Understanding European Solidarity Through Political Discourse in Slovakia

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Abstract

The European Union proposal to relocate refugees based on quotas in 2015 brought turmoil into the debates about how to react to the migration crisis. The idea of solidarity, with the refugees and among EU member states became one of the central topics. In Slovakia, these debates took place during the ongoing political campaign leading up to the parliamentary election in March 2016. The aim of this thesis is to study the notion of solidarity in the Slovak political discourse with regards to the refugee quota policy proposal, and to theorize how and when solidarity discourses are deployed. The thesis relies on the conceptual framework developed by Vivien Schmidt, discourse institutionalism, which operates with ideas, actors, interactions and institutional context. Based on the quantitative text analysis and qualitative discourse analysis of a selection of media articles, findings suggest that politicians in Slovakia frame the notion of solidarity instrumentally as a tool rather than a value. They use the term solidarity to argue both for or against accepting the quotas. This thesis contributes to debates about how politicians use topics, such as refugee quotas, strategically in periods of crisis.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

The refugee crisis and inflow of migrants and refugees invoked questions of on the one hand how to help the refugees, on the other hand how to fairly redistribute the uneven inflow among the countries of European Union. Political discourses were led both on the European and national levels, with an aim to find a common solution. One of the proposed solutions was the refugee Emergency Relocation Mechanism, also referred to as the refugee quotas (Rankin, 2016). This proposal led to heated reactions of some member state. The Slovak case was interesting due to several reasons. The refugee crisis unfolded prior to and during the period before parliamentary elections. This means that domestic political discourses about this topic were highly salient. Secondly, Slovakia's population is relatively homogenous with regards to religion and nationality and it is far from being a host country for asylum seeker and migrants as, for instance, Germany or Sweden. Thirdly, the elites are often characterized as pro-European, yet despite this, most of them strongly opposed the quota system proposed by the EU. All these discourses contained a message of solidarity. The history and the development of this concept was summarized by Stjernø (2009), but it was not a reoccurring topic of political debates in Slovakia. The puzzle is, what constructions of the idea of solidarity and what solidarity actions are produced with regards to refugee quota debates in Slovakia, with little experience with immigrants, pro-European elites and ongoing election campaign. To understand processes of decision-making and the interactions among political actors in such a situation – how do actors discuss it, what ideas they deploy and how they come up with solutions – might help us unveil how solidarity is constructed in Slovak political discourse and domestic European political discourse more generally. That is the subject of this thesis, which relies on Vivien Schmidt's conceptual framework of discourse institutionalism. The concept of solidarity operates on various levels, from deep core beliefs to simple policy stances and it may refer to a feeling of unity among individuals or states with common interests. It can represent a

normative value as well as a call to action. A qualitative text analysis of Slovak politicians' statements is conducted to evaluate solidarity through the argumentation, rhetoric, framing and its problematization in political discourse.

Research Questions

RQ Why does a strong pro-European public attitude and a tradition of pro-integration stance of the elites not translate into a solidary stance towards EU policy on refugees?

RQ1 How does Slovak political discourse on refugee quotas build the concept of solidarity?

Chapter 2 - Theory and literature review

The goal of this chapter is to present the conceptual framework of discourse institutionalism, to review the existing literature on the idea of solidarity and to present literature dealing with Europeanization, institutions and discourses in Slovakia.

Conceptual framework – discourse institutionalism

In my analysis of political discourse on refugee quotas in Slovakia I am using discourse institutionalism (DI) as the analytical framework as proposed by Vivien A. Schmidt (2008). It is an approach to study institutional or political change. Discourse institutionalism focuses on the (1) content of ideas, (2) actors who are the "carriers" of ideas, the (3) interactive processes of argumentation and discourse where ideas are legitimized and finally translated into action or policy, all within (4) the (formal) institutional context. It is both a new-institutional as well as a constructivist framework and assumes that institutions are socially constructed by agents, but compared to other "three new institutionalisms" (Hall, Taylor, 1996) DI offers a more dynamic view of institutions. Agents, who construct institutions, are sentient (thinking and speaking), therefore through discourse they can communicate or contest ideas and thus change institutions. Compared to rational choice institutionalism, agents in DI are not necessarily preference maximizing, but they are preference oriented. DI adds another layer to the "game" (Downs, 1957), agents use discourse as action and at the same time ideas shape what their preferences are. In my model, I presume that the (political) actors are strategic in what discourses they do or do not deploy, underlining the sentient ability of agents to evaluate and act with consideration of what others might do. In this sense, political agency is seen in game theoretic terms, with ideas and their strategic deployment at the center of the analysis. Moreover, agents always operate in an institutional context with background information about the cultural frames or historical rules which serve as external constraints to their actions. (Schmidt, 2008:85-87) In

this section I discuss the four main aspects of discourse institutionalism and how they relate to my research questions.

Ideas

Ideas represent the substantive content of discourse (for instance in Bourdieu, 1990, Foucault, 2002). They come in different forms, types and at different levels. They can range from ideas about specific policies, such as policy towards refugee quotas, to very general philosophical concepts or values such as ideas about solidarity, justice, freedom or equality. Ideas may represent interests following specific preferences of actors following the "logic of consequence", but ideas may also seek normative goals, following the "logic of appropriateness" (Vachudová, 2005:218). With regards to their forms, ideas also vary significantly – from narratives (i.e. particular 'stories' about specific things), discursive fields (i.e. narration), framing of problems (what exactly is brought into the foreground when describing an issue, problem, policy etc.), ways of depicting specific groups of people, to argumentative practices or collective memories. Ideas can change incrementally or in revolutionary shifts, they may disappear from the discourse, enabling new ideas to emerge. (Schmidt, 2008:88) Ideas shape action by "structuring and constraining actors' reasoning and information processing". (Jacobs, 2009:255) So ideas do not only affect what the actors do, but also what actors believe, value and choose – by interpreting the existing policy and economy. (Goldstein, 1995, Blyth, 2011) In politics, ideas are publicized strategically to shape beliefs of audiences. The electorate uses heuristics to make political choices – often taking cues from the elites. (Sniderman et al. 1999)

In my opinion, the multitude of ideational dimensions can be well illustrated by the notion of solidarity, which I am using as a key theme in the political elites' discourse about refugee quotas. It is a concept that refers to a feeling of community, but also to common interests and responsibilities among members of a group, class, nation or people (and states) in general.

It could be perceived as allocated either on the individual, national or eventually on the transnational level. It is a normative concept that refers to a set of values and practices, mentioned in some legal documents, for instance in Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (2012). Moreover, it may also be perceived as having political implications. As Bell (2010) notes, solidarity may raise obligations, but it is valid to ask to whom and between whom they apply – citizens, states, individuals, the environment, and also to ask how far solidarities at various levels and among different groups reach. (Bell, 2010:21 in Ross 2010) I will reflect on what particular discourses and policies are connected to solidarity and why it is relevant for the discourse on refugee quotas in the section on European solidarity. (Ch.2.2)

Actors

Discourse institutionalism assumes that ideas do not "float freely" (Risse-Kappen, 1994), but they need to be carried by agents. Agents or actors, who carry previously defined ideas, engage in discourse, where they articulate and communicate these ideas. Thanks to their "background ideational abilities", they can make sense, according to their knowledge, of the meaning context and rationality of the setting they are in. They use practices such as deliberation, discussion, negation or contestation – also called by Schmidt "foreground discursive abilities". (Schmidt, 2008:91) Discourses incorporate a broad range of actors, who can change institutions by deploying ideas. DI underlines the fact that discourses do not have to be on the top down level only, but that through ideas also local, national or international "civil society", activists or public can engage into the discourse. (Schmidt, 2008:86) Schmidt suggests that actors gain or lose power based on whether their ideas, arguments and discourses make meaning to their audience, but at the same time she notes that some actors have more "power" or authority in the discourse and can spread their messages more effectively. This is particularly important for understanding the content of Slovak political elites' discourse on

refugee quotas and the reasons for which they might be deemed, in hindsight, to have backfired electorally.

Moodie (1984) suggests that the main elements of Politics are government and conflict. The concept of governing refers to rule-making and applying these rules across the polity. Policy is defined as the program of action, which serves a concrete purpose to deal with a particular problem. (Moodie 1984 in Lefwich 2004:23) Based on this definition, I think it is safe to say that political elites, especially members of the government, will always play an important role in discourse about policy, where they might engage into conflict with ideational political or civic opponents. Foucault (2002) also contends the notion that there is an ideational domination of the powerful. Van Dijk (1992) suggests that elites play a special reproductive role in discourse. They are the ones making up the legislature, and policies - in line with the definition of policy as problem solving, politicians are deeply involved in discourses on the pressing issues, including ones on immigration or crises, where they communicate information to the public and political opponents. Even though DI underlines the fact that also bottom up initiatives can succeed in discourse, structural power relations and the governing responsibility play in favor of political elites. They encounter positive and negative feedback on their actions and speeches all the time and change their next actions accordingly. Knaap (1995:191) suggests that politicians, and people in general, use three corrective systems: learning based on feedback, learning through cognitive development or social learning by dialogue and argumentation. The implication for understanding Slovak political discourses on the refugee quotas is that politicians further pursue their strategy or change it, based on the feedback they receive from the public in opinion polls and their opponents in debates. Moreover, a situation, in which a political opponent gets positive feedback for an anti-refugee statement, might motivate the politician to adopt a similar rhetoric. Further developments in the refugee crisis or an alternation of stance by one of the European actors, such as Germany, can also change their policy attitudes.

Moving on to the interactive processes, discourse institutionalism states that actors establish the link between ideas and policy through so-called coordinative and communicational practices. (Schmidt in Fischer 2012:100-102)

Argumentation, discourse and policy

Argumentation is a process of reasoning, through which people support or deny actions, chains of events or actions, goals or outcomes and usually seek to reach a conclusion. "It explores the way people communicate in civil debate and engage in persuasive dialogue and negotiation as well as in ordinary conversation." (Dryzek, 1994:10) Discourse is the broadest definition, which includes argumentation or rhetoric and represents a whole body of concepts and ideas that influence and shape argumentation. (Dryzek, 1994)

Discourse analysis, according to Austin (2009) is "based on the assumption that "to talk" means "to act" and words (discourses) have a strong performative effect on social reality." Theoretically the link between the study of language or argumentation and policy analysis was established in the book Argumentative turn (Fischer, Forester, 1993), and this focus is useful because it provides a bridge between actor centered and institutionally oriented analysis - between agency and structure. (Schmidt, Radaelli, 2004:10) But also the process of policy argumentation in discourse provides a link between empirical and normative arguments. Moreover, it supplies society with basic narratives or modes of behavior. (Fischer, Gottweis, 2012:1-2) Majone (1989) states that "argument is central in all stages of the policy process" (in Fischer, Gottweis, 2012:7) Schmidt and Radaelli (2004:10) suggest that discourse gives shape to new institutional structures, through ideas about rules, values and practices, but it is also a resource for the actors to produce and legitimate these ideas. It has implications for policy formulation and communication. However, it is important to note, that discourse cannot be the single cause of a political change. Communicative interaction can be one of the causes of change. (Schmidt, 2010a) Political actors, through communication, can find support for their

policy proposals, they can shape public opinion about issues or alternatively activists, public or media might address their critiques in discourse. Even though the actual political change must be made by an institutionalized mechanism, such as by voting in the elections or adopting a law in the parliament, its content was possibly affected in the discourse. Actors always operate within a reality of institutions and empirical facts. However, the focus on interactions between the actors can help understand their conflicting views. Emotional arguments are often present in times of crises, such as migration one in 2015. Actors' stances go as far as foundational normative arguments about how they see the world, or how they believe it should be. All of this is reflected in the discourses they deploy and take part in.

Discourse institutionalism operates with two main domains when talking about discourse – communicative and coordinative discourses. Coordinative discourse is used for policy construction, where policy actors reach agreement on a specific policy through deliberation, arguing or bargaining. It is coordinative because those participating share consensuses about the need to create or change policy, with an aim to generate an agreed upon 'final product': a new piece of policy. Communicative discourse is employed more widely in the public sphere, when political actors communicate their ideas to the public, also using similar tools such as deliberation, arguing, contesting or legitimating, but with purposes broader than just agreeing on a specific policy. (Schmidt in Fischer 2012:100-102) In communicative discourse, diverse motivations come into play. Political actors may attempt to form mass public opinion (Zaller, 1992) or try to engage and manipulate the public into debates about policies they favor and ultimately to win the election. (Mutz, Sniderman, Brody, 1999)

There is a big body of literature in voting behavior, which focuses on whether politicians are policy oriented (Wittmann 1977, Calvert 1985) or office motivated (Hotelling 1929, Downs 1957). I will refer to Downs, who suggests that political parties and politicians are opportunistic and will take courses of action that lead to re-election. Also, if politics, as defined earlier, is

about political office, then the main goal of politicians should be governing. Ideology is sometimes also listed as one of the motivations of politicians, but researchers suggest that electoral motivations of candidates prevail over ideological motivations. (Callander, 2008)

Levels of ideas

The questions posed by the motivation of political actors only underline the complexity of the socially constructed reality. On the one hand politicians seek to engage with public in the communicative discourse and find support for their policy, but on the other hand their proposal is already influenced by the public opinion from opinion polls. Also, ideology of actors may pose a challenge, but the proposed policy does not necessarily have to reflect the ideational beliefs of politicians and can be instrumental. Discourse coalitions also project such construction of reality. These coalitions as noted by Haas (1992) mostly link actors based on their ideas, but while they may agree on goals of certain policy, they might disagree on the use of policy instruments or application. The actors may agree on the arguments for a certain policy but disagree on their normative legitimization. (Schmidt, 2008:102) Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1994) have created an advocacy coalition framework (ACF), in order to deal with the various levels of actors' beliefs in policy making. Even though they operate with an assumption of limited cognitive abilities of individuals, which differs from the sentient perception in discourse institutionalism, this framework in my opinion offers a useful tool to think about motivations of actors. The authors distinguish between three levels of beliefs, deeply rooted ideological or normative beliefs, policy core beliefs that refer to policy areas and on the lowest tier are secondary beliefs which are empirical, relate to concrete policy and are most easily changed. (Sabatier, Smith, 1994) This perception could provide an optics, which accounts for values and ideological beliefs of politicians, who group in advocacy groups according to similar beliefs, but at the same time they seek to gain power and take office. Ideology therefore does not have to be a strictly divisive issue, since actors operate on various levels of beliefs.

Institutional context and assumptions

Institutions, according to Douglass North (1990), are rules of the game in a society, which structure political, social or economic human exchange. More formally they could be defined as "the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction." (North, 1990:3) The relationship is twofold. On the one hand humans create and change institutions. On the other hand, institutions constrain human behavior through specific incentive structures, opportunities and punishments. This relationship is also crucial for discourse institutionalism. Actors always operate within a pre-given institutional context. As I have described in previous sections, actors are thinking and speaking agents who carry ideas, but also think about them and act accordingly. Therefore, they are able to achieve political and institutional change by deploying discourses strategically. Discourse could be perceived as what they say they are going to do; it is the vehicle of change. Institutional context is the setting, where ideas have meaning, where actors can act collectively and achieve change. (Schmidt, Radaelli, 2004:105) For Schmidt, context signifies mostly the "meaning context", where actors can "get it right" and with certain rationality they are able to address their ideas in a "right" way, to the "right" audiences. These contexts explain why the same term may be understood differently at international and national levels but it may also differ from country to country. For instance, the discourses on globalization as Hay and Smith (2005) suggest are presented differently in France and UK, but also in UK and Ireland, where one could expect more commonalities. Part of the explanation could be in the differing cultural, social, political and economic contexts of these countries. Another explanation is, of course, that actors make recourse to different types of ideas depending on the audience they think they are facing. This is also the reason why I am expecting varying notions of solidarity in Slovakia and in the EU.

Discourse institutionalism, compared to the other "three new institutionalisms" as described by Hall and Taylor (1996), is more dynamic. The main difference between discourse

institutionalism and rational, sociological and historical institutionalism lies in its assumptions. Here, I will present the assumptions of the three-other institutionalism and discuss how they can be accounted for in discourse institutionalism. I will also explain why it is the best fitting framework for my analysis.

Rational choice institutionalism assumes actors have a fixed set of preferences and behave rationally and strategically in order to attain their preferences. (Scharpf 1997, 1999; Moravcsik 1998 in Schmidt 2010) Rational choice institutionalists tend to see politics as a struggle for power, in which actors constantly deal with collective action dilemmas. In rational choice institutionalism actors are always preference maximizing in the actions they take. Actions are approached through calculation of costs and benefits of possible outcomes. In discourse institutionalism, actors are assumed to not have fixed preferences, they are able to think, speak and change institutions. DI assumes that to talk means to act. Actors do not talk for no reason, but rather express their interests and beliefs through discourse, therefore there is an aspect of rationality. Ideas shape what actors' preferences are, but they also represent another explanatory factor in the analysis. Actors deploy certain discourses based on their preferences and strategy. And as I have mentioned before, power is very much present in discourse. Firstly, discourse reflects power structures in a society and politicians are among the most important when talking about policy and governing. Secondly, through expressing ideas in discourse, actors can gain or lose power, based on how their audiences accept their ideas or policy proposals. Power, similarly as discourse, is relational and goes on among people. Analytically, authors distinguish between conflictual (power over) and consensual (power to) power. While 'power to' signifies the capacity to make x happen, 'power over' refers to the ability to win conflicts and prevail over other actors. (Morriss in Haugaard 2006:297-300) This distinction is relevant for my analysis, since actors who engage in discourse on refugee quotas have varying powers. While opposition members can organize press conferences and pundits can present their opinions in

the media, politicians in the government have ultimately both higher capacity to push through policies and overrule other opposition politicians if they have majority support. Even though ideas matter, shape the discourse and can affect decisions, the actual policy is dependent on a few key players. Therefore, a statement by the prime minister can be perceived as having higher weight than the statement of an independent parliament member.

The main advantage of discourse institutionalism for my analysis is that it offers a framework which connects ideas such as ideas about solidarity, with political actors and political agency, who through discourse communicate their views on a number of policy proposals, e.g. refugee quotas, all within the cultural and political context of Slovakia and European Union. The ideas about the EU, national identity or solidarity all show in this policy discourse. The specific construction of these ideas and their strategic deployment is based on the preferences of the actors, which are further shaped. Actors try to engage with their electorate before the elections or present a positive image of Slovakia in front of the EU officials during the Presidency of the Council of the EU. DI also enables me to evaluate ideas on different levels, or unpack ideas such as solidarity, which sometimes hold more meanings – such as normative, legal and a call to action, or even the basis of actions – e.g. being solidary and accepting refugees, or richer member states contributing through EU funds to poorer EU members.

This view in my opinion best reflects the reality, with structural power relations and motivations, interactions between public and politicians, but also various and often conflicting notions of ideas., it enables me to operate with refugee quotas both from the perspective of a policy that reacts to a problem or an (non) issue and more importantly from the perspective of problematizing of refugee quotas in the political discourse. Through the representation of this issue I can trace and explain the positions and intentions of political elites.

Solidarity

Solidarity according to the English Oxford Dictionary refers to "unity, agreement, feeling or action, especially among individuals with a common interest". (Stevenson, 2011) As a concept it dates back to 18th century France when it was transformed from a legal concept that was supposed to resolve responsibility for debts of a member of a group, into a sociological and political concept that refers to a feeling of community. During the French Revolution, solidarity was sometimes used interchangeably with the notion of fraternity. (Stjernø, 2011:156) Basically since the Enlightenment, the concept of solidarity became enrooted in European philosophical, social and political thinking and language, along with other values such as liberty, equality, freedom, responsibility or human dignity. Charles Fourier, a French utopian and social philosopher, was the first one to add another aspect to the notion of solidarity, by associating it with social policy and claiming that solidarity should also mean sharing resources with people in need, supporting families or guaranteeing minimum income. (Stjernø, 2011:156) This short introduction to solidarity incorporates the three main elements of the notion of solidarity: the feeling of a community, solidarity as a normative value and solidarity as a call for action (e.g. resource pooling and redistribution). These three aspects are essential to form a definition of what solidarity is, and to answer how it is relevant for my research questions. With regards to refugee quotas the idea of solidarity was the underlying theme of the political discourse. It incorporated all the aspects of the definition.

As I have mentioned in the section on ideas, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1994) underline the fact that various levels of ideas, from deep core ideas to specific policy ideas may exist concurrently and may even be contradictory. Someone may for instance formally subscribe to normative values such as freedom or equality, but at the same time hold a contradictory view on a specific policy issue – for instance that citizens of third countries should not have equal rights. This comparison is also valid for the notion of solidarity.

Freeden (1994), who studied political concepts, proposed that core, adjacent and peripheral concepts should be distinguished. If applied to values, Stjernø (2011:158) suggests that political parties also operate within this framework. They have some basic values, which form the basis/core of their programmes and other values which are mentioned, but are not central. Gallie (1955) noted that values are the object of political struggle. They are constantly being interpreted and re-interpreted by political actors. At the same time, values, such as justice, solidarity, freedom or responsibility together form complete political language. (Stjernø 2011:158) This only supports the claim that various notions of solidarity, with varying interpretations and importance may be deployed concurrently. This is an important presumption for my analysis of political discourse.

Stjernø (2009, 2011) who is the go-to author on historical development of the concept of solidarity in Europe provides a useful summarizing definition of solidarity that I think best fits my research question, because it constructs solidarity as a political concept that is formed through discursive, communicative action and has implications for specific actions:

> "For the majority, it is based not on personal interest, but on political altruism: it is founded on empathy and cognition, and the balance between the two may vary. Solidarity is developed through communicative action and the ability to take the role of 'the others'. It means the preparedness to share resources with others, through personal contributions to those who are struggling and through taxation and redistribution organised by the state. Thus, solidarity means a readiness for collective action and a will to institutionalise it through the establishment of rights and citizenship. It is normally expressed through relating to others who are engaged in struggle." (Stjernø, 2011)

Drawing on this definition, Bell (2010) suggests it is necessary to ask when, towards whom and why is solidarity deployed by the actors. The analytical approach formulated by Stjernø (2011) adds questions about the foundations and the goals of solidarity. I will tackle these latter aspects only when defining European solidarity.

Who is included and excluded? It depends on how broadly solidarity is defined, ranging from family, members of a nation or religion to the entire world. With regards to refugee quotas,

in my opinion, it makes sense to focus on two aspects, solidarity towards refugees with a sense of humanitarian response and solidarity among EU member states directed towards those which were facing high inflows of refugees.

When is solidarity deployed? Ross (2010:2) suggests that the notion of solidarity is often invoked during crises, when a common response is required. Solidarity is invoked in both humanitarian and man-made crises. Events such as collapses of financial systems, humanitarian crises, but also migration crisis are often perceived through feelings of insecurity or loss of identity and therefore notions of solidarity are deployed in the discourse to provide a sense of community. According to the definition by Stjernø, the idea of solidarity may be deployed when politicians are seeking support for redistribution and taxation. European Stability Mechanism preventing European member states from bailout or the European Regional Development Fund supporting less developed European regions based on contributions of the richer Member States can as well be constructed as a solidarity mechanism.

Why is solidarity used? It may have explicatory value in crises, where context is important. The foundations of solidarity lie in the values shared by people or nations and the feeling of community among these people. Some collective goals such as peace, stability, freedom may come into play or beliefs about equality and altruism. European Union, for instance, is a project that besides uniting markets stands on common values (eg. Human dignity, freedom, democracy) and provides European citizenship to citizens of member states. Nations could also provide people with a sense of community, due to common history, culture and interests. David Miller and Sundas Ali (2014) propose that current societies are large and anonymous, therefore it is hard to build a sense of community or mobilize people in order to provide collective goods or agree on redistribution. They say, that if large scale solidarity was deployed, this problem could be potentially overcome. Nationality is in their view the main source of solidarity, because it has mythical and imaginary elements which could be adjusted

according to needs. Moreover, some sociologists, such as Vašečka (2011) state that Slovakia and other countries in the CEE follow primordial, rather than civic, tradition of citizenship and constitutionalism. Nation in these countries, is often perceived as congruent to the state. I think this underlines the importance to study solidarity in national contexts. It is deployed by political actors, who use nationality as one of the sources of solidarity and claim common actions need to be taken in the name of national community. Solidarity is sometimes deployed just as a meaning – the sense of community, while other times solidarity has causal implications for actions.

European solidarity

"Solidarity is part of how European society works and how Europe engages with the rest of the world." (EUR-Lex, 2008) European Union is more than a mere common market. It is built upon core principles and values. These values come out of Christian democratic (von Ketteler, Nell-Breuning) and Social democratic (Marx, Bernstein) traditions, which have developed in the national contexts. Social democratic solidarity is based on the foundations of interdependence, ethics and morality, empathy and acceptance of difference. Christian democratic solidarity is founded on the idea that man was created by God and ideas of human dignity and interdependence. It also rests on the underlying understanding of humankind from Christian ethics. The founding fathers (Adenauer, Schuman, De Gasperi) of the European Steel and Coal Community (ECSC) in 1951 were Christian Democrats. Soon after the establishment of the ECSC, Christian and Social democratic parties started functioning on the European level and simultaneously introduced ideas and values from national contexts into European one. They became part of the European political language and were incorporated in founding treaties.

Solidarity in primary European law

Solidarity is defined as one of the founding principles in European primary law. Primary law is the original, supreme source of law in the EU. It consists of founding treaties, which

contain formal and substantive provisions of law. They frame implementation of policies of European institutions. They also determine the competences of EU and member states. I will be referring to the most recent Treaty on European Union (TEU) and Treaty on Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) plus the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU in consolidated version from 2016. (EUR-Lex, 2016) Solidarity is mentioned and deployed both as a value and a principle aiming to guide actions on several occasions in these treaties, which have a binding character for EU institutions and member states.

The EU operates with the notion of solidarity on varying levels. For instance: "Solidarity between their (EC's) peoples" (Preamble), "solidarity and equality between women and men" (Article 2) or "solidarity between generations" (Article 3). But solidarity is used also with regards to relations with the "wider world" (Article 3), the common foreign and security policy (Article 21) or with regards to external actions as "political solidarity among Member States" (Article 24).

In the Article 2 solidarity is used as a normative value, along with principles of non-discrimination, tolerance, justice and values of equality, freedom or democracy in the Union and among societies of its member states. In case of a terrorist attack, natural or man-made disaster it is written in the TEU that Member States should "act jointly in a spirit of solidarity". (Article 222) The same formulation for act is used if severe difficulties arise in the area of energy. (Article 122)

Articles 67 and 79 are especially relevant for my research question, because they oblige EU members to use the solidarity principle with regards to migration. Article 67 states that the EU: "shall ensure the absence of internal border controls for persons and shall frame a common policy on asylum, immigration and external border control, based on solidarity between Member States, which is fair towards third-country nationals." Moreover, it is suggested in the Treaties that migration policy of the Union and its implementation "shall be governed by the

principle of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility, including its financial implications, between the Member States." Haughton (2007:3) suggests that the power of acquis depends on its "clarity, consistency and the ascribed salience of such laws". As I have shown in these examples, solidarity in the TEU sometimes describes specific situations and actions to be taken, while formulations such as "spirit of solidarity" or the implementation by "principle of solidarity" are rather vague.

Slovakia and the politization of the refugee quotas policy

There are three major strands of literature about Slovakia with regards to my research question. First, it is the literature about the impact of the EU on Slovakia, also known as Europeanization literature, which deals with the socialization effects of European integration. Secondly, I will shortly tackle the institutional background in Slovakia, including the main topics of electoral competition and the outcomes of the latest election. And lastly, it is the literature on nationalism in Slovakia, specifically I will focus on perception of "others", Roma, migrants or other minority groups, in the public discourse.

Europeanization

The process of integration is one of the main policies of the European Union to achieve the goal of prosperity, peace and security. It is a process in which countries liberalize trade and create a market for goods, people, capital and services. (EU, 2017) Europeanization can be described as the "domestic adaptation to European regional integration". (Graziano, Vink, 2006) With regards to Slovakia and other new member states, which joined the EU after 2004, the Europeanization literature focuses mainly on the positive effects of EU membership on these countries after their accession. (e.g. Moravcsik and Vachudová 2002, 2005, Radaelli and Schmidt 2004, Enyedi and Lewis 2007, Haughton 2010) The argument is that since candidate countries must meet Copenhagen criteria, defined in 1993, to become member states, they have certain obligations and motivations to do reforms. Besides economic criteria of a functioning

market economy or administrative and institutional capacity to implement the acquis (common rights and obligations defined in Treaties, EU law), the candidate countries must satisfy also political criteria: "stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities". (EUR-Lex, 2017)

Vachudová (2005) in her influential book distinguishes between the active and passive leverage of the EU. She states that the European Union played a passive role for post-communist nations – as these states were attracted to the EU membership and the idea of "prosperity, peace and security". EU membership emerged as a national interest in countries of CEE, because it offered "tremendous geopolitical, sociocultural, and economic benefits" (Vachudová, 2005:64) This resulted in an "asymmetric interdependence", because EU depended on these states only a little, which affected the accession talks. But the EU also played an active role, through deliberate conditionality of the pre-accession process and requirement criteria. Vachudová (2005:159) suggests that EU went furthest in using the active leverage in Slovakia, but she notes that the leverage had opposite effects, forcing the illiberal government of Mečiar to seek support in Moscow. At the same time this move helped the opposition gain support in 1998 elections, because people preferred West. (2005:159)

Slovakia is often presented as "one of the clearest examples of transformative power of the EU" (Haughton, Rybář, 2009:129) due to the patterns in party politics conflict against the illiberal HZDS and cooperation of pro-EU opposition. Haughton and Rybář (2009:139) suggest that in the post-accession period the EU played three roles in Slovakia: it was a source of agreement, the reference point and a measure of competence. Moreover, there was a narrative of a success story with relation to EU membership. The importance of being in the "inner core" of the EU (Schengen, Eurozone), presented as a part of Slovakia's identity illustrates well the sense of vulnerability in Slovakia. (Haughton, 2010) While in 1990's Madeleine Albright, then the US secretary of state, referred to Slovakia as the "black hole of Europe", the narrative and

perception in the world changed by 2006, when Slovakia was presented as the "Tatra tiger". Empowered by the fact that the country at first was not invited to the accession talks along with other Visegrad four states due to incapability to meet the political criteria, Haughton (2010) suggests that in Slovakia there is also a vulnerability of labels and a desire to be perceived as European. Partly because of this, there has been a broad agreement on being in the EU among politicians and in public opinion. (Haughton, Rybář 2009-10) Though, the EU is not central in electoral contestation. (Haughton 2014:81)

Institutions

Slovakia has a proportional representation electoral system with a 5% threshold. Since 1998 the elections are organized in a single constituency. Voters have 4 preferential votes, although these seem to play only a minor role in the outcomes. (Spáč, 2014) Slovak system could be characterized by high electoral volatility. In 2002 elections 40% aggregated volatility has been recorded, but the numbers remain high until today. In 2016 election, only 56.5% of voters remained stable in their preferences, either voting for the same party or not voting at all. (Gyarfášová, Slosiarik, 2016) High electoral volatility in a combination with short democratic tradition and weak institutionalization of parties, results in regular electoral success of new political parties. As Spáč and Rybář (2016:153) suggest this could be illustrated on the fact that after 2016 elections, none of the parties which governed ten years ago, is now represented in parliament.

The emergence of new parties, or the "new-newer cycle" as Krause (2013) calls it, is a phenomenon common for almost all countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). These new parties could be usually characterized by having a single leader, who determines the future of the party. Among characteristic features are also lack of organization and emphasizing issues, such as corruption, which do offer long term commitment of the electorate and their strength might diminish once in government. (Krause, Haughton, 2012) Krause suggests that Smer,

which was established in the early 2000's in Slovakia might be one of the exceptions from this pattern in CEE. Robert Fico managed to invest into party organization and regional representation before the second campaign in 2006. Fico shifted emphasis on topics such as redistribution and sometimes also national identity, making long term commitments. Despite this fact, Krause concludes that SMER remains dependent on Fico and his engagement (Krause, 2013:278)

Haughton (2014) sums up the Slovak election themes of the last decade. In 2006, the electoral campaign was about the pros and cons of the neo-liberal model, Hungarian minority and social values. In 2010, a question whether Robert Fico will become Prime Minister again was widely discussed, along with corruption, the ethnic tensions between Hungarian minority and Slovaks, but also taxes and spending were central in the campaign. After the Radičová center-right government collapsed over the unsuccessful no confidence vote connected with vote on support for European financial stability mechanism (EFSM) for Greek bailout in response to Eurozone crisis in 2011, the next election of 2012 was dominated by topics such as state of economy, corruption and coalition choices. (Haughton 2014:78) SMER (left-wing) won 83 seats and formed a one-party government. The general trend in party competition until 2010 regards two central themes – role of the market and issues of national identity. After 2010 also anti-corruption agenda is discussed in electoral campaigns. (Spáč, Rybář, 2016)

The 2016 elections are sometimes termed as an electoral earthquake (Spáč, Rybář 2016:153), due to new divides, losers and winners of the election and a shaken logic of party competition and government formation, that was usually bound around two competing camps (left-right). At the same time the results could be also perceived as confirming Slovakia's party system to be "stable in its instability". (Haughton, Malová, Krause:2016) The main electoral themes related to protection of national identity. The governing party SMER led the campaign with a slogan "Protecting Slovakia" and its prime minister Fico added claims such as "Slovakia

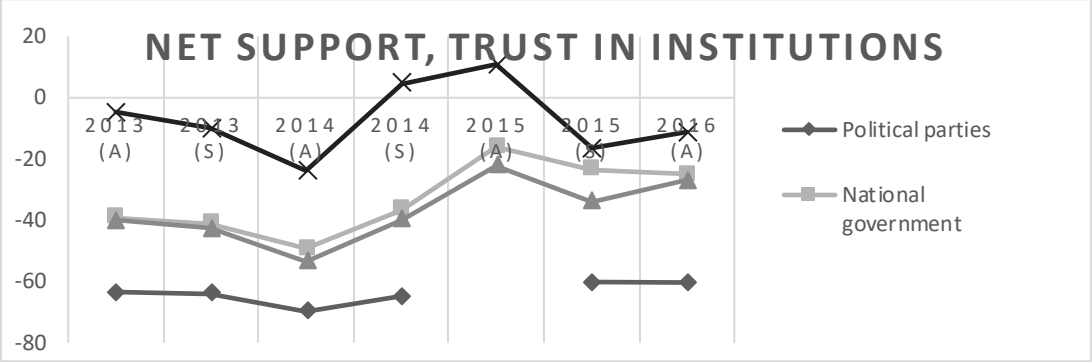
will not accept a single Muslim", because they [Muslims] are posing a security threat to Slovakia. Moreover, SMER claimed most of the migrants have prevalently economic motivations. The electoral campaign of SMER peaked with a filed complaint to European Court of Justice against refugee quotas and a presentation of a mobile wall a month before the election, to manifest the preparedness to "protect the citizens". According to Spáč and Rybář (2016) some members of the opposition criticized the government for harming Slovakia's reputation abroad, while others called the quotas inefficient, but hardly anyone in the opposition fully supported it. These statements and their implications in the context of a common European solution to migration crisis require further analysis. Whereas the actions and policies may be pretty self-explanatory, I think it is important to study the discourse as narratives and frames contain specific nuances which may be contradictory and harsher than the actions.

Malová and Dolný (2016) offer interesting points into the discussion about developments leading to 2016 elections. Authors analyze the elite response to Eurozone crisis and briefly deal with their response to refugee crisis in 2015, considering the effects of Europeanization. In the Eurozone crisis, strong dependency of Slovakia on the EU market played a role. In 2015 almost 85% of Slovakia's export headed to countries of the EU, with 23% exported to Germany and 12% and 9% to its neighbors, Czech Republic and Poland respectively. (Eurostat, 2016) While political Copenhagen criteria had mainly effect in the pre-accession period, Maastricht criteria for joining the monetary union had longer lasting effects. The primary role of European Central Bank (ECB), is to maintain stability of euro, therefore it can put pressures on Eurozone member states. Malová and Dolný suggest that the oversight from ECB played an anchoring role during the economic crisis.

The key point for my research question, that the authors are making, is about the elites. While political elites have complied with explicit rules of the Eurozone, they did not act in a similar manner when "humanitarian European norms" were in play. Malová and Dolný (2016)

state that it was due to high domestic costs. Authors suggest that the reason is in instrumental understanding of European norms by the elites that, is focused on fiscal governance, not on other shared European norms. Even though a government dissolved over EFSM in 2011, the support for EU did not shift. The EU economic crisis did not invoke significant anti-EU sentiments and no mainstream party rejected European integration. (see figure.1) The consequences of migration crisis are different.

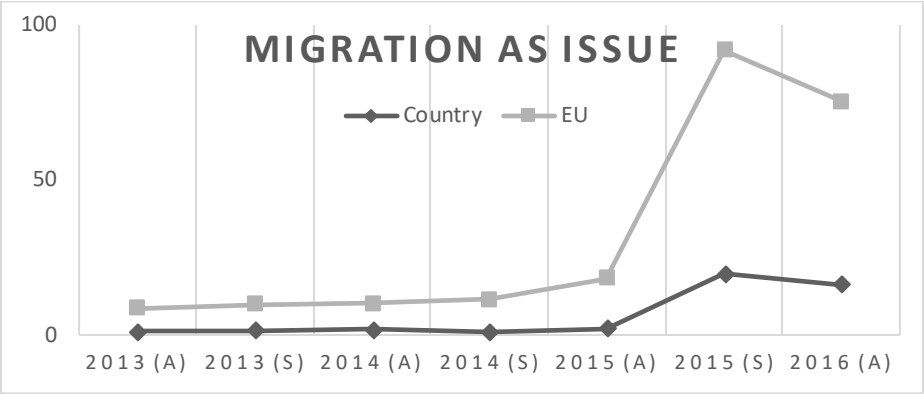
Figure 1 - Trust in Institutions



*Net support % calculated as the difference between the proportion of those who "tend to trust" and "tend not to trust" the institutions in Slovakia. (See Annex 1) Source: Standard Eurobarometer 2013-2016 autumn (A), spring (S)

Even though authors state the anti-EU attitudes did not rise significantly in 2015, they claim the mishandled crisis paved way for populist politics. (Malová, Dolný, 2016:300-301) The results of 2016 elections, with extremist and alternative parties in the parliament support their claim. In my opinion, my model could provide further understanding of these developments. Firstly, I think it is necessary to evaluate whether elites perceive European norms only through instrumental prism, by analyzing why politicians deploy or do not deploy specific discourses and ideas. Solidarity is an idea which was central both in discussions about EFSM and migration crisis. To see how elites, understand and use this concept could be a part of the answer. Secondly my focus is on the entire year before the election of March 2016, allowing me to cover the changes and analyze trends.

Figure 2- Perception of Migration as an Issue in Slovakia



Migration selected as one of two most important issues that Slovakia and EU are facing. (see Annex 1) Source: Standard Eurobarometer 2013-2016 autumn (A), spring (S)

Discourses

As I have mentioned in the section on electoral competition, two topics were dominant in Slovakia until 2010– labor market and national identity. There seem to be patterns in these past discourses, such as politicians using nationalism as a mobilization tool, that can have implications for the discourses that were led during the refugee crisis, as Kluknavska and Smolik (2016) suggest.

In the 1990's the political discourse was full of nationalism, mostly due to breakup of Czechoslovakia and national tensions with Hungarian and Roma minority. Kevin Deegan Krause (2004:658-9, 2013:264) distinguishes between six set of attitudes that were present in this period, peripheral nationalism against:1) a domestic minority (Czechs), 2) regional or global institutions (EU, Nato), 3) foreign state (Hungary), 4) state building nationalism against a homeland minority (Hungarians), 5) against a non-homeland minority (Roma) and 6) against co-nationals (non-nationalist Slovaks). Based on a content analysis of electoral programs in 90's elections (1992, 1994 and 1998), Krause suggests various nationalisms tend to shift along with most pressing national issues, such as breakup of Czechoslovakia or beginning of accession talks with the EU. (Krause, 2004:685) Fisher (2006) also states that the nationalist

discourses shifted from ones against Czechs (external other) to those against Hungarians (state building nationalism) to nationalism against the West (EU and non-nationalist Slovaks).

These nationalist discourses by 2000's started to interact and became linked to political preferences. Moreover, the patterns from 1990's show that they became "politicized at precisely the moment that such politicization proved useful for the country's largest party" (Krause, 2004:658-9). With regards to nationalism towards the West and the EU, Krause mentions that voters aligned their attitudes with party leaders, rather than the other way around. The claim is based on the analysis of relationship between party decisions and support of voters and the fact that electorate's beliefs changed after their political preferences were already fixed. Also, weak party mechanisms back then, support the thesis that it was a top down shift led by the party elites – who shaped public attitudes and helped "align them in configurations." (Krause, 2004:687-690) This behavior might have implications for the discourses during the refugee crisis. If voters align their preferences with parties and their leaders, this supports the assumption that politicians would deploy specific messages and discourses strategically, to achieve electoral success and receive support. Also Gyarfášová (2013) presents a similar notion. Nationalism is according to her often used as a "conveniently available" mobilization tool of collective identities. Moreover, Kluknavska and Smolik (2016:335), who studied issue adaptation of extreme right parties, suggest nationalist, xenophobic and populist discourses were bridged by these parties in late 2000's, and received positive feedback during economic and refugee crisis. This fact may have played another significant motivation for mainstream politicians to embrace these types of discourses to mobilize their voters.

Vollmer (2011:320-1) notes that the concept of threat often plays a dominant role in EU discourses on migration. It is connected to the establishment of common security zone and is specific in each of the national contexts. The discourses about migrants living in Slovakia are often dominated by prejudice and stereotypes based on almost no real-world experience with

migrant populations. (Vašečka, 2011:105) Divinský (2004) suggests that especially in early 2000's these discourses were driven by fear for security from irregular migration – irregular populations of migrants residing or transiting through Slovakia were exaggerated. Discursive criminalization by the media was also present, prioritizing negative stories.

Refugee crisis, which is a relatively recent event of high salience in the EU, is however even more interesting in the Slovak context, because Slovak national elections took place in the same period as the refugee quota system was announced and discussed. This supposedly adds intensity to the discourses held and makes it an attractive object of study that may unfold the developments in the stance towards Europeanization or specific institutional reactions. The statements and attitudes towards others in such a critical period may not only explain external events, but they may help us understand what solidarity (European values) really stand for in Slovakia, reflected in the discourses and actions of the actors. How do the pro-European attitudes and positive impacts of the EU on Slovakia, outlined in the literature review, translate into a stance towards EU policy on refugee quotas? How does the fact that a political campaign is under way play into this configuration? Answering these questions may help us understand better how politicians argument, what goals they seek by deploying specific discourses and whether they consider values in their decision-making or whether they perceive them instrumentally.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Case selection

As suggested in the literature review, I am focusing on the case of Slovak political discourse. This choice is conditioned theoretically (Silverman, 2000:105), because the puzzle in my research questions regards the general positive stance of the public and country representatives towards the EU, but a negative attitude towards an EU policy (refugee quotas) in Slovakia. The choice is subjected by the occurrence of a national election in the given period and the related assumption about the strategic use of salient issues by political actors to attract voters. Politicians, who are trying to get elected, will deploy discourses and present statements which are likely to be close to attitudes of their electorate on important events, such as the refugee crisis. In a sense, the politicians are trying to "guess" what their voters think about certain important topics which are discussed publicly as issues. Modern political campaigns and marketing rely heavily on opinion polls and focus groups to learn about the public stances. However, this should not imply that politicians only say what their voters want to hear, but they also should (and have an option) to shape the beliefs and values of their electorates, as public figures and authorities. Those who show great leadership in their governance are often referred to as "statemen/women".

Moreover, as suggested by Wolcott (1990:69), I decided to narrow down the focus on a single case (rather than all four Visegrad nations), to produce a more manageable and achievable research task, due to reasons of time, space and language skills. This approach enables me to add more data or different levels of discourses. (in Silverman, 2000:69) The focus on a single case (within-case analysis), is subjected by the ability to cover the developments leading up to the elections over time. Poland, which also had a parliamentary election in similar period (October 25, 2015) would be an obvious choice, but Slovakia has been chosen due to a better knowledge of local context and therefore also the ability to "read between the lines" of

what the politicians are actually saying. This paper could serve as a basis for future comparative research.

Data

In my analysis, I will be using Newton media database as the primary source of data. It is a private service providing access to all the Slovak media articles, including print newspapers and online content, press agency articles or even television reporting.

In the first part of the analysis I will extract media content which regards refugee quotas, to learn about the periods (months), when quotas were discussed the most in the media. I will use key terms and filters (see Annex 1) to acquire the given content. Of course, this will largely depend on external factors, such as the number of refugees arriving to Europe or the legislation passed by the EU, but the assumption is that these are the periods when domestic political elites also have to react and present their statements. Presumably they discuss the quotas the most and have to "take sides".

I will be focusing on three categories of media – print newspapers, their online websites and lastly two TV stations.

I will include four newspapers, SME ("we are"), Nový Čas ("the new time"), Pravda ("the truth"), and Denník N (Daily N). The average daily sales of the print edition of the newspapers in the first quartile of 2015 were according to ABC Audit led by Nový Čas with 95000 sold copies, followed by Pravda with 43000 and Sme with 32000 copies. Daily N was not monitored in given period, but the sales according to the publisher were 8000 average sold copies per day. Since print sales are decreasing constantly both in Slovakia and globally, it is important to also follow the audiences on newspaper's websites, where on the contrary, the audience and subscriber numbers are increasing. (Poláš, 2015)

According to AIMmonitor (a media monitoring agency) Sme.sk, the most read newspaper website which is profiled as a liberal, economically right-wing paper in the Slovak context, had 2.1 million real users in March 2015 and was the third most visited Slovak domain. The most read tabloid website, Cas.sk, had 1.9 million real users in the same month and ranked fifth among Slovak websites. In the analysis, I will include two other newspapers, Pravda.sk and Denníkn.sk. Pravda is profiled as a liberal left-wing newspaper. It had 1.4 million real users in March 2015. DenníkN.sk defines itself as an independent liberal newspaper. Even though it was set up only in January 2015 by part of the Sme's editorial staff and newsroom, it is also considered an opinion making site, with half a million real users and ranked 23rd within Slovak domains.

Among the televisions, I will focus on Markíza, the most watched commercial television with approximately 23.1% share of the market in 2015 and STV1 ("Slovak television one"), a public channel with 10.7% share.

The second and main part of my analysis, the discourse analysis, will be based on the findings from first part – where I am looking for the months, with the highest frequency of articles about refugee quotas. From these I will select from two, up to four periods to provide a comparative aspect for the analysis over a period of one year.

To extract the political statements and discourses I will be using data from press agency TASR (The News Agency of the Slovak Republic), a public service institution, providing news coverage. I will be again using the Newton media database to retrieve the texts, which were authored by TASR and which regard the refugee quotas. (see Annex 1 for key terms and filters) Then manually, I will pick only those texts which contain statements and speeches of Slovak political actors, or NGO's and other civil society actors who might participate in the discourse. The main advantage of this approach is that I will be able to cover the changes in the political discourse over a longer period, since I will be using articles written by the press agency which

include political statements, making it a manageable task. In contrast to media analysis, which usually focus on all the articles published in selected media over a brief period of one week, as for instance Gartrell (2016), who analyzed the portrayal of Syrian refugees in British press, my approach enables me to evaluate trends over time and more importantly the changes in political actors' discourses leading up to the election. However, I must acknowledge that I will not be analyzing original texts and statements in their full lengths, but quotes from articles written by the press agency. The drawback is that the statements are already pre-selected by a journalist and may be taken out of the context. Despite this, I think that this approach represents the most viable choice for analysis of political discourse over longer time period. Firstly, it should cover the most important events and statements which resonated in the public discourse and required response by political opponents. Secondly, the amount of coverage of certain actors over other actors is also a finding. I will do my best to contextualize the statements and evaluate them in their original meaning.

Time frame

The first EU summit, a special meeting of the European Council, about the refugee crisis took place on 23rd of April 2015. (European Council, 2015a) April was also the deadliest month in 2015 according to IOM (International Organization for Migration) when more than 1250 died tragically crossing the Mediterranean. With refugees arriving to the southern shores of Europe in thousands, Germany's Angela Merkel first proposed a quota system to distribute migrants among EU countries. This policy reacted to the fact that in 2014, out of 624,000 asylum applications, more than one third were claimed in Germany. (Traynor, 2015) Due to the quota proposal, my analysis starts with April 2015 and the research period is bounded by March 5, 2016, the date of the Slovak parliamentary election. I will provide a timeline of important events with regards to the quotas and Slovak political discourse in the analysis chapter.

Text analysis

I will perform a quantitative computer-assisted text analysis using MS Excel and the data retrieved from the Newton media database in order to evaluate the issue salience of refugee quotas in the period between its announcement and the Slovak national election of 2016. The output will help me identify the months in which refugee quotas were most widely discussed in the Slovak political discourse.

Campaign, politicization and framing

For the qualitative text analysis is it important to introduce three new concepts, politicization, mobilization and framing. The campaign period does not include only the communication of political parties with their electorates but also the interaction between the parties. The dynamics include rhetorical attacks by opponents or attempts to "own" a topic, where they feel support for their position. As Dolezal et al. (2015:171) note, for instance in the research on US presidential elections, candidates often decide to go negative on the topic based on prior attacks. Also, highly conflict-prone events, such as the final television debates or the days immediately before the election, are likely to produce negativity in communication.

The mechanisms that lead to the selections of topics that are discussed in the campaign are highly influenced by several factors, among them the ideological preferences of the parties (Schultz, 1996), which influence the issue-based strategies, and the position in government or in opposition. Politicization of an issue, the first concept necessary to conduct the thematic analysis of key speeches and statements, is a broad phenomenon, and it entails public opinion and refers to the "existence of varying standpoints that are intensely debated in the campaign." (De Wilde, 2011 in Senninger, Wagner, 2015) In other words, it means that some issue receives public issue status and quite some centrality. In contrast, mobilization refers more to a party-level phenomenon, describing how a party includes an issue as central part of its election campaign. It also covers the intra-party competitions, types of issues addressed and framing strategies employed. Senninger and Wagner (2015:1339) argue in their analysis of EU topics

in national campaigns that parties' mobilization often depends on issue-based incentives: "a party will want to mobilize on certain issues (e.g. refugees, EU) if it believes that addressing these issues in such a way will bring about electoral benefits." They suggest that analysts should consider whether positions held by the party are popular and whether the party is perceived as handling the issue well. Moreover, as Carmines (1991:75) suggests: "All successful politicians instinctively understand which issues benefit them and their party and which do not. The trick is to politicize the former and depoliticize the latter". Politicians will therefore try to hold popular positions, where they are seen as capable, or where they can 'own' a particular standpoint or the whole issue. This has several implications for my analysis. Topics and issues, such as refugee quotas, get politicized in political space – public opinion and politicians react. Politicians are strategic in what discourses and standpoints they deploy, or whether they react to a certain issue at all, for instance if they do not 'own' the topic or feel on weak grounds with their standpoints. The consequence might be that some parties miscalculate and their stances do not attract electoral support, while others may gain votes. What I am interested in is the inter-party dynamics of mobilization, rather than the intra-party competition over the topic, since it can often be debated behind closed doors and what really matters for my analysis is how the issue is presented and communicated to the public, not the process of agreeing on the party stance.

Studies have shown that peoples' attitudes and decisions towards questions vary with the context and with how options are presented. (Chong and Druckman, 2007 in Binder et al. 2015) Framing, the way that an event, issue or politician is presented, may influence how people evaluate it. Tversky and Kahneman's (1981) experimental research suggests that frames affect people's decisions, even if logically equivalent alternatives are presented. How politicians frame refugee quotas and use it to attract voters will also be a part of my qualitative analysis. Various frames, such as presenting quotas and the refugee crisis as a threat or imposed proposal

by the EU, may show up in the analysis. But also positive frames, emphasizing solidarity, values, a "we can" approach may be present. I will categorize and theorize various frames of political parties in the analytical part.

Analyzing policy and problematizing issues

Since refugee quotas are a policy issue, which has created a lot of disagreement among European and Slovak political actors, it is also necessary to introduce a methodological tool for analyzing policy. Even though the main focus of this thesis is to analyze the political discourse on refugee quotas, there might be a discrepancy between how the political actors interpret the problem and how it is in reality (or in a different context). And of course, politicians may be lying, stating one thing, but actually doing the opposite. For this purpose, I decided to include the "what's the problem?" approach by Carol Bacchi (1999), which focuses on the representation of problems. She proposes the analysis of policy to be carried out through the competing representations and interpretations of the political issues and as specific 'problems' which require specific solutions (in the form of specific policies). This view was also expressed by Michael Shapiro (1988:11, 26), who said that "public policy problems achieve their reality in language", i.e. they are not imitations of reality, but practices through which things take on meaning and value. (In Bacchi 1999:37-39)

The 'What's the problem' approach states that people do not discover problems, but create them–by giving them shape and representation and, consequently, implying what should and should not be done. This understanding of problems suggests that what really matters is how the 'issues' or 'problems' are represented and constructed, rather than the pressing reality of the issue. (Bacchi, 1999:9)

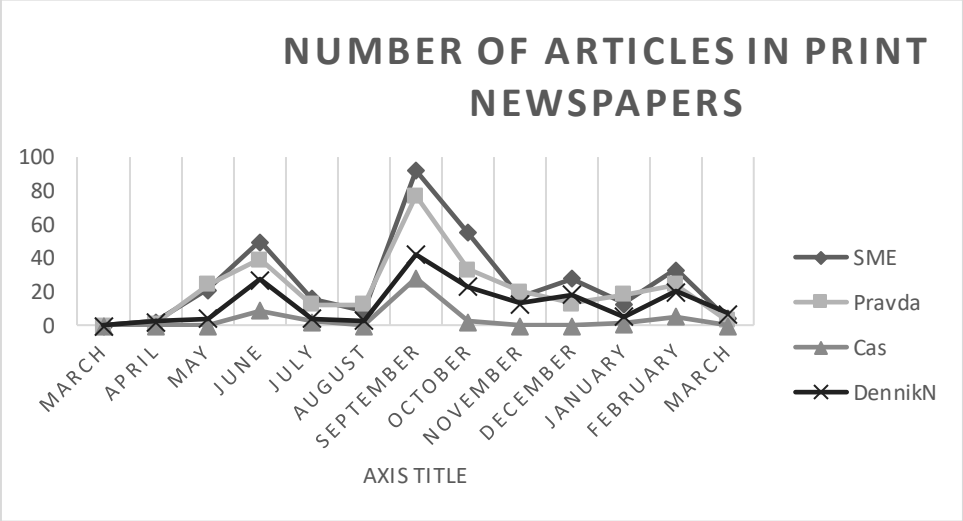
Chapter 4 - Analysis

Quantitative media analysis

Refugee quotas became a widely-discussed issue after their announcement in April 2015, as I have discussed in the previous chapter. The aim of this thesis is to analyze the political discourse and the framing of the refugee quotas in the period, in the context of the undergoing political campaign leading up to the Slovak parliamentary election of March 5th 2016. Since it is impossible to analyze the discourse in its entirety over a period of one year due to reasons of time and space, as I have described in methodology, a quantitative media analysis will help me choose the most important months to further analyze qualitatively.

In the year prior to the election, the most articles about refugee quotas were published in print newspapers in June 2015, September 2015 and February 2016, as shown on Chart 1 (below). It shows the number of published articles which contain the keywords *refugee* or *quota* for each month for four newspapers.

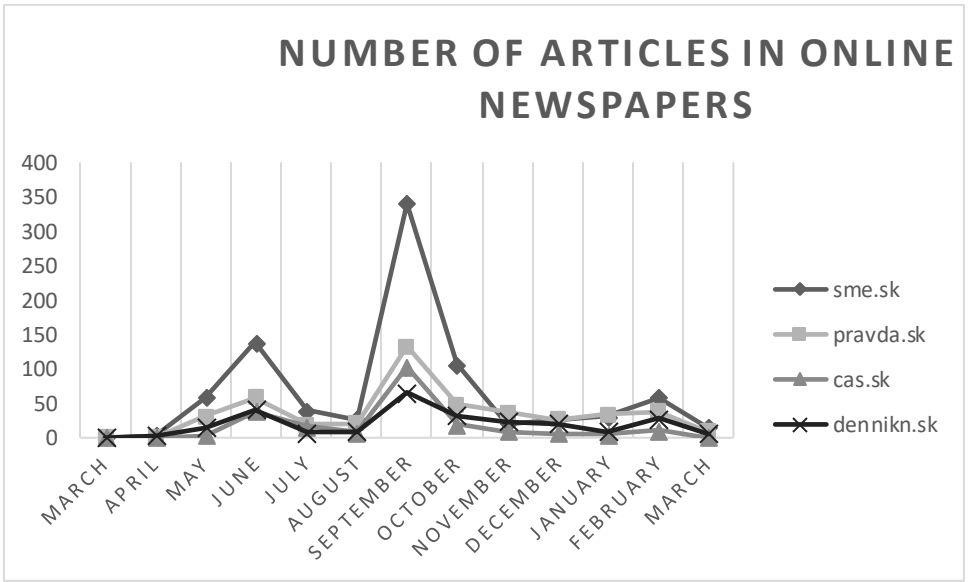
Figure 3- Refugee quotas in print newspapers



Source: Newton media database, 2017

The trend is almost identical for all four newspapers. The most articles about quotas were published in September. The broadsheets: daily SME published 92 articles, Pravda 77, DennikN 42 and even the tabloid Nový Cas published as many as 28 articles. The differences in the frequency of published articles could be explained by several arguments: SME and Pravda have larger newsrooms than DennikN and the two newspapers are published six times a week, while DennikN only five times. The reason why Nový Cas has the least articles about quotas can be explained by its profiling as a tabloid newspaper and coverage of social topics which differ from the other three newspapers. In Nový Cas there are very few or no mentions of refugee quotas in the rest of the months. Only in June 2015 were there 9 articles published and in February 2016 there were five articles. Interestingly, these months ranked second and third also for the broadsheets. A similar pattern is present in the analysis of the online websites of these newspapers, as shown in Chart 2. In September, there were also the most online articles about quotas on all the media websites. SME.sk had almost three times as many articles (340) as second Pravda.sk (133).

Figure 4- Refugee quotas in online newspaper websites

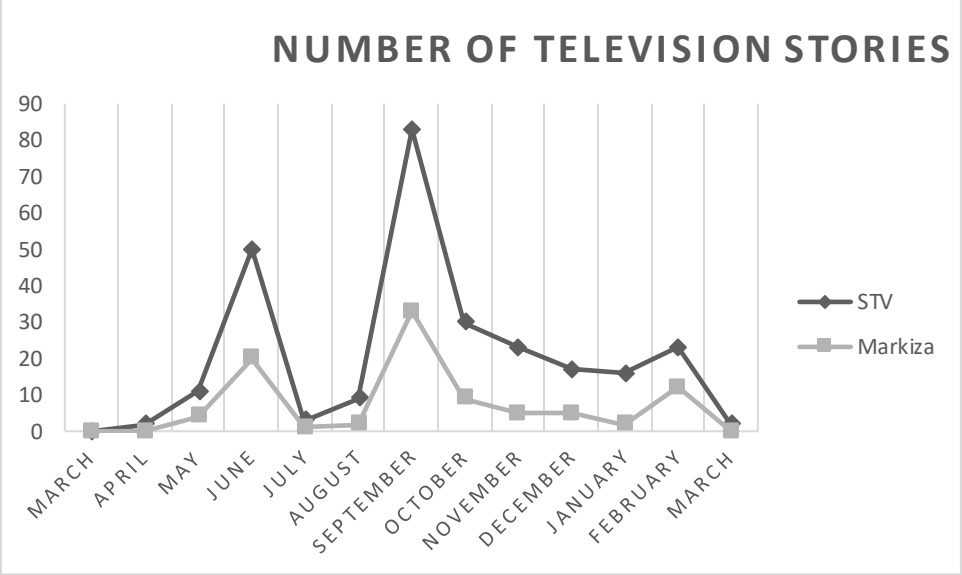


Source: Newton media database, 2017

The difference could be assigned to the fact that the website is the third largest Slovak domain and it contains many sub domains, such as regional newspapers Korzar or Uj Szo.

The pattern observed for both online websites and print newspapers is valid also for TV reporting in the selected period. June, September and February represent a logical choice for further qualitative analysis, because they are the "peaks" of the reporting frequency on refugee quotas. Moreover, the selection of these three months enables me to cover the changes in discourse over time. The quantitative analysis, which has been performed by a Boolean search, of course includes all the articles which contain the search term on refugee quotas in selected media. This means that it covers external developments regarding the issue, such as information about migrant ships coming to Europe, proposals by the EU or statements of European as well as Slovak political leaders on the refugee crisis.

Figure 5- Refugee quotas in selected televisions



Source: Newton media database

Even though selecting three months, June, September and February might mean missing some of the important statements and speeches of Slovak political actors, it should be sufficient to provide enough primary data to analyze the framing of refugee quotas. Moreover, since my

focus is also on the use of refugee quotas as an issue before the parliamentary election, selecting a three-month period will enable me to evaluate the developments and changes in rhetoric during the campaign, leading up to the elections. Naturally, refugee quotas and more generally the migration crisis are both issues which got politicized and therefore widely discussed among the public and politicians. In this case, it was due to the "crisis" status of the situation, the need for a humanitarian response and contradictory views on how to solve it. In the next section I will shortly discuss the most notable events in the studied months to provide a context for the analysis.

Context

In 2014, there were 562,000 first time asylum applications in EU. (Eurostat, 2017) In 2015, the inflow of refugees continued. Since March there were news about migrants and refugees floating towards the EU through Mediterranean Sea on ships. In April, the situation escalated as hundreds of people drowned on the route. (BBC, 2016) On April 20th, the European Union in reaction announced a 10-point plan to prevent further tragedies, which included deployment of teams from the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) into Italy and Greece. (Reuters, 2015) On April 23rd the first emergency summit on migration and refugees was held, where heads of EU states discussed measures to tackle increasing refugee and migrant flows. Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, proposed a system of quotas to redistribute asylum seekers across EU member states. (Huggler, 2015) The European Commission unveiled a blueprint in May, which suggested 20,000 refugees should be redistributed among European states. (EC, 2015a)

Another important development with regards to EU asylum procedures came in June, when Hungary stopped receiving back applications according to the Dublin III regulation, (Hruschka et.al, 2016), which requires applications to be processed in countries of first registration. In late August, Hungary, one of the main transit countries, became overburdened

by refugees and closed Keleti railway station, which transformed into a temporary refugee camp. (Nolan, 2015) The argument of the government for the closing referred to the Schengen regulation, which states that no one should be able to travel in the Schengen area without valid identification. (Keszthelyi, 2015) On September 4, migrants started walking on the highway towards Austria. Austria's Chancellor Faymann with Germany's Angela Merkel announced they would allow migrants to cross the border from Hungary. The next day, September 5, Germany suspended the Dublin regulation, which allowed the migrants to have their asylum application processed in Germany. However, on 14th of September, Germany became overburdened by the inflows and introduced temporary border controls on its borders with Austria. Austria followed and also issued controls at its border with Hungary. (BBC, 2015a)

The emergence of the whole situation, and an important development in the Slovak political discourse, was marked by tragic death of 71 people, who were found in a smuggler food truck on a highway near Vienna and Bratislava on 27th of August, 2015. This event led to a civic petition called "Plea for Humanity" (Výzva k ľudskosti), which was within a few days signed by approximately 10,000 people, civic personalities, companies, NGOs, the Ombudsman and the Slovak President. Its goal was to advocate a humanitarian response to the crisis. This civic initiative became one of the actors in the political discourse, but also a coordinator of NGOs, volunteers, and a crowdfunding campaign. Another tragic event, which received world-wide media coverage and became sort of a poster image capturing the traumatic experiences of migrants coming to Europe from Turkey by sea was the death of Syrian toddler Aylan Kurdi on 2nd of September. (BBC, 2015b) The released photograph spread around the world and calls for an international response to the crisis emerged, also among politicians.

On September 9, the Commission proposed an emergency relocation mechanism for 120,000 refugees already in Europe and other measures to assist member states. The measure was adopted on September 22nd by the Home Affairs Ministers and voted on by the European

Parliament. (EC, 2015b) In October Greece, Germany and other states along the migration route agreed to create holding camps for 100,000 people. Leaders of the EU met with African leaders in Malta on November 11 and 12, where they adopted a common declaration and a statement about an Emergency Fund for Africa. Despite the efforts to find a solution and moderate the situation, further debates about migration were fueled by terrorist attacks of November 13th in Paris.

The leaders of EU and Turkey met on 29th of November to discuss a deal to reduce migratory flows to the EU and to provide assistance to Turkey. (European Council, 2015b) On 2nd of December, Slovakia filed a lawsuit at the European Court of Justice against the mandatory quota relocation mechanism, and was followed by Hungary in the same month.

Even though winter weather made it impossible for migrants to cross the Mediterranean, and in effect the inflows declined, there were already over 1,2 million first time applicants in Europe by end of 2015. Therefore, the issues with how to process this many application, decide who is eligible for protection or how to relocate refugees were highly relevant. Of course, political debates about these highly salient issues and about rethinking the asylum system were going on.

This contextual information, along with the selected months with the highest frequency of articles about refugee quotas, may imply that Slovak discourse is to a large extent reactive to external events at the European level. Although there were hardly any refugees in Slovakia in June 2015, the debate was fueled by the news about shipwrecks and refugees on the Southern European borders. Another event which marks a turning point was for sure the death of 71 refugees on the highway in late August, followed by civil society reactions and salient discourse over the issue. Only February 2016 seems to correlate with a domestic event, the election, since refugee inflows calmed over the winter.

Discourse analysis

In the qualitative analysis, I am working with a total of 58 articles written by the national press agency, which regard the Slovak political discourse over refugee quotas. There are 23 articles written in June 2015, 30 in September and 5 articles containing political statements written in February 2016. I have extracted 156 separate political statements, which represent the units of my analysis. After initial analysis, I categorized them into a logical matrix and created three categories of statements – about who are refugees, what is the stance towards quotas and how is the notion of solidarity constructed, which were dominant in the discourse and which best regard my research questions.

In the analysis, I will explain how refugees are portrayed in the Slovak political discourse during the three different months, when public discussion about refugees and refugee quotas are most intense. In an attempt to provide an empirically grounded answer to the RQ, I also engage with how the quota system as a solution to the 'refugee problem' within the EU is framed in terms of different ideas of solidarity. I will deal with the main subject of my study, the politicians' stance towards the refugee quotas and the arguments they use to oppose them. Finally, I will discuss how politicians deploy the notion of solidarity into the discourse and how they are expressed in their policies and actions, linking up the analysis with the research question of the study.

The main actors

Since I will be referring to political and civil actors, who deploy specific discourses towards specific political ends, throughout the analysis I find it useful to first present some general findings about who are the most important actors. As I discussed in the theoretical chapter, actors' influence in discourse varies according to the role they play. This means that some actors are more successful than others in conveying their message to their audiences. Or

simply that politicians who are in the government, and have influence over public policies, have more or a more influential say on these topics.

This is also true in my research. Prime Minister Robert Fico along with his two deputies, Interior Minister Robert Kaliňák and Foreign Affairs Minister Miroslav Lajčák, dominate discourse on refugee quotas. In June 2015, one-third of the 33 analyzed statements were presented by one of these three government representatives. In September, it was more than half of the statements - 57 out of 100 –, with Fico having made 23 of them. Before the election in February, Fico made 8 statements with regard to the refugee quotas and the party SMER totaled 13 out of 23 statements. Besides owning the counts, these three actors outline the discourse on refugee quotas. The reason is that firstly, SMER, after winning the elections in 2012 and receiving 83 seats in the national parliament, formed a single party government. Secondly, it is exactly the Prime Minister, Interior Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister who are responsible for reactions to events such as the refugee crisis. They hold the power and resources to form a national policy, for instance on refugee quotas. The opposition parties, in this case everyone else, do participate in the discourse on refugee quotas, but in general they tend to react to policies, external events and statements of government or European officials. Of course, it is important to remember that a political campaign was underway in the selected period, which means that some opposition party members tried to act as an alternative to the government.

Two parties, populist We are family – Boris Kollar and far-right LS-NS (People's Party – Our Slovakia), which were successful in the 2016 election, passing the 5% threshold, are not represented in my analysis. Both parties opposed immigration with a populist and extremist rhetoric (Haughton et al., 2016). The reason for not being included is that the press agency, along with most other serious media, did not cover the statements of these two parties in the

selected period since their message often spread hatred and intolerance. However, their election return could be explained by their success on social media. (Kysel', 2015)

Who are the refugees?

To analyze how refugee quotas were framed in the political discourse, it is important to first discuss what discursive strategies politicians used to depict refugees.

I will start with the general findings for the selected period. The discourse in June 2015 could be characterized by political actors describing who the migrants are. Most actors agree that refugees should be protected, while economic migrants should not. Politicians discuss the threat posed by migration and fear of radicalization - on the day of refugees, 20th of June, an anti-Islam march is organized by far-right activists, while civil society actors organize a counter-protest. September 2015, when quotas are announced and events occur closer to Slovakia's border, the issue gets really politicized, there is more populist rhetoric among politicians. Some are fear-mongering, and they often use quantifiers to describe the scale of the crisis. In February 2016, in the light of the upcoming election, populist rhetoric and generalizations are still present.

The majority of politicians used the terms *migrant* and *refugee* to underline their motivations to migrate. While refugees, categorized under the 1951 UNHCR Treaty, are seen as deserving humanitarian protection, the term *economic migrant* is used to describe those who undertake migration as a matter of choice, are opportunistic, not in 'real' need, therefore should not be entitled to any help, but rather sent back to their countries of origin. Economic migration is debated with regards to restrictions and its prohibition. Sometimes politicians talk about illegal migration, and migrants are also called illegal, due to illegal border-crossing and inability to claim international protection. The bottom line is that the discourse is constructed on differences between the in-group (domestic society) and out-group (migrants and refugees). The statements often lack compassion or are based on fictive information.

One of the narrative devices to construct a negative image of immigrants was the use of quantifiers. Especially in September, when the quotas are approved and the politicians face the issue "at the borders", some 10 statements (out of 100) contain quantifiers. The Prime Minister refers to a 'mass' or 'flood' of people, instead of highlighting the individual stories and sufferings of individuals and families migrating, women, children and men fleeing war – as for instance President Kiska does. Quantifiers were also used to refer to economic motivations of the people to come to Europe. Fico said: "We have to identify who is an endangered refugee. Is someone, who finds 5000 euros for a smuggler suffering from famine? Look at how many young men there are, who are coming to get a job. It is 90% among them." (Fico) This statement is interesting for at least two reasons. Firstly, despite stating that refugees should be helped, it is the Prime Minister, the highest government official, deploying a populist message disregarding the true cause of people migrating. The fee paid to smugglers may represent a big amount of money compared to Slovakia's average wage, but what is missing is the context of people using their savings and selling their property to save their lives. Secondly, according to UNHCR's (2015) December report, the statement is not factually correct either. Reportedly, Syrians, escaping the war in their country, formed 50% of the people crossing the Mediterranean, followed by second most numerous group of Afghans, accounting for 20%. According to the report 70% of migrants were men, as opposed to 90% stated by Fico. Even so, many of the men moving towards Europe might have been accompanied by their wives, children and other dependents.

Quantifiers were also used to argue against the quota system. The statements in this category could even be perceived as fear-mongering. For instance, the Interior minister said that Slovakia could, without any problem, deal with two thousand asylum seekers, but with regards to the mandatory quota, "it could be 50,000 people over the next five years". (Kaliňák) An opposition member presented a similar claim: "Europe could help 100,000 migrants, but if

10 million came, we could not absorb them." (Miškov) These claims seem slippery-slope arguments. Even though they are unverifiable, they seek to refuse the quota policy while reasoning using potential – and highly unlikely – future developments.

In addition to quantifiers, another discursive strategy was the linking of refuges to terrorist acts taking place in Europe around the same time. Migrants are often represented in the Slovak political discourse as potential security or even terrorist threats. One statement by the Interior Ministry in June speaks for all: "We don't know the background of these people, whether it's their education, cultural habits and traditions, the security aspect etcetera. We don't know whether they will be able to integrate and find a job." (Kaliňák) This statement does reflect the fact that Slovakia has only limited experience with foreigners and asylum seekers. According to IOM in 2015, foreigners accounted for 1.72% of the population, while more than 40% were from neighboring countries, and 55.8% altogether were from the European Union. With regards to asylums, the story is similar. As depicted on Table 1, Slovakia grants only a minimum of asylums per year. While the number of applications could be counted in hundreds over the past 7 years, during the conflict in the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan there were thousands of applications per year between 1999-2007, reaching over ten thousand in 2003 and 2004.

Table 1 - Asylum Statistics

Year	Nr. Of Asylum Applications.	Asylums Granted/denied	Additional protection granted/denied	Citizenship granted
2010	822	15/180	57/101	3
2011	541	12/186	91/47	7
2012	732	32/334	104/153	0
2013	441	15/124	34/49	7
2014	331	14/197	99/41	12
2015	330	8/124	41/24	5
2016	146	167/82	12/13	3

Source: Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, 2017

The narrative about the potential threat and little knowledge about the arriving people was echoed by both the government officials and the opposition. A claim by Fico warning that there are dangerous people arriving to Europe among the mass of migrants, similarly as the one about money spent on smugglers, could be described as fear-mongering. Regardless of its validity, I think it is interesting to note that such statements, which are hardly verifiable, are spread by none other than the Prime Minister.

And lastly, migrants and refugees are framed through their religion in the Slovak political discourse. This is contrasting with the depiction of Syrian refugees in the British discourse. (Gartrell, 2016) Slovakia is a majority Christian country. According to 2011 census, 60% identify as Catholic, while only 2,000 identify themselves as Muslim. Estimations work with a number 5,000 Muslims, which would still represent less than 0.1% of population. Religion is used as one of the arguments why refugees would not want to go to Slovakia, but instead to "richer countries, where they have communities and families and the religious infrastructure." (Blaha) Another reference to religion is posed by the leader of nationalist SNS Danko, who stated that if Slovakia helped 100 Syrians, "with Muslim citizens it is usually at least times by seven" (Danko) referring to the possibility of bringing along atypically large families if given asylum. In September, maybe the most ironic statement was presented by Fico, who was the Prime Minister 8 out of 10 past years: "we are not able to integrate the Roma. Let's not pretend that we are able to integrate someone from Eritrea or someone who comes with a completely different religion and set of traditions." (Fico) The inability to resolve problems with other marginalized communities is used to argue against accepting the quotas or people of other religion. The fact that asylum seekers and migrants are approached through their religion is proven by the announcement of July and December 2015 that Slovakia will accept 100 and later 150 Assyrian Christians from Iraq. In February 2016, Fico repeats in the campaign

debates: “we will not be creating any united communities with other religions” (Fico), mobilizing voters in majority Christian Slovakia.

The attitude towards the quota system

There is a wide agreement on the refusal of the quota system among Slovak political actors during all three months. In June 2015, the National Council unanimously adopted a declaration stating the refusal of a mandatory quota system as a non-system solution with regards to the relocation of migrants. (Slovak National Council, 2015) The parliament members also insisted on voluntary participation in the system of relocations as suggested at the European Council meeting in April 2015. The discourse over the quotas in June could be summarized as a set of expressions towards the voluntariness of the proposed policy. Interestingly, even the President, who usually highlighted the human rights aspect of migration, agreed that quotas do not represent a *perspective and right solution*.

June 2015

Mandatory quotas were opposed by using fear-mongering techniques and national sovereignty frames in June 2015. Fico used a comparison with a *boomerang*, claiming that the problems after adopting the quota policy would only return with greater intensity. Similarly, Kaliňák made efforts to highlight the potential threats and negatives connected to enacting the quotas. He also claimed that the only effect would be that more migrants would come and potentially die during their journey. Interestingly, Kaliňák, as well as Fico, use simple comparisons to get their messages to their audiences. The Interior Minister defended the government’s stance by comparing the situation to ‘draining water from a leaking house’ or ‘signing a contract with the smugglers’. Using this rhetoric technique might help explain a relatively abstract problem (i.e. quotas) with a specific picture, and to link it back to why quotas should be refused.

The second argument against the quotas regards the EU as being responsible and threatening the Slovak sovereignty. Fico deployed a narrative positioning the Slovak Republic on the one side of the dialogue advocating for voluntary quotas, and the European Commission on the other side dictating mandatory numbers of migrants to be accepted. This narrative, deployed by the Prime Minister, is highly relevant to my research question, because it explains the framing of the notion of solidarity towards the refugees. In June, the need to express solidarity towards other member states, was still absent. I will discuss these links in the next section of the analysis.

September 2015

The refusal of the quotas was even harsher in September, though not surprisingly, as it followed the enactment of the proposal to resettle 120,000 refugees across 28 member states. The government officials used several narratives to oppose the policy. The Interior Minister called them 'irrational' and 'against the interests of migrants'. These statements are part of a wider narrative that migrants do not want to go to Slovakia. Prime Minister claimed to never support a mandatory quota, which 'will not save anyone', bringing to the fore migrants' welfare also. The Foreign Minister called the policy 'administrative and directive', linking it with issues of sovereignty and administrative procedures. All these statements are in line with what the government had been stating already in June. Also, Fico pointed out that he intends to take legal action and not stop with just 'raising a hand against', suggesting that the quota system was seen as an important political issue to pick a fight over with the European institutions. An interesting twist was played by three European Parliament members for SMER, who voted for an EP resolution supporting Juncker's plan on migration (i.e. the quota system), with some opposition members calling for their resignation. The consensus on the refusal of the quotas between the opposition and the government lasted throughout September. However, the President and some

opposition members pointed out that quotas became an object of political competition, and that refugees became a topic of discussion only after the quotas were announced.

Compared to June, politicians blame the EU more often and more directly. The sovereignty frame, calling the mandatory quotas a 'dictate of Brussels' or a 'majority dictate', is used by both the opposition and government officials. Moreover, the EU is blamed for having an irresponsible immigration policy, which would supposedly lead to a higher inflow of refugees. Closely connected to the sovereignty narrative is the argument against the quotas portraying Slovakia as a poor and somewhat incompetent country. Even though refugees might really want to go only to Sweden or Germany – and would cross the Schengen border immediately, I think these narratives reflect some politicians' low ambitions to participate on bringing a solution, for instance when the Prime Minister argued Slovakia is not even able to integrate the Roma. This view disregards the fact that comparatively it is a rich, full EU member state with the resources and capacities to participate in supporting several thousand refugees (especially with EU support). At the same time, the argument that Slovakia is one of the small EU member states is expressed as a concern by some opposition MPs, that opposing the quotas might lead to isolation within the EU. I will further discuss this frame in the section on solidarity.

Schengen borders also appear in a different context in September. Other EU members are blamed for not protecting their Schengen borders. This securitization narrative is perceived as a priority and a solution that would be more viable than the quotas. It is also one of the frames that shows how solidarity among the member states and with refugees is constructed in the discourse. In this context, the statement by Fico, that Slovakia is doing its part protecting the border with Ukraine and other countries should do the same, sounds ironic. It does not account for the very different realities, where the Slovakia's Schengen border is only 97 kilometers long

and there are no refugee inflows on this border and in Slovakia, while the Southern borders in Italy or Greece are coasts of several thousand kilometers, overburdened by refugee inflows.

February 2016

In February, the central line was still that mandatory quotas have to be opposed, repeating the arguments about potential danger posed by the quotas or the EU being responsible. The opposition is more active in political competition over the quotas, at the peak of the political campaign, and its leaders often point out that the Prime Minister is misusing the topic for his own electoral goals. It is also evident that the election is coming to an end from Fico's rhetoric. In February, the SMER campaign with slogan "We are protecting Slovakia" is accompanied by Fico's claims that the opposition would 'drive in' thousands of immigrants if it formed a government after the election. Another slogan suggested that the EU, or even personally Angela Merkel, have no plan on how to solve the crisis, implicitly suggesting his party has the right solution, which would prevent enacting the quota system and migrants coming to Slovakia, therefore "protecting it". The "us" against "them" or Slovakia vs EU narrative is deployed also when Fico calls Germany's diplomatic questioning, before a V4 summit about Schengen, sending in a demarche, which is a formal diplomatic tool to express objection or protest. Interestingly, this narrative is focused towards Germany, rather than EU in general or other member states, due to the role Germany is playing in the EU and its welcoming stance towards refugees. These relationships and suggestions that some member states are behaving paternalistically or irresponsibly could be analyzed with regards to the notion of solidarity. I am going to discuss how the notion of solidarity was constructed in the discourse and what particular solutions the politicians offered instead of the opposed quotas. I will also present the disparities between presented narratives and actual actions taken by the government.

Solidarity

The notion of solidarity, along with refusing the quota system, was one of the dominant topics in the Slovak political discourse in the selected months. Solidarity discourses could be analyzed in three ways: solidarity discussed directly, implicitly and reflected in policies.

In some discourses, politicians and other civil actors used the term directly to frame the issue of the migration crisis and refugee quotas as problems reflecting the absence of solidarity. These were the discourses about how Slovakia can help the refugees fleeing war, how it should assist other EU member states overburdened by refugee inflows, and whether it is doing enough. Secondly, the analysis expands on how refugees, economic migrants and the policy on refugee quotas are approached in the Slovak political discourse, to analyze the implicit ideas about the notion of solidarity. And lastly, the government's actual actions taken during the refugee crisis may be interpreted as acts of solidarity, providing an empirical point of view.

Explicit solidarity

In June 2015, solidarity discourses were deployed to highlight the need to help the refugees. Interestingly, politicians use the word *solidarity* as an equivalent of helping, or accepting refugees. For instance, the Minister of Foreign Affairs said: "we are not against solidarity, but mandatory quotas are not a solution" (Lajčák), where solidarity is meant to stand for 'also taking in refugees', also participating in tackling the problem. However, previously discussed mandatory quotas are put to equivalence with *mandatory* solidarity by the Interior Minister. In this sense, solidarity is understood as a negative idea, according to the government stance that quotas should be opposed.

In September 2015, solidarity is also discussed in the context of assisting other member states in addition to the frame of helping refugees. Slovakia, along with other member states which refused to participate in refugee quotas, was criticized by other EU member states

(particularly Germany and France) as not expressing solidarity. (Markaris, 2015) Slovak government officials objected to these statements by claiming that they were against *false* solidarity. This argument leads back to the voluntariness of the quota system. Fico claimed in September that the government will help those who need it – refugees, not economic migrants. The notion of solidarity is present in his statements, but it is oriented towards refugees only and conditioned by voluntariness. Moreover, the Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister presented an interesting antagonism, with *solidarity, rationality and responsibility* on the one side and *accepting everyone* or *opposing quotas* on the other side. Lajčák argued that since the Union did not solve how to keep the migrants in countries assigned by the quotas, it is not *un-solidary* but rather *responsible* not to accept them, supporting the claim that refugee quotas should be opposed. The President framed the issue in the exact opposite way. He stated that helping refugees is an *expression of basic humanity and solidarity*. His understanding of solidarity as a feeling of community was further noted when he described the discourse in Slovakia as restricted to the question: "why should we help other people, if we didn't solve our problems." (Kiska)

Solidarity is not directly discussed in the selected statements in February. Only the leader of the Christian Democratic party KDH underlined the need for solidarity on a voluntary basis. His statement suggests a normative understanding of this notion: "if we won't have a feeling for those whose lives are being eliminated, we cannot talk of a character of the nation." (Figeľ)

The competition surrounding the idea of solidarity shows how politicians actively define and redefine the term in ways which support their political messages, be it pro or against the refugee quotas. The fact that the meaning of solidarity is thus disputed shows that the idea of solidarity is one avenue through which political messages are being forged: it is a centerpiece of political discourse in Slovakia at the time.

Implicit solidarity

Solidarity is commonly described as a feeling of community, a normative value or it may represent a call for action. As I described in the theory chapter, it operates on various levels, from deeply rooted ideological values to ad hoc policy stances. In this part I interpret the implicit messages of solidarity in previously analyzed framings of refugees and quotas. As suggested in my literature review, to analyze solidarity, I should first answer who is constructed as included and excluded from solidarity in the Slovak political discourse. Even though I have described the discourse as prevalently restrictive towards migrants (economic, illegal migrants and Muslims especially), with a clear consensus on the refusal of the quota system – using terms such as *irrational, non-sense or mandatory dictate* to describe it - most actors agree that refugees should be helped. Some politicians express compassion with the people dying on their way to Europe. Even Fico, who is often using fear-mongering narratives about the number of migrants arriving or deploying xenophobic statements about Muslims, in the end agrees that refugees should be protected. In September, he expresses sorrow, stating that each death is *horrible*, although simultaneously his pragmatism is reflected when he adds that doing politics based on *emotions* and *moralizing* could bring us into a *corner*. The representatives of Plea for Humanity along with the Ombudsman emphasize that the concern is with individual human beings who need help claiming that: "Slovak Republic cannot resign on providing protection of basic human rights and freedoms to everyone without exception." (Dubovcová) This claim shows the varying notions of solidarity between the Prime Minister and Ombudsman. While Fico implies that making unpopular policy decisions may have consequences for political support, the Ombudsman underlines exactly the opposite message, anchored in international Charters and agreements, that protection of rights should come first.

There is a clear distinction in the discourses between those who could claim protection according to the Geneva Convention (refugees) and those who could not (economic migrants).

This does not account for individual asylum claims, but rather constructs a perception of groups with common motivations - refugees (i.e. mainly from Syria) and economic -sometimes called *illegal* - migrants (usually from Africa). Therefore, Slovak solidarity could be described as including refugees, while excluding economic migrants.

Another instance, when migrants and refugees are approached as a particular group is when they are described through their religion. Syria being a majority Muslim country and Slovakia being a majority Christian country with almost no Muslims (see p. 45), the issue of their integration is problematized in the discourse (and actions too – accepting only Christians). Politicians are fearmongering and using security narratives. For instance, Fico claimed before the election in February 2016 that 'migrants could not be integrated in Slovakia' and that is why he will try to 'prevent establishment of a Muslim community' (Fico). Even though some opposition members criticize Fico for 'creating a strawman out of Islam and Muslims' (Droba), the official governmental line in the context of elections constructs solidarity rather as excluding Muslims. According to discourse institutionalism, actors express their interests and beliefs through public discourse. Therefore, the narratives about refusing to accept Muslims suggest that politicians either truly believe Muslims should not be part of Slovak society or they deploy these narratives instrumentally, operating on the policy level, to gain support through problematising of an unpopular topic in a way that garners public support.

The consensus on the refusal of refugee quotas has implications for understanding solidarity in Slovak discourse too. The quotas were a crisis measure aimed to resettle refugees and spread the burden among member states. Regardless of the fact that a majority agreement to resettle 120,000 was achieved, though there were almost 1 million at that time, the argumentation by Slovak political elites carries a message about the notion of solidarity. If solidarity is described as a feeling of unity among individuals or countries with common interests, then a solidary act would entail taking sharing the responsibility for the resettlement.

Discursively, Slovak politicians are rather doing the opposite. Among the prominent narratives are: critique of the EU or directly Germany for quotas being a bad, *irrational* measure representing the *dictate of Brussels*. Other narratives underline the need to protect the Schengen borders as one of the *priority measures,* which could slow down the migrant inflows. Politicians critique Southern member states for not protecting their shores from illegal immigration, 'failing to satisfy their duties' (Matovič). Or finally – some politicians frame Slovakia as a country, where the migrants don't want to go because 'they prefer other richer countries' (Matovič) or a country that has own domestic problems with *poverty, i.e. of Roma* (Fico). None of these narratives suggests taking part in a common solution. However, the elites do propose some measures, mostly in June 2015, though these are to a large extent vague and copy European debates – stabilizing the situation in war zones, creating hotspots and security zones in Africa or providing financial and humanitarian help. These proposals do not bear a message of European solidarity with overburdened European member states either. To summarize, most politicians deploy discourses seeking to avoid direct responsibility for accepting refugees and are rather trying to outsource the problem by proposing distant military, humanitarian and financial measures.

Policy solutions

In this section, I discuss what solidarity measures were eventually adopted, regardless of the way in which they were problematized in public discourse. Interestingly, despite strong anti-quota discourse throughout the months analyzed, Slovakia has been accepting resettled refugees, demonstrating the solidarity its politicians were critiquing and publicly resisting.

In June 2015, government officials announced Slovakia would accept 100 Assyrian Christians from Northern Iraq on a voluntary basis as a contribution to resolve the migration crisis. On December 2015, 25 families actually arrived, a total of 149 refugees, to start the asylum process lasting up to two years, with assistance from civil organizations and Christian

charities. (Slovak Spectator, 2015) This action is in line with what the government was saying, in a sense that non-Muslim refugees were accepted voluntarily. Though the execution of this measure seems much simpler than the general political discourses, which was often problematizing refugees as potential threats to culture or security. Also, the fact that only Christians are accepted supports the notion that Slovak solidarity does not include Muslims.

In June 2015, the Interior Minister also announced that Slovakia will house temporarily 500 asylum applicants from neighboring Austria in Gabčíkovo. In a reaction, the citizens organized a local referendum in August, in which 96.67% of the 2603 citizens (58.46% eligible) were against setting up the temporary refugee camp in their town. Besides personal opinion, the extreme results for sure reflect the securitization discourses before the referendum, as politicians are the ones who first and foremost shape public opinion, as described in the literature review. Despite the referendum, approximately 110 of the 500 refugees arrived during September 2015. The Ministry of Interior argued that it understood the referendum as an *expression of concern* with regards to migration, and that is why Slovakia engaged into a diplomatic battle against the *mandatory quotas dictated by the EU. (*ČTK, 2015*)*

Another significant policy was adopted at the beginning of October 2015, after the tragic death of 70 refugees on the highway and the crisis "peaking" in neighboring Hungary. The Prime Minister met with representatives of civic initiative Plea for Humanity and committed to adopt several measures, among them to: redistribute 600,000 euros to development and humanitarian programs, 500,000 euros from state lottery to NGOs such as People in Need, Magna or Slovak Catholic Charity, and 1 million euros in material supplies. This is significant because it reacts - in a solidary manner - to a bottom-up pressure of a civic initiative with approximately 10,000 signatures and support from the President or Ombudsman. (Government Office, 2015)

After the election of March 2016 and before taking over the Presidency of the European Council in July, the government confirmed it would relocate 100 refugees from Greece and Italy to Slovakia as agreed before the announcement of the quotas in 2015. (Mikušovič, 2016) As of May 2017, Slovakia pledged firm commitment to accept 40 refugees under the Emergency Relocation Mechanism. (EC, 2017)

These findings suggest that Slovakia, by temporarily accepting and voluntarily relocating refugees, in practice showed solidarity. However, the numbers are negligible, compared to the pressures that neighboring Hungary was facing, or other countries such as Greece, Italy, Germany or Macedonia. The pledge to accept 40 refugees is also minor, because 902 were attributed to Slovakia by the Relocation Mechanism.

Chapter 5 - Conclusion

Slovakia is a typically pro-European country, with elites supporting EU integration and a strong pro-European public opinion. The question that was raised is, why does this supposed attitude not turn into solidary action in finding a common European response to the migration crisis. This thesis studies the expression of solidarity towards refugees and other EU member states, using a discursive analysis of political debates in Slovakia about refugee quotas.

Based on the quantitative analysis, three months with the highest frequency of articles about refugee quotas were selected in the period between the announcement of the quotas and the parliamentary election in March 2016. The analysis shows the following conceptual and empirical findings.

In narratives approaching solidarity as a normative value, refugees are framed as included, while economic migrants and Muslims as excluded. Mandatory quotas are presented as a bad EU policy. The actors -notably the Prime Minister, Foreign Affairs Minister and Interior Minister- construct the opposition to quotas as a *responsible* response and claim that quotas represent *false solidarity*. They prefer other sources of help, such as financial or humanitarian assistance without actually relocating refugees to Slovakia. They argue that refugees want to go to other richer countries and that there is no Muslim community in Slovakia. If solidarity is referred to as a feeling of community with common interest, and some EU member states are overburdened with refugees, the Slovak proposed solutions aim to avoid direct responsibility.

The analysis also suggests that the discourses are sometimes harsher than the reality. While some discourses and actors frame accepting refugees as a potential security and cultural threat, and talk of a dictate posed by mandatory quotas, the government does accept 149 Christian refugees, temporarily it commits to house 500 refugees from Austria and supports the

NGOs helping refugees. Moreover, after the election in March 2016, the government announces it will relocate 100 refugees on a voluntary basis. It could be discussed whether the government should do more, but in the end some solidarity acts were taken.

One of the interesting findings of the thesis is that political discourse in the latter part of 2015 and in the months prior to the national elections was remarkably consistent – and negatively so – despite the fact that there were clearly segments of the Slovak public who were open to a policy of accepting refugees. One reason why a consistently negative stance was, essentially, the only stance during this period is that an ongoing political campaign was taking place in Slovakia. It could be suggested that an unpopular topic was grasped by most actors, except for the President who is directly elected and non-partisan, in a negative way due to the upcoming election. The analysis shows that the rhetoric was becoming increasingly more negative as time passed by and elections were approaching, although other external events may have also added effect. After the election, it seems that the debates about quotas calmed down, and for instance labor migration became a topic in the discourse instead of refugees. The fact that the government, announced to voluntarily relocate 100 refugees to Slovakia, also suggests that refugees are no longer the main subject of political competition.

The analysis shows various, and often contradictory, notions of solidarity - as a normative value, a feeling of community or an action to be taken. The reality in which the solidarity discourses before the elections are harsher than the solidarity measures taken by the government, prove that this concept is strategically deployed and contested in domestic politics. It is exactly this contestation, for instance when the quotas are announced and problematized, during which the political actors define what solidarity means to them and how it should be expressed. This shows how important the 'battle of ideas' is.

Even though I studied 156 statements of key political actors during the selected months, one limitation has to do with the nature of the primary data: truncated statements. The database

used did not enable me to study political actors' statements in their full length, but only those pre-selected by the press agency. On the other hand, this selection enabled me to study the development over a period of three months. Another limitation lies in the fact that this thesis presents results of a single case study and, given the specific context arising from the upcoming elections, a very specific case study at that. However, the presented study could be used for comparative studies, for instance with other Visegrad countries, or in the study of events such as terrorist attacks and Greek monetary crisis, during which solidarity discourses tend to be deployed. Another application relates to the fact that elections were held during this period. The United Kingdom held a referendum on EU Membership in June 2016 (Migration Observatory, 2017) and there were local elections in Germany in March 2016 (Oltermann, 2016), in both of which migration debates played an important role. The deployment of solidarity and migration discourses with regards to these elections could be studied comparatively with the Slovak case.

The main contribution of this thesis is that it indicates how to approach the study of nuances of solidarity, empirically and conceptually. To describe and understand solidarity it is necessary to answer who is included and who is excluded, when is it deployed and why is it used. It is also necessary to study the various levels it is operating on – from deep ideological beliefs to ad hoc policy stances.

The disparities between the discourses and actions, and their alteration after the elections suggest politicians understand values, such as solidarity, instrumentally. This is in line with what is set forth by discourse institutionalism, that certain discourses are deployed strategically by actors for a specific reason.

Annex 1

Keywords and filters: "quotas" AND "refugees" OR "migrants" (in all forms in Slovak – kvót* AND uteč* OR migr*), for qualitative analysis only articles authored by TASR are selected. The selected keywords cover most of articles which regard refugee quotas, around which the solidarity discourses were centered. The mechanism to relocate refugees was commonly referred to as "refugee quota", rather than refugee relocation. A test

Figure 1 Question: "I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in certain institutions. For each of the following institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it. (M)"

Figure 2 Question: "What do you think are the two most important issues facing the EU/Slovakia at the moment? " Figure 2 represents the proportion of people who mentioned migration as one of two issues.

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