.

2. THE CONTEXT OF POLITICAL PARTIES AND LEADERSHIP IN SLOVAKIA

Leadership and its major domains has been part of many academic studies in the field of politics, history, management and other research disciplines. The majority of current bibliographical data and political leadership studies base political leadership on individuals, strong leaders in the historical past and usually stress the situation from western liberal types of democratic experience. Barbara Kellerman¹¹ and Jean Blondel¹² provide rather comprehensive analysis of the principles of

⁹ Martina Sekulová and Oľga Gyárfášová, "MIPEX 2015: Slovensko v integračných politikách zaostáva," *Tlačová správa IVO* (Bratislava, 2015) // <http://www.ivo.sk/7702/sk/aktuality/mipex-2015-slovensko-v-integracnych-politikach-zaostava>.

¹⁰ *Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the year 2020*, supra note 2.

¹¹ Barbara Kellerman, *Political Leadership: A Source Book* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986).

¹² Jean Blondel, *Political leadership: Towards a General Analysis* (London & Beverly Hills: SAGE, 1987).

political leadership and grounded the major theories related to the political leadership which is great and influential for further research. In spite of former developments and observation in the field of political leadership, these address an earlier time period, specifically the consequences of World War II, which introduced two specific non-democratic regimes structured around strong political, totalitarian leadership.¹³ He argues that leadership is an interrelated concept between the leader and the followers in a specific context. Furthermore, he offers a typology in leadership studies:

- Leadership as a social status – position,
- Leadership in types of social structures,
- Leadership in organizational function and institutional position,
- Leadership as personality type.¹⁴

This empirical typology stems from Max Weber's principal understanding of political leadership viewed as a traditional rule: "the authority of the eternal past, of custom, hallowed by the fact that it has held sway from time immemorial and by a habitual predisposition to preserve it."¹⁵ He then introduces the concept: the authority of the exceptional, personal gift of grace, charisma, entire personal devotion to and personal trust in, revelations, heroism, and other qualities of leadership in an individual.

These concepts are structured around three kinds of authority and legitimacy of political leadership: legal, charismatic and traditional. Weber goes beyond the normative typology since he also distinguishes the transactional and transformational environments in which the leaders usually may act.¹⁶ According to him leaders derive their legitimacy based on situations, which means that charismatic leadership may be carried out during transformational circumstances such as in the later cases of the post-Soviet countries which are typically known through societal and political revolutions and a huge demand on the strong political and effective leadership. However, the transactional leadership which is typical for ordinary circumstances may be carried out on the basis of a legal authority as devoted through frequent and democratic elections or the social order. Although, he admitted that the three types of legitimacy are not frequently found in real functioning societies but they may occur in combinations.¹⁷ MacGregor Burns goes even further in complicating the prevailing robust theories and arguments related

¹³ Lester G. Seligman, "The Study of Political Leadership," *The American Political Science Review* 44:4 (1950).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*; Ulrika Möller and Isabell Shierenbeck, "Hidden Treasure or Sinking Ship? Diagnosing the Study of Political Leadership," *QoG WORKING PAPER SERIES 2009:27* (Göteborg, The Quality of Government Institute): 13–14 // http://qog.pol.gu.se/digitalAssets/1350/1350722_2009_27_moller_shierenbeck.pdf.

¹⁵ Max Weber, *Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 311.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*; Ulrika Möller and Isabell Shierenbeck, *supra* note 14.

¹⁷ Max Weber, *supra* note 15.

to the wide scope of understanding the principles and factors of political leadership.¹⁸ In his *Leadership*, Burns introduces a model and approach to distinguish the context of leadership itself and political leaders. According to him, leaders shall be understood as individuals with characteristics and features whilst leadership ought to be used as a framework to study and analyze social behavior and changes. He considers as important that relation between leadership and leaders is best illustrated through followers, i.e. there is no political leadership without those who follow.

Our major assumption is based on the current trends of political leadership in a national perspective. Modern-day governance is usually structured along the lines of leadership roles and elitism from the perspective of presidential studies, leaders of government such as prime ministers and, ultimately, the political party leaders. The role of political leaders on the party level is best illustrated through the media visibility of the parties and the influence that leaders have over their voters and supporters. Moreover, the political elites represented across the party system usually create and shape the political will of the people and legitimate their authority through the essence of party leadership. That said, party leaders often play the major role of political decision-making and the party affiliation or polarization is best interpreted through the personality of its leader. In other words, party leaders enjoy the most visibility in public media and thus create the complete political image in society as well as to other political parties and movements.¹⁹ Therefore, the party leadership dominates during crisis management as well as throughout the electoral campaigning in relation to the followers – voters but also the mass media. Žúborová states that leaders become speakers of the government coalition or opposition, owing especially to the party political position. The modern trends of medialization have increased in Slovakia over the last decade, intensifying within the last few years. Currently, the feature of political personalization is vivid and dominant across the Slovak party system. As interpreted by McAllister, this feature is typical for Slovak political environment since the governments are typically called according to the current administration and Prime Minister name, compared to the political parties which form the government coalition.²⁰ This phenomenon focuses on the candidates or political leaders instead of political parties as institutionally based organizations. Maciej Hartliński concurs that “party

¹⁸ James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Perennial, 1978).

¹⁹ Viera Žúborová, “Prejavy personalizácie líderstva: perspektívy slovenských straníckych lídrov vo vzťahu k medializácii,” *Central European Political Studies Review* 13:4 (2011).

²⁰ Ian Mcallister, “The Personalization of Politics”; in: Russel J. Dalton and Hans-Dieter Klingemann, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

leadership as a type of political leadership is one of the few and also proportionally less explored issues."²¹

The political ideology of Slovak political parties does not always play a major role in conflict management. This argument is quite relevant when a crisis scenario occurs and party leaders claim different positions that would be expected from the party platform. An example may be demonstrated through major party Smer-SD. Ideologically it stems from the left wing socialist party family, but the leaders strongly refuse solidarity with migrants that is demonstrated mainly through the definite rejection of quota system and migrants' distribution. In conflict management, the party leadership stands for typically right wing solutions, thus the social aspect of the party is substituted with the national protection and interest. Such arguments are more relevant to Slovak National Party (SNS) which leaders suggest the principles of national security and refuse the migrants' allocation owing to their national party ideology. In the case of the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), the party leadership agrees with the conservative and Christian-democratic values which were demonstrated in their migration crisis position through solidarity with migrants and aspects of Christians' genocide in the Middle East. Such solidarity was visibly expressed in the party leadership of Sieť (Net) with the family and state appeal. However, Peoples' Party – Our Slovakia (LSNS) as ideologically far right political party, provides quite uniform and simple solutions using arguments against migrants, European institutions and political system development itself. The party used rather populist rhetoric with terms such as parasites, labor migrants and general negative positions to individuals and groups of different ethnic origin. Perhaps the most tolerant approach is expressed in the leadership of Most-Híd (Bridge), a party with nationally and linguistically mixed political representation, appealing to the need of a European model of problem management. The liberal platform Freedom and Solidarity (SAS), despite its name, is predominantly against the applied principles of solidarity with migrants, and the party leadership considers the migration influx to be an economic and social threat to the EU. The non-uniform approach may be demonstrated in the case of Ordinary People and Independent Personalities (OLANO), since there is solidarity with migrants expressed at first but a threat from labor migrants is also introduced, both identically through party leadership. Thus, ideology plays only a limited role in conflict management of the migration crisis and party leadership seems to be the crucial point of party image management and public visibility.

²¹ Maciej Hartliński, "Contemporary 'Prince.' Influence, the Position and Authority of Party Leaders," *South-East European Journal of Political Science* 1:4 (2013): 135.

3. EUROPEAN MIGRATION CRISIS AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SLOVAK POLITICAL PARTIES

This part of the paper focuses on the aspects related to the different patterns of political approaches and resolutions in response to the growing numbers of refugees which also influenced the national policy making and enhanced the need for collective action that ultimately resulted in major criticism and conflict at the EU level. The current refugee influx is a major test for EU stability and the project of European integration itself. Similarly, it can be a testing ground for national governments how to cope with the situation that is challenging to everyone, not exclusively the states that have sea access. The modern day political leadership requires similar and different approaches compared to the system transformation after the final collapse of the Soviet regimes. At first glance, the task of the international recognition through EU and NATO integration has been successfully accomplished. Secondly, the transition to democratic and consolidated political system has been monitored by multiple domestic and international agencies, NGOs and political opposition. The new challenge takes the form of external factors, such as war zones in the Middle-East or in African countries. Thus, this new scenario creates a platform for new conflict management, ethnic tensions, the risk of terrorism and massive immigration to the Western countries. It is then a necessity for the political leaders to decide, react and adopt new measures and reforms in response to radical changes in the society and world, both from a national as well as international perspective. Thus, the central issue of this paper is: what is the political response and how do Slovak political representatives react to the growing problems related to this enormous migration crisis?

Among other factors, the current migration crisis has been caused by recent difficult political developments in the Middle East and African countries followed by the system transformation commonly referred as the Arab Spring. The export of democratic values and liberalization of politics in the related countries met with major critical junctions, which ultimately resulted in exodus in the countries where those people are persecuted, civil wars have escalated, and the global threat of terrorism emerged again. The very recent massive migration wave to Western countries is thus a combination of the political and economic developments which had begun already in the 1990s. Whether we take into account the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the civil war or the current geopolitical situation in Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran and Syria as well as the Ukrainian crisis, the practical scenario is almost always the same. Hereby, it is rather difficult to apply the classical and neoclassical theories of migration demonstrated through Ravenstein's Laws of

Migration²² as empirical evidence based approach or the push-pull theory as a strictly defined economic rationalism.²³ Without elaborating the multiple methodological paradigms of such models, we may argue that the current migration crisis combines a collection of approaches topped up with the issues of securitization, individual and family safety, threats of terrorism and genocide.

Our research of the political parties and their leaders related to the migration crisis in the EU is performed as a top-down approach, since we predominantly consider the positions and approaches of the individuals and parties through the media appearance and visibility. From this basis, we use a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods; the quantitative part is expressed through the timeline of political interest of particular party and leaders in the media and related categorization of the political expressions to migration crisis. We have divided these into areas such as securitization, safety, terrorism and refugees. The qualitative part of the paper uses several crucial quotations of the political leaders that demonstrate and illustrate the general position of the political party towards the migration crisis. In this part we also formulate the parties' possible solutions to the particular problem-driven issues. The schemes below illustrate how much attention a particular party pays to the migration crisis within the party web sites and secondly, the national media.

²² Ernst Georg Ravenstein, "The Laws of Migration," *Journal of the Statistical Society of London* 48:2 (1885).

²³ Douglas S. Massey, Joaquín Arango, Ali Koucouci, Adela Pelligrino, and Edward J. Taylor, *Worlds in Motion: Understanding International Migration at the End of the Millenium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

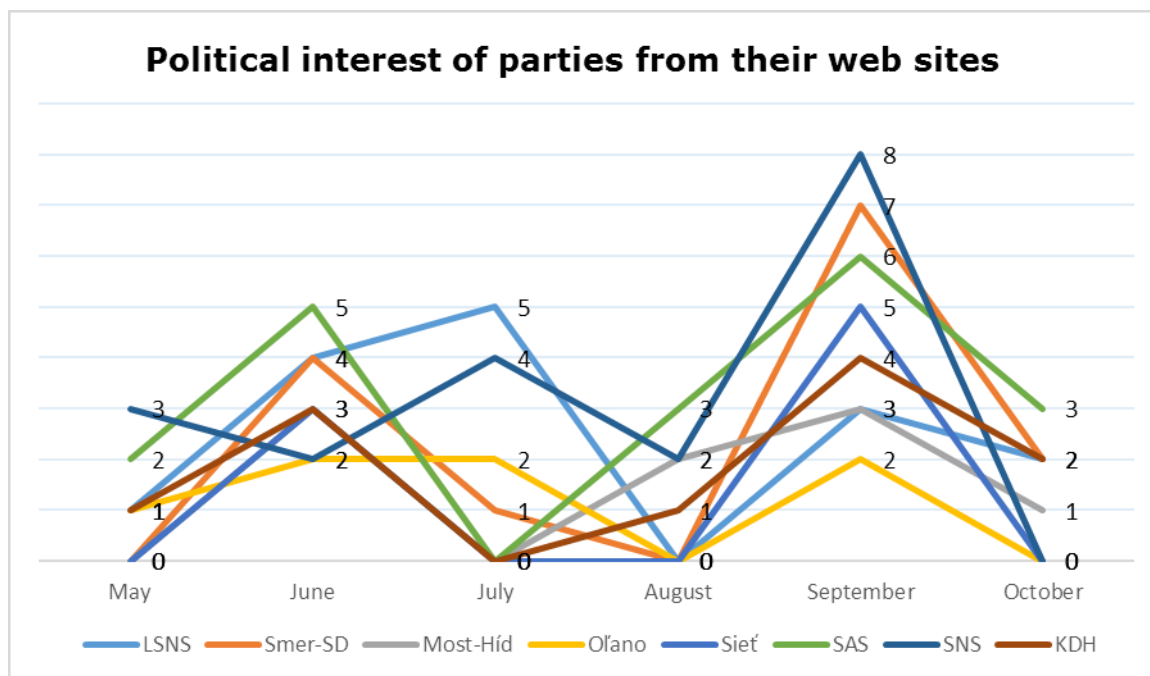


Figure 1. The number of times per month migration was mentioned by a major Slovak political party on its web site (May – October 2015)

As illustrated in the scheme, the political interest of major political parties in Slovakia differs rather significantly. While the opposition political parties tended to give lesser attention to the migration crisis, the governing party SMER-SD paid the greatest attention together with non-parliamentary actors. With regard to the timeline of the research (May – October 2015) we argue that:

- Surprisingly, the most visible political party is non-parliamentary Slovak National Party (SNS), but owing to the right-wing party agenda and conservative ideology, this may be considered a typical feature regardless of this particular context. In comparison with extreme-right party People's Party – Our Slovakia (LSNS), the Slovak nationalists are more reactive and visible. SNS is ranked in first place in migration crisis statements while LSNS is the second to last. This fact may be so due to the extreme-right party orientation.

- The governing party SMER-SD pays the most attention to migration crisis from all parliamentary political parties.

- The liberal platform Freedom and Solidarity (SAS) is also active in the topic which is also controversial at the level of European Parliament.

- The least engaged party is the Ordinary People and Independent Personalities (OLANO) with their rate of interest being the lowest.

• With regard to ideological polarization of the political parties and their interest in migration crisis we may introduce following framework (ordered from highest interest to lowest):

1. Right-wing parties (SNS, ĽSNS)
2. Centre-left parties (SMER-SD)
3. Liberals (SAS)
4. Centre-right parties (KDH, OĽANO, SIEŤ).

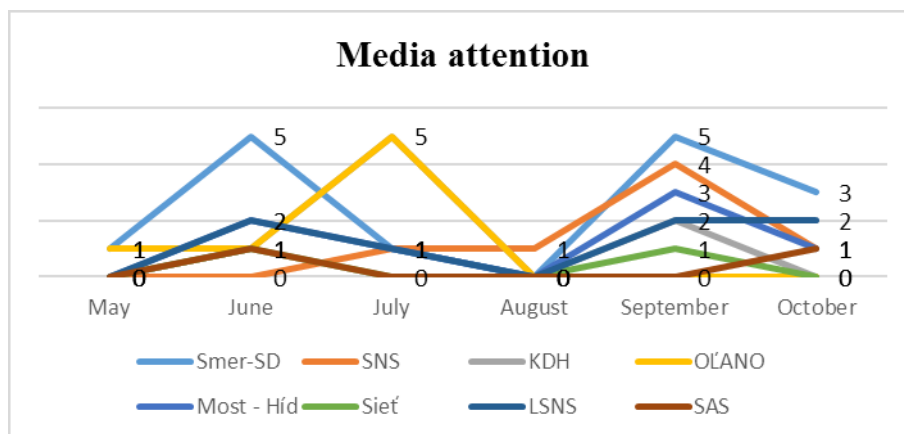


Figure 2. The number of times per month migration was mentioned by a major Slovak political party in the national media (May – October 2015)

The media attention on the topic is heaviest from the ruling party SMER-SD, followed by the Slovak National Party. In general, observation of the scheme illustrates the comprehensive political spectrum in Slovakia: the parties have not addressed the migration topic specifically beyond the selected time frame and tended to react simultaneously, which is then typical in higher argumentative and ideologically ambivalent statements. The media attention analysis also pointed to the interest of political parties and individual characteristic features of the respective party leaders. The least engaged parliamentary political party OĽANO (Figure 1) was rather visible through its populist leader in the beginning of migration crisis with regard to media attention. SNS and SMER-SD are represented almost equally. The latter one represents the only governing party which also tends to acquire the priority position in media reporting. An interesting issue is related to SNS as a non-parliamentary party which suggests to lower media presence and visibility but this assumption proved invalid.

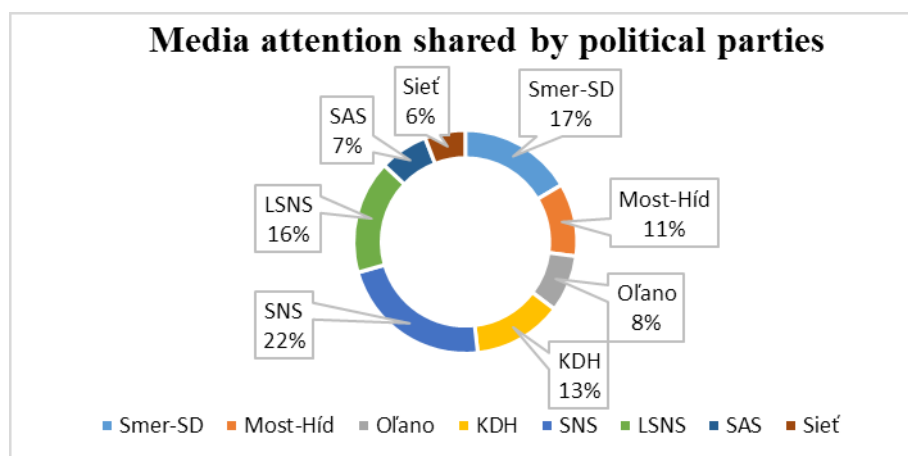


Figure 3. The visibility of major Slovak political parties in national media and party web sites in relation to European migration crisis (May - October 2015)

Figure 3 illustrates the media and party web sites attention over the research period proportionally divided among the various selected parties with the slight domination of SNS and SMER-SD.

4. MAJOR DOMAINS OF MIGRATION CRISIS AND PARTY LEADERSHIP IN SLOVAKIA: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

For the qualitative analysis, we have compiled data from the selected political parties and leaders as related to their various expressions on the migration crisis from the same sources as the previous parts of this paper. We have elaborated four major domains of migration crisis that are comparative in both context and resolutions of the multiple parties and their representatives. These domains include:

- Protection – which involves national interests versus European model of quota distribution of refugees in the Members States, discussion on securitization of migration topic and inability of collective action including the protection of labor market.
- Safety – which relates to any threat that may be caused by or related to the refugees' inflow into the Schengen zone and other nation-states, such as violence, abuse and riots.
- Terrorism – despite the fact that during the data collection there was hardly any clear terrorist action taken that would emphasize the anti-terrorist rhetoric or political agenda we have included this topic as very important and demonstrative.

- Refugees – general positions to the migration topic, refugees' allocation, political response to the crisis itself.

The table below contains the scores of the content analysis based on the media and party web sites.

Table 1: *Four major domains of migration crisis and scoring (0 – none or marginal interest in the problem, 1 – interest declared but not as a priority, 2 – priority topic)*

	Protection	Safety	Terrorism	Refugees
Smer-SD	1	2	0-1	2
KDH	1-2	0	0	2
SNS	2	1	0	2
SAS	2	1	0	2
OL'ANO	1	1	0	2
LSNS	2	1-2	0	2
Siet'	1	1	0	2
Most-Híd	0	1	0-1	2

Below, we detail and list each of the political parties, and interpret the data accordingly.

Smer-SD

The party strongly opposes the quota allocation system from the very beginning, which ultimately led to the law suit of Slovak Government against the European Council in December 2015. According to party leadership the quota principle does not solve anything. On the contrary, the problem may return retrospectively with much more intensity.

Similarly, there were several referendums held in the cities and regions near the refugee camps in Slovakia with the negative outcomes, which supported the official strategy of the Slovak Government. The party leaders called for Visegrad group cooperation in continuous refusal of migration policy as introduced by the EU leaders. The party calls to clearly distinguish between labor migrants and those who need protection for their lives. The major topics were security, protection of the Schengen area and possible safety threats. The leader of the party and Prime Minister Robert Fico openly declared the possible raise of terrorist actions which was almost the sole prerogative compared to other parties and leaders. The priority for the party is the refugee crisis alone together with the national security and Visegrad cooperation to oppose the joint EU migration strategy. This is similar in the case of protection which aims to Slovak citizens' protection, economic migrants' problems, V4 region cooperation and Schengen area. Safety issues are strongly related to the previous domains and include the national security and interests. This

has resulted into massive securitization campaign in Slovakia with the main representatives of the party as the personalization of the national security. Terrorism is mentioned especially in the form of uncontrolled influx of potentially dangerous individuals or lone wolves.

KDH

The Christian Democratic Movement expressed visible solidarity but only related to Christian migrants. The support for people in their kin state should be the first priority, they say then we can proceed to accept and adopt families of political refugees from Syria in such parochial communities that are prepared with capacities and human capital. The phrase "support people for people" is an expression of fellowship and is the most effective form of solidarity according to the party leadership.

This argument was later adopted also by Smer-SD. Terrorism and safety topics are widely neglected compared to protection and refugees issues. The political leadership of the party called for the possible solutions such as creation of permanent EU representative for refugees as well as the need for common European migration framework. The party argues that Slovakia is a reliable partner and capable to integrate several hundreds of refugees despite opposing the quota allocation system. Similarly, they appeal to the need for a strict division between economic migrants and political asylum seekers. The dominant theme is refugees, followed by security problems of the Schengen and EU integration project itself. Safety is mentioned specifically relating to the Syria region, separation of economic and political migrants. Terrorism is not mentioned at all.

SNS

The Slovak National Party claims first to oppose and reject the quota system. Based on this, the party leaders envisaged the protection of national interests and citizens' safety as priority topics. The party leader demonstrated that he refuses racism, xenophobia but also would like to think about those who sit on the boat and travel the Mediterranean Sea. Not all of them deserve protection according to Martin Danko. Western countries live different value principles and have a stronger economy compared to Slovakia's. They are used to living with various immigrants. But as they claim now, such coexistence of cultures and nations is failing.

According to the party representatives the potential for solving the problem is vested in the countries of migrants' origin. They also suggest some restrictions of migration policy such as penalization and resentment. Although they accept political migrants, the protection and safety of EU Member States is crucial. The party

emphasizes the close cooperation of ideologically related parties in the EU. The priority is thus given to refugees and protection against unveiled problems. They enhance the national interests and safety of Slovak people as well as the Schengen area and border protection. The party refuses another EU dictate. For SNS, quotas symbolize arrogance and power of the greater EU members - it had proved how small and unimportant in the EU Slovakia is. Compared to this, the threat of terrorism was practically absent.

SAS

Despite low media coverage of the liberal platform, the party leaders strongly oppose the common European migration policy, especially the policy of Angela Merkel, which was openly criticized by SAS party leader Richard Sulík, currently serving as a Member of European Parliament. He believes that if quotas would provide a definite solution he would immediately agree with the systematic and joint proceeding. At the same time the party is quite skeptical toward the proposed solutions, mentioning only the beginning of the problem. Related to Slovak concerns, the party strengthens the possibility of security threat. They do not provide for the need for state protection as the major domain but suggested to operate in asylum hot points in the frontier zones such as Syria or Mediterranean countries. Another important factor is to recognize the economic and political migrants since the EU is only capable to provide the social donations for migrants. The questions of protection are largely related to Schengen zone protection, southern EU border control and individual approaches to each migrant or free mover. The priority is thus given to refugee policy and rejection of EU migration policy. The issues of safety are marginally introduced and the threat of terrorism is not mentioned at all.

OLANO

This party declares that refugees do not cause European problems and calls for solidarity with the political migrants while pointing on the threat of economic migration because refugees who flee from first secure country should be considered as labor migrants. Subsequently, the major party criticism is oriented toward the quota system and the need of Schengen border area control and protection. The party leadership strongly opposes the policy of Angela Merkel and suggests reaching consensus and common strategy in the area of operation and in the migration centers. The safety threats are thus related to the inability of collective action on the level of the EU which is also part of the party criticism. The major domains are refugees and solidarity with migrants who seek political asylum,

followed by the protection as illustrated by the open rejection with EU migration policy. Terrorism is widely absent in the media and party web site coverage.

ĽSNS

The priority domains are refugees' problems and Brussels dictates in the field of migration policy, pointing to the previous Moscow dictate during Soviet times compared to new form of dictatorship from Brussels referring to the recent joint strategies. They also put forward the issues against EU integration and call for the protection of national interests. The party stresses the need to protect Europe and especially Slovakia against the migrants' invasion. The media visibility of the party was dominantly related to their support in many anti-migrant protests and demonstrations. The rhetoric of the leaders is strictly anti-EU, anti-globalization and anti-migrant reaching the extreme measures and anti-democratic solutions. The domains of safety and protection are best seen through the party leader Marian Kotleba, who supports the idea of building the fence against migrants at Hungarian – Serbian border. Kotleba also initiated the joint talk with the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán by sending an open letter to FIDESZ leader. The threat of terrorist attack is mentioned very rarely.

SIETĚ

The newly formed political party and its leaders emphasize discussion about a security threat related to migrants. According to the party Europe needs to emphasize that it would not tolerate the abuse of rules and norms and uncontrolled benefits of the organized groups supporting the illegal migration. Similarly, they urge for the requirement that migrants are divided into political and economic migrants in order to securitize the labor market of Slovakia and the EU. Compared to other parties and leaders, SIETĚ initiates the requalification of asylum assistants in the problem countries and frontier zones. One of the possible solutions according to the party leaders is reaching the European consensus in wider perspective, increasing the sanctions for smugglers as well as the need for Schengen area protection including national security. Ultimately, they called for border fences to stop the massive migrant influx. Safety is mentioned only in relation with the economic migrants, while national interests are at the top of their agenda. Similar to other political parties, terrorism remains neglected.

MOST-HÍD

Perhaps the only party that calls for open solidarity with migrants. The party emphasizes that we need to get used to the point that the EU is not only about

funds but also about problem resolution. If we expect southern EU members to be sympathetic with problems which are essential to us we also have to use the same metrics. The leaders do not mention security or protection, and refugees are not considered as unwanted or evil for European nations and countries. The potential threat is elsewhere, according to the party leader the dangerous situation emerges when the European politicians take inappropriate actions and raise the public awareness. In comparison with other parties, the party leader of Most-Híd, Béla Bugár is openly pro-European, appealing for a consensus within the European Union in issues related with the security and protection. The party allows the situation that Slovakia is ready to help more than 800 refugees. We do not need quotas to accept this. The leaders call to be open and active in this issue. Our solidarity can be introduced with neighboring states to provide our capacities for refugees, for example. Thus, the refugees are not essentially considered as problem with no need for protection and safety. The party calls for calming the escalated situation and spreading the fears of people traveling to Europe. As opposed to the possibility of terrorist attacks the party leaders formulate the other position, i.e. not considering the migrants as potential security risk or terrorists.

As indicated in the various party analyses there is no single support for the quota system introduced by the EU. The positions across Slovak party system are largely negatively structured around the policy of refugees' allocation. The total rejection and uniform approach was characterized by a cultural and social situation in Slovakia. The difference in the expressions can be found in different and more particular topics with respect to immigration policy. The highest contrast is visible in attitudes about solidarity to the refugees themselves and also from the aspect in addressing the situation, which will be described below. On the contrary, the common grounds of the political parties are found in the possible solutions of the crisis which lean alongside with the citizens' expectations and leaders thus copy the securitization demands and protective positions. It is rather difficult to say whether this unprecedented feature is part of the electoral campaigning or aligned in terms of nation and state protection as a real political agenda. However, the fact is that the individual right-wing political parties do not change their positions in the timeline, unlike other predominantly left or center-left oriented political parties, which in this case play a role of a political chameleon.

The solidarity expressed with migrants by parties is limited to four parties, mostly visible in the case Most-Híd together with the Christian-Democratic Movement KDH, with the least tolerance expressed by the extreme-right party ĽSNS. The measurability of solidarity by the various political parties also comes

with their ideological orientation. Parties that should express more solidarity have claimed and defended this position. Contrary to this, the left-oriented governing party SMER-SD lacks the solidarity pattern despite opposing their ideological nature and major pillars of leftist policy making, especially visible through the Party of European Socialists represented in the European Parliament. The other non-solidarity parties include party SAS, which is also controversial taking into account their liberal nature, which then steps more forward to conservatism and radicalism. An exceptional case is visible in Most-Híd representing a party with a clear position of a merger of all citizens in Slovakia, regardless of their political, ethnic and national preferences. The leaders of the party do not expect the potential of migration crisis in increasing the political capital of a single party and voters' support and such topics are then expressed very moderately.

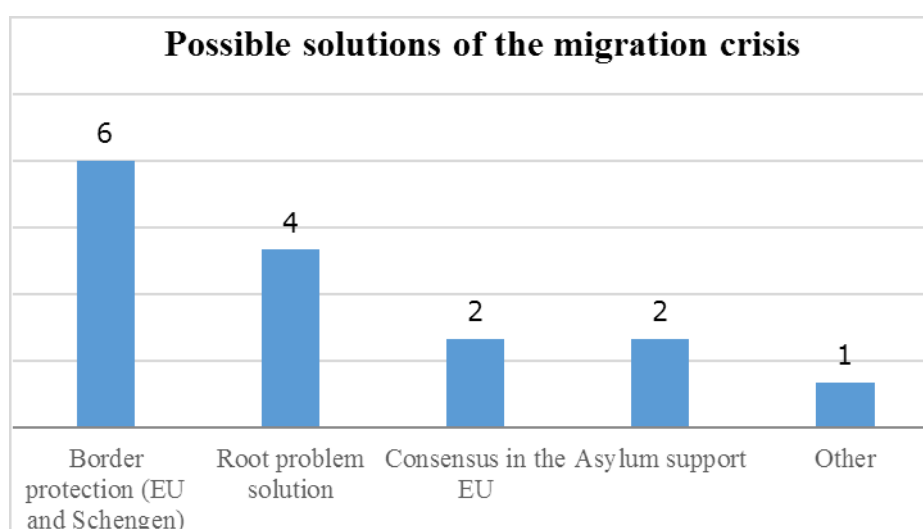


Figure 4. The breakdown of possible crisis management and solutions across the parties in Slovakia (the numbers show multiplicity of supportive statements)

As already mentioned above, political parties in Slovakia have ultimately rejected the quota regulations of the European Union. The possible solutions to the migration crisis also share some similar patterns and views. As pointed out, Most-Híd does not consider it of prior importance, which leads to the absence of the need for problem solution. The very opposite reaction is reflected by the extreme-right party ĽSNS that sharply criticizes the EU quota system which finally leads to strengthen their extremist arguments and position. Regarding the proposed solutions the party practically does not offer any comprehensive solution of the problem and therefore the position of the political party can be understood only as moderate populist overtones expressing its extremist temperament.

Possible solutions provided by Slovak political parties in migration crisis are different. Most urgent is the protection associated with the Schengen Area and EU borders. Often this issue is associated with the complete closure of the borders and options to build border fences to prevent the influx of unwanted immigrants. Parties also expressed the will to reach an agreement for the local solution in the countries of origin of the migrants, such as in Syria or African countries. Resolving the Syrian civil war which has been ongoing since 2011 is the second most discussed and prospective solution of the issue. The lesser suggested topics include the solidarity with the migrating people. The parties expressed support for establishing temporary detention centers for immigrants and also call for reaching a consensus at the level of the EU leaders. For example, Smer-SD suggests the protection of the Schengen area first and then to provide the political response in the conflict regions also calling for V4 cooperation in migration crisis and professionalization of the police and army forces in dealing with illegal migration. Christian-Democrats (KDH) strengthen the need for EU protection with more support to Christian Syrians and problem solutions at its origins. The Slovak National Party also calls for similar problem solutions but adding the necessity to protect and securitize the national interests of the state as well as the Schengen border. Liberals emphasize EU protection, calling for turning back the illegal migrants and protecting migrants in Africa from illegal migration with the options of hot spot asylum support. Most-Híd argues that the complex problem solution is nowhere while we may observe an appeal of inappropriate and failing political decisions in migration policy at national as well as international level.

The migration crisis is inevitably bound up with the rise of extremism, which has also occurred within the Slovak party system. Extremist expressions abound in typically right-wing parties led by the party ĽSNS and SNS. Apart from right-wing parties (including extreme right) the liberal party used the rhetoric typical for anti-migrant movements and radical statements, such as: Angela Merkel destroys the migration policy of the EU or that she is the main source of chaos in the EU.

As for the ruling party Smer-SD it is difficult to determine whether the party leaders used extremist measures when dealing with the migration crisis. In this case, we may argue that it is a construct of national populism with spreading the fears of illegal migration in order to enhance the electoral capital for the future voters and possible re-election in the upcoming parliamentary elections.

CONCLUSION

In this article we have elaborated the major domains of discourse related to migration crisis and the Slovakian political parties' and leaders' responses to this issue. The results of the analysis show that the massive migration waves in the recent months have attracted much political attention at the EU level as well as in individual member states. Unfortunately, there is clear opportunity neither for the refugees nor the political actors to adopt a clear-cut solution, which would incorporate both solidarity and effective allocation of the incomings. Despite this, the EU leadership tried and managed to adopt a series of policy implications that would be legally binding for all Member States. Apparently, such a scenario is not in line with the political agenda-setting in EU states, such as Slovakia, Czech Republic or Hungary. The case of Slovakia may be noteworthy, since the conflict between the Slovak Government and the European Commission escalated to a law suit against the quota system distribution of the refugees in each member state. Deriving from this multi-causal and interdisciplinary case study we have selected the timeline of the media coverage of the political responses and awareness of the migration crisis amongst the political parties in Slovakia. From the qualitative and semi-quantitative data we draw the conclusion that EU common migration policy is largely criticized from Slovak standpoint, including all parties in the selected frame. During the crisis management, most of the ideological platforms continuously got rid of their natural focus, such as was the case of the Slovak liberals and the ruling party Smer-SD. Both these actors openly criticized the EU strategies as well as opposed taking any actions that would put Slovakia at risk, while emphasizing the national interests, domestic labor market and securitization of the migration discourse. A major role is then played by the national protection domain, which has rapidly escalated in August and September 2015 together with the peak of the migration waves to Europe.

Despite the fact that Slovakia is not directly affected by the migration crisis, the Slovak political scene has sharply reacted to this topic. As mentioned above, it is not clear to what extent this is related to media visibility vis-à-vis party election campaign or whether we observe the interest of political parties to reconcile political discourse to the topic with the demand of the society, such as with securitization, protection and national interests. The current political parties seem to address the migration crisis in a negative manner as well as providing a particularly populist response. The absence of possible specific solutions following party and leadership performance evokes rather populist behaviour on the part of political parties, rather than concrete and absolute interest in solving the migration

crisis. With the exception of the ruling party, there is hardly any visible entity that would permanently advocate specific positions and solutions both for the current electoral period as well with the vision of the approaching parliamentary elections.

The research on media visibility of various political parties and their leaders in Slovakia confirmed the relative lack and unavailability of central, shared attitudes and positions from the perspective of the party system. The different positions to the migration crisis in Europe across the party system have been influenced by the sources of EU scepticism, national populism and extremism, together with the prospects of the upcoming electoral campaign for the parliamentary elections which had practically started already in summer 2015. Regardless, the dichotomy of the possible outcomes of the migration crisis has definitely helped build up political capital for several Slovak political parties and movements despite operating in a small nation without the direct threat to national sovereignty, multicultural approach or the risk of terrorist attacks.

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