The threat of the Other –

Ontological security and right-wing populism in Poland

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, much of the literature in International Relations has analysed the link between ontological security and the rise of populism. One of the main concepts in ontological security theory is that of a 'sense of home' as a prerequisite for remaining ontologically secure. The aim of my thesis is to address a certain gap in IR scholarship on ontological security by arguing that 'the other' who invades the 'home' is not necessarily an outsider coming from a foreign culture, but can also be of the same nationality and cultural background, if only populist leaders find it beneficial to render such group a threat. I conduct critical discourse analysis of 30 statements delivered by key-members of the right-wing populist political party, which has been ruling in Poland since 2015. I focus on the statements of which the main topic is either migration or LGBT delivered between September 2015 and April 2021. The analysis shows that immigrants are most often depicted as a physical, external threat, while the domestic LGBT community is presented as an internal, intangible threat to traditional values and cultural heritage. My conclusion is that populists can shift the meaning of 'home' by presenting it either as a physical, bordered territory or as a community of 'virtuous people'. It is done in order to render different groups of people, both internal and external, a threat and cause the feeling of ontological insecurity on a societal level with the aim of gaining popular support and consolidating power.

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Introduction

"Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less."

— Maria Skłodowska-Curie[1]

Ontological security, often called the 'security of being', is a concept that was first developed in psychoanalysis and sociology to describe the human need for upholding a stable self-identity in a constantly changing world. It can be described as a psychological mechanism aimed at diminishing the levels of one's anxiety caused by external forces. The concept quickly gained recognition in International Relations with scholars such as Brent Steele and Jennifer Mitzen, who developed two main strands of ontological security theory focusing on intrinsic and relational identity construction, respectively.[2]

In recent years, much of the literature in International Relations has also analysed the link between ontological security and the rise of populism. Most of the IR scholars examining populism from the perspective of ontological security theory proceed from the presumption that strong socio-political forces, such as globalization or migration waves, create an 'epistemic chaos',[3] which then produce anxieties within certain populations.[4] Hence, the rise of populism can be regarded as an outcome of the general sense of ontological insecurity on a societal level, with populist leaders framing the general anxieties caused by the often-ill-

[1] As quoted by Melvin A. Benarde in *Our Precarious Habitat, (*New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 1973).

[2] Brent J. Steele, *Ontological Security in International Relations: Self-Identity and the IR State,* (New York, Routledge, 2008); Jennifer Mitzen, 'Ontological Security in World Politics: State Identity and the Security Dilemma', *European Journal of International Relations,* 12:6 (2006): 341-370.

[3] Jef Huysmans, 'Security! What do you Mean? From Concept to Thick Signifier', *European Journal of International Relations,* 4 (1998): 226-255.

[4] Christopher S. Browning, 'Brexit populism and fantasies of fulfilment', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs,* 32:3, (2009); Catarina Kinnvall, 'Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity and the Search for Ontological Security', *Political Psychology,* 25:5 (2004): 741-767; Mitzen, 'Ontological Security in World Politics'.

defined forces into more tangible threats. However, Steele notes that "critical situations […] both enable and are created and performed by the populist politics".[5] To further engage with Steele's argument, I analyse the case study on the rise of populism in Poland and I conduct critical discourse analysis of the statements delivered by the members of the populist Law and Justice party on the topic of migration and LGBT.

The case study of the rise of populism in Poland is unique compared to those from other parts of Europe or the US. The 2015 migration crisis coincided with the rising wave of populism and constituted a certain window of opportunity for populist leaders in Europe and beyond. There has been a lot of research in IR ontological security scholarship on the link between migration and populism, including various case studies on national responses to the 2015 migration crisis, which I will present in the further sections of this thesis. However, the case of the 2019 parliamentary elections in Poland is different. The Law and Justice party focused its campaign on the on anti-LGBT discourse, which followed the same strategy as the anti-immigration discourse from that of 2015.

The aim of this thesis is therefore two-fold. First, by analysing the Polish case study, I exemplify the different ways in which right-wing populist politicians appropriate certain phenomena to create insecurities with the purpose of advancing their personal and political agenda. Second, my research also aims at extending the debate in the IR scholarship on ontological security and populism by arguing that populist leaders are both the outcome of general anxieties caused by larger socio-political forces, and the creators of certain narratives which cause further insecurities within societies. Following the latter argument, I show that populist leaders as the performers of populist politics further exacerbate the existing societal anxieties. It may be too simplistic to say that populists are the creators and performers of

[5] Brent J. Steele and Alexandra Homolar 'Ontological insecurities and the politics of contemporary populism', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs,* 32:3 (2019): 216.

ontological insecurity. However, by creating the discourse aimed at provoking a particular response to the already-existing anxieties, populist leaders provide a defined direction to them and render certain phenomena (or rather groups of people) threatening. This also brings attention to the larger problem of defining the concept of populism, as well as distinguishing between its specific causes and effects because of the fact that its constitutive processes are based on the so-called politics of emotions.

In my research I not only discuss the link between migration and populism or the link between anti-LGBT discourse and populism, but by analysing how the populist party performs the politics of othering with regards to refugees and LGBT people, I rather focus on how *any* group – both external and domestic can be rendered a threat. The Law and Justice party saw that the strategy they used during the migration crisis was successful, which is why they follow the same path to further consolidate power in the coming years. However, at the time, there was no external event causing anxiety, such as the migration wave, which could constitute a window of opportunity for the members of a populist party to frame it into an ontological threat. For this reason, the Law and Justice party created a 'threat from within', which was the LGBT community, or, as often called by the members of the party, 'LGBT ideology'.

By analysing Mitzen's concept of home,[6] I argue that the feeling of home can be shaken not only by an external threat, such as migration, but also by what appears to be an internal threat, such as the LGBT community. Most of the research in IR scholarship on ontological security and populism focuses on researching nationalism. But what happens when those who are rendered threatening come from within the country? The aim of my thesis is therefore to address a certain gap in IR scholarship on ontological security by arguing

[6] Jennifer Mitzen, 'Feeling at Home in Europe: Migration, Ontological Security, and the Political Psychology of EU Bordering' *Political Psychology*, 39:6 (2018): 1373-1387.

that ‘the other’ who invades the homespace is not necessarily an outsider coming from a foreign culture, but can also be of the same nationality and cultural background, if only populist leaders see a certain benefit in rendering such group a threat. I therefore analyse the complexities of the concept of home and how its meaning can be shifted depending on a group that is rendered a threat.

This thesis is divided into a theoretical part and case study. In the theoretical part, I first outline the two main strands of ontological security theory in International Relations presented by Steele and Mitzen. I further narrow down my presentation to the existing literature on ontological security and populism and I engage with Mitzen’s and Kinnvall’s concept of home. In the second part I analyse the rise of populism in Poland. Specifically, I conduct critical discourse analysis of 30 statements delivered by key-members of the right-wing populist political party, which has been ruling in Poland since 2015. I focus on the statements of which the main topic is either migration or LGBT delivered in the timespan of almost 6 years (September 2015 – April 2021). I argue that the Law and Justice party performs categorization of certain groups of people (in this case refugees and LGBT people) in order to change perception of them on a societal level, thus causing ontological insecurity. On a theoretical level, my aim is also to empirically show how critical situations are both enabled and performed by populist politics, as well as to present how the feeling of ontological insecurity can be caused not only by an external threat, such as migration, but also by what appears to be a ‘threat from within’.

I identified three categories by which the Law and Justice party performs this categorization: *the other* as a physical/biological threat, *the other* as a threat to civilization/culture and *the other* as a threat to family. These categories allow for a comprehensive analysis of the other as a threat, as they relate to both micro and macro level, as well as how the other can be framed both as a tangible and intangible threat.

The reason why focus on migration and LGBT within my case study is the following. First, although they differ in terms of the two groups of people that were rendered threatening (migrants – the 'other' from the outside, versus the LBGT community – the 'other' from within, those who support the opposition), they both successfully aimed at furthering power consolidation by the populist party.

Chapter I: Literature Review

In this chapter I first outline the definition and origin of the term 'ontological security' and then I present the application of ontological security in International Relations with the two main strands of ontological security theory in IR literature. I specify how the two main approaches define the conditions for ontological insecurity on a societal level and I narrow down the application of ontological security theory to the study of populism. I further engage with a concept of 'home' as an element for sustaining one's ontological security. Moreover, I position my case study within ontological security theory and I engage with the concept of critical situations as being both created and performed by populist politics.

1.1. Ontological Security

The term ontological security was first introduced in 1960 by psychoanalyst Ronald David Laing[7] and later developed by sociologist Anthony Giddens, who defined it as a 'security of being' and "a sense of continuity and order in events, including those not directly within the perceptual environment of the individual."[8] Its foundation is built around the presumption that individuals try to securitize their self-identity through routinized behaviour to avoid uncertainty. In this sense, ontological security signifies the individual's attempt at upholding a consistent, continuous narrative of their story which helps them secure their identity through time and space.[9] In other words, ontological security refers to the feeling of stability of one's identity in a constantly changing world. The external environment and self-identities are subject to permanent transformations, which is why individuals need to develop psychological mechanisms designed to sustain cognitive and behavioural certainty to cope with anxiety.

[7] Ronald David Laing, *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness,* (London, Penguin, 1960).
[8] Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age,* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1991), 243.
[9] Brent J. Settle, 'Welcome home! Routines, ontological insecurity and the politics of US military Reunion videos' *Cambridge Review of International Affairs,* 32: 3 (2019): 324.

Such mechanisms are possible thanks to our day-to-day practices and routines, which provide us with a sense of shallow stability in an uncertain world. Importantly, as noted by many IR scholars, the need for ontological security can never be fully achieved, which means that its essence lies in a continuous process of one trying to attain it. As Paul Tillich claims, ontological security is the 'everyday courage to be'.[10]

1.2. Ontological Security in International Relations

The concept first entered the field of International Relations in the 1990s with Bill McSweeney and Jef Huysmans.[11] It later gained significant prominence with a number of IR scholars such as Steele, Mitzen and Kinnvall,[12] laying the groundwork on the application of ontological security to the different levels of analysis, including state, societal and international level. Recently, the scholarship on ontological security and the study of uncertainty, anxieties, and routines expanded to the majority of the IR fields including migration,[13] the spread of populism in contemporary world politics,[14] as well as foreign policy

[10] Cited by: Jennifer Mitzen and Kyle Larson in 'Ontological Security and Foreign Policy', *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics,* Oxford University Press, (2017): 1-26.

[11] Bill McSweeney, *Security, Identity and Interests: A Sociology of International Relations.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999; Jef Huysmans, 'Security! What do you Mean? From Concept to Thick Signifier', *European Journal of International Relations,* 4 (1998): 226-255.

[12] Catarina Kinnvall, 'Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity and the Search for Ontological Security', *Political Psychology,* 25:5 (2004): 741-767; Jennifer Mitzen, 'Ontological Security in World Politics: State Identity and the Security Dilemma', *European Journal of International Relations,*12:6 (2006): 341-370; Brent J. Steele, *Ontological Security in International Relations: Self-Identity and the IR State,* (New York, Routledge, 2008).

[13] Orit Gazit, 'Van Gennep Meets Ontological (In)Security: A Processual Approach to Ontological Security in Migration', *International Studies Review,* 21 (2019): 572-597; Jennifer Mitzen, 'Feeling at Home in Europe: Migration, Ontological Security, and the Political Psychology of EU Bordering' *Political Psychology,* 39:6 (2018).

[14] Christopher S. Browning, 'Brexit populism and fantasies of fulfilment', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs,* 32:3 (2019); Steele and Homolar 'Ontological insecurities', 214-221; Jelena Subotić, 'Political memory after state death: the abandoned Yugoslav national pavilion at Auschwitz', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs,* 32:3 (2019); Shogo Suzuki, 'Japanese revisionists and the 'Korea threat': insights from ontological security', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs,* 32:3 (2019);Maria Malksoo, 'The normative threat of subtle subversion: the return of 'Eastern Europe' as an ontological insecurity trope', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs,* 32:3 (2019).

analysis,[15] and international crisis.[16] Moreover, the research in the area of ontological security shed new light on a significant number of case studies including the analysis of British neutrality and the American Civil War,[17] religious nationalism in India,[18] the 2015 migration crisis and EU border politics.[19] This is to show that the concept of ontological security in IR continually proves to be a useful framework of analysis in a great variety of subfields and cases of different contextual backgrounds.

The premise for ontological security theory is that general, existential anxieties are embedded in human existence.[20] According to Tillich there are three main forms of such anxieties: the first one is that of faith and death and relates to the physical and temporal realm of human existence; second relates to anxieties of meaninglessness and emptiness and concerns philosophical and spiritual realm as well as questions related to the meaning of one's existence. Third category relates to anxieties of guilt and condemnation and "concerns people's need to feel a sense of purpose, destiny and moral self-affirmation".[21] As Browning notes one of the ways to deal with the general, ill-defined anxieties is to frame them into tangible threats which can possibly be "prepared for and countered" and to identify *the other*

[15] Jennifer Mitzen and Kyle Larson, 'Ontological Security and Foreign Policy', *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics,* 2017. Jelena Subotić, 'Narrative, ontological security, and foreign policy change', *Foreign Policy Analysis,* 12:4, 610-627, 2016.

[16] Dimitry Chernobrov, 'Ontological Security and Public (Mis)Recognition of International Crises: Uncertainty, Political Imagining, and the Self', *Political Psychology,* 37:5 (2016); Catarina Kinvall and Jennifer Mitzen, 'Ontological security and conflict: the dynamics of crisis and the constitution of community', *Journal of International Relations and Development,* 21 (2018).

[17] Brent J. Steele, 'Ontological Security and the Power of Self-Identity: British Neutrality and the American Civil War', *Review of International Studies,* 31:3 (2005).

[18] Catarina Kinnvall, *Globalization and religious nationalism in India: The search for ontological security,* (New York, Routledge, 2007).

[19] Vincent Della Sala, 'Homeland security: Territorial myths and ontological security in the European Union', *Journal of European Integration,* 39:5 (2017): 545-558; Orit Gazit, 'Van Gennep Meets Ontological (In)Security: A Processual Approach to Ontological Security in Migration', *International Studies Review,* 21 (2019): 572-597; Elizabeth Johansson-Nogues, 'The EU's ontological (in)security: Stabilising the ENP area… and the EU-self?', *Cooperation and Conflict,* 53:4 (2018); Mitzen, 'Feeling at Home in Europe'.

[20] Christopher S. Browning, 'Brexit, existential anxiety and ontological (in)security', *European Security,* 27:3 (2018): 337.

[21] Ibid., 338.

who is to be "feared and blamed" for those threats.[22] I argue that the discourse of the members of the Law and Justice party aims at framing the three types of general anxieties outlined by Tillich relating both to physical and spiritual realm into a tangible threat which is brought in by *the other*. In order to understand how this process is set in motion and how the Law and Justice party manages to frame *the other* both as an external and internal threat, it is necessary to distinguish two main strands in IR scholarship on ontological security presented by Steele and Mitzen. Those two approaches define different mechanism used by people in order to deal with existential anxieties and maintain their ontological security.

First, Steele emphasizes the intrinsic identity construction connected with biographical narratives. In this sense, 'self-identity' is connected to the notion of continuity and consistency of one's story, which "locates the self in particular time and place and in regard to other significant identities and actors".[23] This means that striving for ontological security is connected to 'the ability of agents to fixate on collective memories'[24] and that ontological security is maintained when agents choose to pursue actions reflecting their sense of self-identity. Steel further argues that routinisation of everyday practices is necessary for dealing with existential anxieties.

Consequently, ontological insecurity in Steele's approach means that the agent experiences anxiety and disconnection with their self, because of the inability to sustain consistent biographical narratives. When this happens one can experience the feelings of deep anxiety, shame and dread.[25] The feeling of dread is linked with a sense of chaos one experiences when their self-identity is in question or when their routines are broken. In such a case, a restoration and re-adaptation of routines and identity narratives are necessary. This

[22] Ibid., 339-340.

[23] Ibid., 339.

[24] Steele, *Ontological Security in International Relations*, 55.

[25] Stuart Croft and Nick Vaughan-Williams, 'Fit for purpose? Fitting ontological security studies 'into' the discipline of International Relations: Towards a vernacular turn', *Cooperation and Conflict,* 52:1 (2017):19.

rupture may be caused either by internal processes or by external factors. Such external factors which disrupt the established order of events are called by Steele 'critical situations'.[26] He defines them as 'circumstances of a radical disjuncture of an unpredictable kind which affect substantial numbers of individuals, situations that threaten or destroy the certitudes of institutionalized routines.'[27] Critical situations can, therefore, disrupt an established order of events and continuity of narratives, causing the feeling of uncertainty and threatening one's sense of self-identity. As Browning notes, they can be understood as social crises because of their ability to disrupt "everyday routines, identities, trust and social structures".[28] When this happens, one seeks the means to rebuild their trust and self-identity in order to be able to carry on their existence. This can be used by the populist leaders who provide easy and simply answers to the general anxieties framed into tangible threats, thus offering a promise to restore one's sense of ontological security.

Mitzen presents a slightly different view on ontological security in which the emphasis is on social dependence of identity and the way it is sustained by routines. Although, to a great extent similar to Steele's understanding of the concept, especially in the way that both scholars take the Giddensian approach to ontological security as a reference point and consider routines as its main constituents, Mitzen's approach presents a number of significant differences. First, she defines ontological security as a 'social construct' that is 'formed and sustained via practices and relations with others, including our embeddedness in social structures'.[29] Hence, the sense of order and continuity in her understanding is more external than intrinsic, and comes rather from relationships with others and less so from

[26] See also: Filip Ejdus, 'Critical Situations, Fundamental Questions and Ontological Insecurity in World Politics, *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 21:4 (2017): 883-908; Filip Ejdus, ''Not a heap of stones': material environments and ontological security in international relations', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 30:1 (2017).

[27] Steele, *Ontological Security in International Relations*, 51-52.

[28] Browning, 'Brexit, existential anxiety and ontological (in)security', 340.

[29] Mitzen and Larson, 'Ontological Security and Foreign Policy', 3.

autobiographical narratives. While Steele emphasizes the role of the Self in identity creation, including the continuity of one's story and consistency of their narratives, Mitzen argues that 'individual identity is formed and sustained through relationships' and the way they are routinized especially with significant others.[30]

Moreover, Mitzen argues that in order to maintain one's ontological security, one needs to have an established sense of home. The concept of home can be both understood as a material space where one is sheltered from the outside world and physical dangers, as well as a set of feelings associated with this space. Home is therefore necessary to provide continuity and stability in one's life as it is a space where daily routines are performed and where 'identities are constructed'.[31] In this sense, the concept of home is inextricably linked with attaining ontological security. Mitzen notes that home imagery can enhance the feeling of belonging to certain groups, especially nations and states.[32] Home therefore signifies a place of grounding and "unquestioned acceptance"[33] in a constantly changing and uncertain world. This means that if one for some reason loses their sense of home, different existential anxieties may emerge. Hence, when one loses or has to leave their home, not only do their established relationships with other members of the home break, but they may also lose their intrinsic sense of self-identity. Losing home can be therefore understood quite literally – for example when a war as a critical situation forces people to leave their houses, families and their countries; when their homes are physically invaded by the other. However, losing one's home can be also understood in a more abstract sense. Identifying with a certain community – either religious or cultural – can also provide one with a sense of grounding, stability and belonging. In this sense, when one feels that the values distinguishing their community - their

[30] Mitzen, 'Ontological Security in World Politics', 342.
[31] Kinnvall, 'Globalization and Religious Nationalism', 747.
[32] Mitzen, 'Feeling at Home in Europe', 1374.
[33] Browning, 'Brexit, existential anxiety and ontological (in)security', 340.

home are for some reason threatened by the other, they will also experience ontological insecurity.

Steele's concept of critical situations as well as Mitzen's and Kinnvall's concept of home are essential to the analysis of my case study which focuses on how two different groups – immigrants and LGBT community – are depicted as the *other* causing ontological insecurity. I analyse how the state, represented by the Law and Justice party, shifted from the depiction of home as a physical space to presenting home in a more abstract manner as a community of what could be called 'pure, virtuous people' in order to continue to create a sense of ontological insecurity on a societal level. In the following section I also engage with Steele's and Homolar's claim that critical situations can both enable and be created by the populist politics in the context of the discourse focused on immigrants and on LGBT community.

1.3. Ontological Security and Populism

As Steele and Homolar note, populism is often regarded as a self-evident concept.[34] However, its meaning is greatly dependent on the context in which it operates and it is in fact difficult to strictly define. Populism is broadly understood as an approach that divides the 'corrupted elite' from the 'pure people'. The distinction between the two groups is made on a subjective and emotionally-charged basis by an agent who can be a political party striving to acquire or consolidate power. Ontological security therefore proves to be a useful lens to analyse and understand such a divisionary concept that does not fall into any clear definitions and is rather based on evoking particular emotional responses within certain segments of society. Steele and Homolar highlight that routines and anxiety are the features of ontological security theory that are particularly important when examining how populism works. They note that when

[34] Steele and Homolar, 'Ontological insecurities', 214.

anxiety takes over, people tend to reject experts and expertise and 'ignorance becomes a coping mechanism'.[35] In this sense, the insecurity caused by the larger, ill-defined forces becomes the enabler for the populist politics. However, Steele and Homolar note that although critical situations are unavoidable and constitute a part of human existence, the rise of critical situations which can be associated with late modernity call 'our notions of Self and Others constantly into question'.[36] They further note that critical situations causing ontological insecurities 'both enable and are created and performed by the populist politics'.[37] This means that in certain contexts populist leaders and members of populist parties can contribute to creating critical situations by the very act of producing populist discourse aimed at vilifying a given group of people.

In the discussion of my case study on populist discourse in Poland, I argue that the statements delivered by the members of Law and Justice party in the context of the European migration crisis which started in 2015 are an example of an instance when a critical situation enables populist politics. In 2015, Europe faced an unprecedented challenge – due to the continuing civil war in Syria and growing instability of the MENA region many people were forced to flee their homes and look for refuge in neighbouring Europe. These events, called in popular discourse migration or refugee crisis constituted a great challenge for the majority of the European states and were subsequently used by numerous political leaders in their electoral campaigns.

Similarly, in Poland the members of the populist party used the window of opportunity created by the general sense of anxiety due to the migration influx in Europe, to gain popular support by perpetuating the politics of fear aimed at providing a concrete imagery of a tangible threat and a defined direction to the general anxieties. The home in this case was

[35] Ibid., 215.
[36] Ibid., 216.
[37] Ibid.

defined by the members of the Law and Justice party mainly as belonging to the Polish nation, which could be disrupted by an external physical threat represented by immigrants.

However, the case of the anti-LGBT discourse used by the members of the Law and Justice party can be regarded as an example of a critical situation that was created and performed by populist politics. The strategy from the 2015 electoral campaign proved successful for the Law and Justice party, which pivoted from the opposition into the ruling party. For this reason, the Law and Justice party implemented a similar strategy in the coming years in order to again win the elections. At the time, however, there was no 'critical situation' understood as a Europe-wide crisis that could be framed into a tangible threat coming from the outside. This is why the members of the Law and Justice party started to spread a vilified discourse targeting LGBT people and rendering them as a threat to Polish traditional values. The existence of the LGBT communities in Poland or elsewhere was certainly not a new phenomenon. In this instance, a critical situation was successfully created and performed by the politicians of the populist party by rendering a long-existent phenomenon into a tangible threat, which could invade *home*. However, a question arises – how *home* if understood as belonging to a nation could be disrupted by an 'internal' other, which exists within the given nation? Stuart Croft and Nick Vaughan-Williams note that "home is not a fixed referent object".[38] It means that home does not need to necessarily refer to the whole nation but may as well signify a feeling of belonging to a given group within the nation. In case of populist discourse, it may signify belonging to the 'pure people' as opposed to the 'corrupted elite'. In this case, belonging to the 'pure people' may be marked by different identity signifiers[39] such as Christian catholic religion, traditional and family values.

[38] Croft and Vaughan-Williams, 'Fit for purpose?', 18.

[39] Kinnvall, 'Globalization and Religious Nationalism', 757.

I argue that in order to be able to disrupt the sense of home by what may seem as internal *other*, the Law and Justice party had to rewrite to a certain extent the meaning of home. In case of migration, home was framed by the Law and Justice party both as a nation and as an enclosed bordered territory which is physically invaded by the *other*. In case of the LGBT community, the focus needed to be shifted to what Tillich described as anxieties of meaninglessness and emptiness related to an intangible realm. This means that *home* was here understood not as the whole nation, to which LGBT communities also belong, but rather as belonging to a certain segment of the nation – the 'real Poles' or the 'pure people' who are distinguished by certain values such as tradition, culture, family-orientation or religion.

Chapter II: Case study – populist discourse in Poland

In this part of my thesis I will analyse the case study of the rise of right-wing populism in Poland. First, I present the methodology of my research and I Identify three categories by which the members of the Law and Justice party perform categorization of *the other* and I conduct three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis of the excerpts from 30 statements delivered by the members of the Law and Justice party from September 2015 until April 2021. I present how both refugees and LGBT community were rendered an ontological threat by the members of the Law and Justice party and how this could influence certain parts of Polish society.

2.1. Methodology

My case study consists of the qualitative analysis of 30 statements delivered by key members of the Law and Justice party of which the primary focus is either the topic of migration or LGBT. The analysis covers the timeframe of almost 6 years (from September 2015 until April 2021). This time-span covers the parliamentary elections of 2015, the regional elections of 2018, the parliamentary elections of 2019 and the presidential election of 2020. The analysed statements were delivered by several members of the Law and Justice party, including its leader, as well as the current President of Poland, the current and former Prime Ministers, and several Ministers and Members of Parliament (full list in Annex I). The type of texts analysed include official statements and speeches delivered in the Polish Parliament, as well as during Law and Justice party conventions, and other official meetings including electoral meetings, media interviews, press conferences and social media posts. 13 statements are focused on the topic of migration and 17 of the analysed statements refer directly to the topic of LGBT. There is a visible trend that most statements about migration were delivered from 2015 until

2018, and most statements about LGBT were delivered from 2019 until 2021, however, with some time overlaps.

Following Tillich's categorization of the general existential anxieties into those related to tangible and intangible realms[40], I identified three different categories used by the members of the Law and Justice party in order to shift the general anxieties into concrete threats related to the *other*. The first relates to a tangible/physical threat mainly associated with migration, while the following two concern intangible threats to what can be called traditional values, which are to a great extent associated with the LGBT community. In the first category, I present how the discourse of the members of the Law and Justice party shaped the understanding of home as a nation and physical territory of a state. In the second and third category I focus on the depiction of home as a community within the nation of 'pure people', who distinguish themselves by certain values. Hence, the identified categories are the following: *the other* as a physical / biological threat, *the other* as a threat to civilization / culture, and *the other* as a threat to family. These categories allow for a comprehensive analysis, as they refer to both macro and micro level, and both tangible and intangible threats. For each category, I selected a set of key-words related to how the concept of home was disrupted in each case. For the first category, which focuses on how home was disrupted by a physical threat, the key-words include: *terror, terrorism, disease, attack, safety, security;* for the second, focused on intangible threat, the key-words are: *culture, tradition, values, freedom, civilization, ideology, social, crisis, disaster;* and for the third: *family, children.* This allowed for the primary assignment of the statements to each category, however, a thorough secondary discourse analysis taking into account the broader context was also conducted. 28 statements out of 30 statements analysed clearly fall under at least one category, with some falling under two or all three categories.

[40] Paul Tillich, *The courage to be* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2014), 41-42.

In the first category I analyse how *the other* can be presented as a physical threat on both macro and micro level. On the macro level, several references to collective societal security can be observed (*the other* linked with an increased threat of terrorism), while on the micro level, *the other* is often depicted as a threat to the everyday safety of individuals (references to increased criminality). Moreover, following Michel Foucault's theory of bio-governmentality and biopower,[41] I also analyse how *the other* can be depicted as a biological threat.

The second of the identified categories focuses on the analysis of *the other* as a threat on a macro level, often described as a "threat to civilization" or a threat to culture. As opposed to the first category which focuses on the analysis of a physical threat, the second one shows how *the other* can be categorized as an intangible threat. In the third category, I focus on the micro level by analysing the depiction of *the other* as a threat to one's family. This encompasses the analysis of both tangible threats (often formulated as a threat to physical safety of children) and intangible threats (threat to family values). In each of those categories, I will a critical discourse analysis of the excerpts from the 30 statements. I argue that by means of using the above-mentioned categories, the aim of the Law and Justice party is to change the societal perception of *the other*, thus causing the feeling of ontological insecurity in relation to certain groups.

In the following sections, I use Fairclough's three-dimensional framework of critical discourse analysis[42] to examine excerpts from the statements delivered by the members of the Law and Justice party on the subject of migration and LGBT. On the micro level, I analyse vocabulary and rhetorical devices used in order to create a sense of threat to the society. On the level of the discourse practice, I focus on the broader perspective by analysing the ways in

[41] Michel Foucault 'The Will to Knowledge', *The History of Sexuality,*1, (New York, Pantheon Books, 1978).
[42] Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis. The Critical Study of Language,* (London, Routledge, 2010).

which the statements could influence the public, as well as on possible reactions to the discourse.

The third dimension of my analysis consists of positioning the discourse within the Polish historical and cultural context, as well as within the larger political context of the rise of right-wing populism and its link to ontological security theory. Following Steele's argument that critical situations both enable and are created by populist politics, I exemplify how in the case of the migration crisis a critical situation enabled populist politics, as well as how in the case of anti-LGBT discourse a critical situation was created as a populist tool.

2.2. Analysis of the case study

As already mentioned, the two sub-cases of the discourse focused on migration and the topic of LGBT, which differ as to how Steele's concept of 'critical situation' was rendered either as a factor enabling populist politics, or as an entity created and performed by the populist discourse. This is also connected with the fact that in the two sub-cases two different groups were presented as a threat (migrants and LGBT people) in two different contextual situations (Europe-wide migration crisis versus no external event that could cause a crisis). In the following part of this chapter I present and examine the different discursive features used by the Law and Justice party members in order to present different depictions of the concept of home and shape the general societal anxiety into a concrete fear directed against a given group of people.

With regards to the distribution of the analysed statements per topic over time, there is a visible trend that most statements on the topic of migration were delivered between 2015 and 2018, while the statements on the topic of LGBT cover the time-span of 2017-2021 (with a visible peak in 2019). The largest number of the analysed statements on the topic of migration were delivered in 2015, which coincides with the electoral campaign for the

parliamentary election in Poland, which took place in October 2015. In 2016, after the parliamentary elections, which were won by the Law and Justice party, the number of statements on the topic of migration decreases. In the following year it increases again, which could potentially be linked with the beginning of the electoral campaign for the local elections of 2018.

Since 2017 there is a visible trend in the number of statements on the topic of migration decreasing while the number of statements on the topic of LGBT increases significantly. One could argue that as the situation with regards to the Europe-wide refugee crisis stabilised, the statements rendering migrants as a threat started to lose credibility. For this reason, the Law and Justice party members started to depict a domestic LGBT community as a threat. The peak in the number of statements on the topic of LGBT takes place in 2019, which coincides with the parliamentary elections which were held the same year, and won once again by the Law and Justice party (see Figure 1). Although it would be necessary to analyse a larger sample in order to come up with any conclusive arguments, both the peak in the number of statements on migration and the peak in the number of statements on the topic of LGBT take place in the years of parliamentary elections in Poland. This could potentially mean that the members of the Law and Justice party intentionally rendered those two groups a threat in their discourses in order to gain popular support and win the elections.

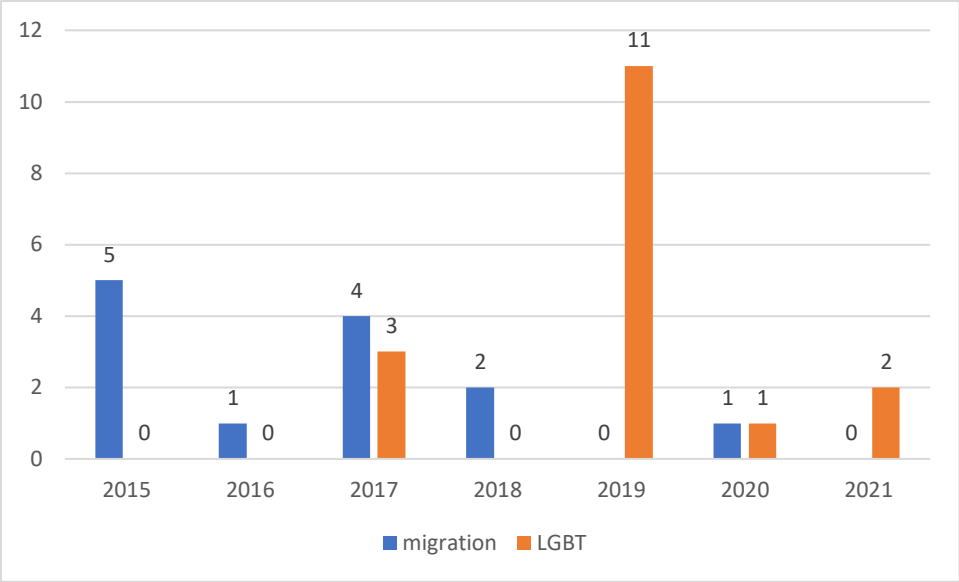

Figure 1: *Distribution of the analysed statements per topic per year.*

When it comes to the distribution of statements per each category, 37% of statements can be assigned to the first category (the other as a physical threat), while half of the analysed statements fall under the second category (the other as a threat to civilization/culture). 23% of the analysed statements can be assigned to the third category (the other as a threat to family). 2 out of 30 analysed statements cannot be clearly assigned to either of the identified categories, while 5 of the analysed statements can be assigned to more than one category.

As for the topical distribution per each category (see Figure II), there is a visible trend that the majority of the analysed statements on the topic of LGBT (59%) fall under the second category, while the majority of the statements on the topic of migration (69%) can be assigned to the first. This means that the LGBT community is more often framed as an intangible threat on a macro level (a threat to culture / civilization / values), while refugees and asylum seekers are usually depicted as a physical threat on both macro and micro level (link to the collective safety – threat of terrorism as well as link to the everyday safety of individuals). The third category of analysis encompasses both the depiction of the other as a physical threat (most often presented as a threat to physical safety of children) and an abstract threat (threat to

family values). The depiction of the other as a threat to family values could be treated as belonging to the second category, however, because of the prevalence of the statements focused specifically on the topic of family, I decided to analyse it under a separate category.

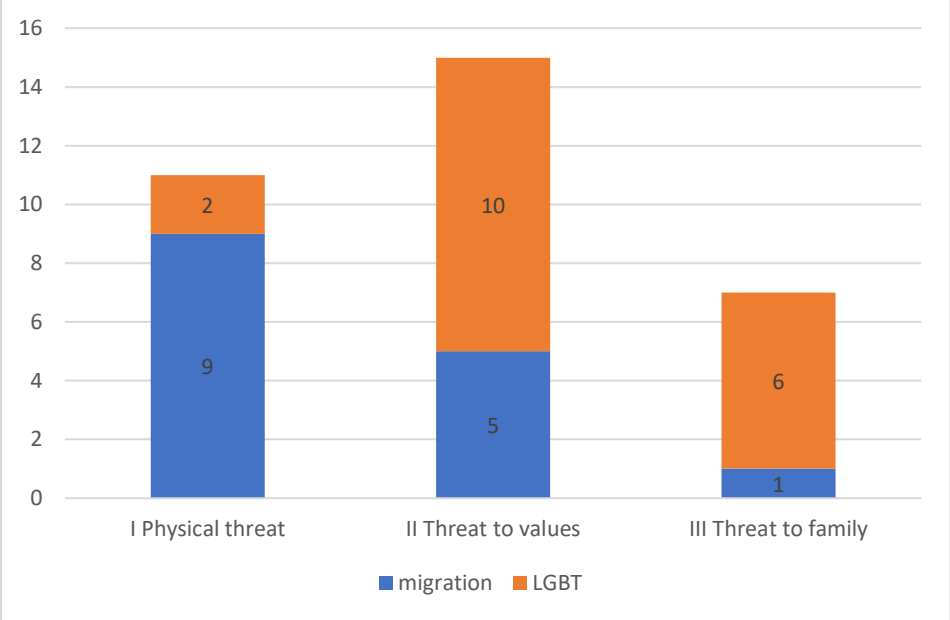

Figure 2: *Distribution of the analysed statements per topic per category*.

2.2.1. Category I: *The other* as a physical / biological threat.

In the first category I mainly focus on how immigrants were framed a threat in the discourse of the Law and Justice party members. This follows closely a securitization of migration approach where refugees and asylum seekers are presented as a security threat to a national community. In relation to the ontological security theory, this can be connected to the existential anxiety of the temporality of our physical existence described by Tillich.

As opposed to the second category where I analyse how *the other* is depicted as an abstract, intangible threat, I focus here on the analysis of *the other* as a tangible threat to both everyday safety of individuals and to collective security of the members of the Polish society (presented as a threat of terrorism and bio-threat). This is to show how general anxieties can be turned into a tangible threat which is to be brought in by an external *other* who comes from outside

of the nation. The image of home depicted in the discourse of the Law and Justice party members is that of an enclosed, bordered physical territory.

The below-listed two excerpts from statements delivered by the leader of the Law and Justice party leader and current Minister of Defence of Poland present how immigrants were depicted as a threat to everyday safety of the members of Polish society.

We will not accept anyone who is a security risk. At the moment, there are no people of whom we can say that they are not a threat to security (...) of whom we are 100% certain that they are not a threat to security. Unfortunately, a great many of these people were using false documents, so we will not do anything to threaten the safety of the Polish people.

Mariusz Błaszczak on migration, 2016

[If refugees were allowed in] *there would be a big problem relating to security and it's not just about terrorism. It is about such ordinary, everyday safety. There is no reason for us to radically lower the standard of living of Poles.*

Jarosław Kaczyński on migration, July 2017

Both speakers directly refer to not accepting or allowing refugees into the *home* as it could 'threaten safety' and 'security'. Therefore, the image of home described by the members of the Law and Justice party is clearly that of a nation and a country. The speakers also link migration with increased risk of criminality which could threaten the 'ordinary, everyday safety' of Poles. This is one of the most common arguments used by the populist politicians against accepting refugees and asylum seekers who are often depicted as young males migrating solely for economic purposes. Migration in this context is also often linked with an increased risk for the safety of women. Marta Della Libera examines how women and women's bodies were represented by the European media amid the 2015 migration crisis and states that 'women's bodies are placed in post-colonial political and racial discourses' and

that ‘discourse on the female honour gives legitimacy to a growing closure in the dialogue about and with the other’.[43]

This shows that the discourse of the members of the Law and Justice party refers to the physical realm both in their description of home as a state in a Westphalian sense, as well as in the description of the other who could physically invade the home and harm those within. In this context, the whole of the Polish society is depicted as being at risk of a physical invasion of the other. The picture of indiscriminate violence directed against all members of the Polish society is also enhanced through the statements which link the other with a threat of terrorism:

Did the Polish emigrants impose their rules on anyone? Did they terrorise anyone? No!

Jarosław Kaczyński on migration, September 2015

If you do not see that today the threat of terrorism is a fact which can affect any country in Europe on any day, and if you think that Poland should not defend itself, then you are going hand in hand with those who are using this weapon against Europe, against all of us. (…) Do we want politicians who say we must get used to attacks, and call terrorist attacks incidents? Or do we want strong politicians who recognise the threat and fight it effectively?

Beata Szydło on migration, May 2017

Western Europe has no idea how to deal with this [immigration from Muslim countries]. *Last Thursday I was in Luxembourg, talking to interior ministers. Do you know what idea important politicians from Western Europe have? Well, they want to integrate through sport, militants, Muslims, those who are ready to kill themselves and kill others they want to integrate through sport.*

Mariusz Błaszczak on migration, June 2017

Effectiveness, according to Trzaskowski, is giving in to blackmail, breaking the law and accepting at least 7 000 migrants, among them many criminals and terrorists. According to him, nothing could be done about it. Is that so? Why does Trzaskowski want terrorists in Poland?

Tweet by PiS Dolnośląskie on migration, May 2020

[43] Marta Della Libera, ‘Sex with the Other. Anxieties and Representations of Gender in Europe during the Refugee Crisis’, *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding* 3:6 (2016): 19.

In the second excerpt, the former Prime Minister of Poland talks about a physical attack on Poland and presents the other as a violent, weaponized invader against which the country needs to 'defend' itself. As in the case of statements referring to 'everyday safety of Poles', statements linking migration to terrorism also follow a typical securitization of migration approach. However, a threat of terrorism can cause even greater ontological insecurity than a threat of increased criminality, because the former can be regarded as more indiscriminate. In case of criminality, the other, and the way in which the other acts, can seem more logical that in case of terrorism. For example, crimes related to thefts, although causing anxiety and fear, may seem more 'understandable' as there is a clear objective behind them. One can also have an illusory sense of being able to control this threat to some extent, for instance by avoiding certain city districts which are regarded as more dangerous. When it comes to terrorism it is the random, unpredictable element which causes the greatest feeling of ontological insecurity. Agents start to experience chaos as both their established routines and their narratives are disrupted. They cannot mentally prepare for this kind of a threat as they do not know where, when and why it occurs. This is the reason why linking migration to terrorism has proven as a particularly successful strategy for the populist political parties and it has been widely used over the years in the discourse of the Law and Justice party members.

Another physical threat category commonly associated with migration is that related to a biological realm.

These are issues relating to various dangers in this sphere. After all, there are already symptoms of the appearance of very dangerous diseases that have not been seen in Europe for a long time: cholera on the Greek islands, dysentery in Vienna, various parasites and protozoa that are not dangerous in the bodies of these people can be dangerous here.

Jarosław Kaczyński on migration, October 2015

In the above excerpt, the Law and Justice party leader warns against accepting asylum seekers using the argument that they could spread 'dangerous diseases'. To strengthen the imagery of a possible threat, he lists names of diseases that allegedly were brought by refugees to other European countries, however, without providing any references to sources from which such data was derived. This particular example also follows Foucault's argument that 'the other' is not only a political enemy but a biological threat that could damage the population.[44] The other is presented here both as physically threatening the Polish society and also as belonging to an inferior societal category. This is to cause what Steele describes as a feeling of shame.

In conclusion, in this category of analysis I focused on how migration, depicted as a physical threat to the Polish society, can disrupt the feeling of home understood as a state and a nation. In the following section, I will switch my focus to the statements on the topic of LGBT and to how a domestic LGBT community can be presented as threatening *home* which is understood in this case as a community of people valuing certain moral and cultural principles.

2.2.2. Category II: *The other* as a threat to civilization/culture

The analysis shows that the category of the other presented as a threat to culture/traditional values/civilization was most often used by the members of the Law and Justice party in order to change the societal perception of *the other*. This kind of categorization was used both in the case of statements on migration and on LGBT. However, statements on the topic of LGBT are significantly more often linked with this category than the statements on migration. This is also the broadest out of the three categories, as I analysed here the depiction of the other as a threat to civilization, culture, as well as what can be called as a threat to 'traditional values'.

[44] Foucault, 'The Will to Knowledge'; Also quoted in: Heather L. Johnson, 'To Make Live: Representing and Protesting Refugee Agency', *Localities,* 6 (2016): 59-92.

The major difference between this category of analysis and the previous one (the other as a biological threat) is the representation of home. In the first category, general societal anxieties were framed into a physical threat of the other who was an immigrant. For this reason, the representation of home was also that of a physical, bordered territory. However, in this category I focus my analysis on how the domestic LGBT community is framed into an intangible threat, and how, consequently, the image of home also takes a more abstract, intangible form.

One of the most common representations of *the other* in this category is as a threat to civilization. This can be exemplified by the following excerpts from two statements delivered by the leader of the Law and Justice party:

The models that can be imported today from some Western countries are not models that lead to development, they are classic symptoms of a crisis of civilization[...] And we must protect ourselves from this! Because this is the road to collapse and not the road to development.

Jarosław Kaczyński on LGBT, September 2019

Those who did not fight [the LGBT] – *there are plenty of examples from Europe – lost. I will not contribute to our losing to what I consider to be a threat to the very foundations of our civilization.*

Jarosław Kaczyński on LGBT, September 2020

The predominant vocabulary associated with violence and crisis serves the purpose of creating a vivid image of a threat to the historical and cultural collective narratives of the members of Polish society. Steele argues that one's self-identity depends on the consistency of their story.[45] In this sense, the above statements can create ontological insecurity by presenting an image of a threat that could potentially disrupt the continuation of collective

[45] Steele, *Ontological Security in International Relations*, 55.

cultural and historical narratives of Polish society. A very similar approach is visible in the statements delivered by the Prime Minister of Poland on the topic of LGBT:

Let us have no illusions. Now this battle will be - yesterday I said that like the Battle of Grunwald - today (I will give an example of) maybe some other battle, like the Battle of Salamis. We are the heirs of those ancient Greeks, the Greeks of freedom, of Greek democracy. This is why we are defending the constitution against those who want to violate it, regardless of the fact that it includes Article 20 on the social market economy, what marriage is about and that marriage is a union between a man and a woman. We must not allow the constitution to be violated. So now there will be a battle for everything, just like that battle of Salamis. And we have fewer resources than the Greeks of that time, unfortunately, as well as other heirs of freedom.

Mateusz Morawiecki on LGBT, June 2019

The Prime Minister makes several historical references both to ancient Greek history and to medieval Polish history in order to present *the other* as an enemy that could potentially destroy historical legacy and the cultural heritage. Therefore, the image of home is not that of Poland as a state but is rather understood as a community of 'cultured people' – the "heirs of freedom". Browning refers to such framing as vicarious identification, which entails 'identifying with broader communities' and 'living through the experiences and achievements of others, appropriating them as if they happened to oneself'.[46] He notes that vicarious identification can help overcome anxieties related to fate and death, and guilt and condemnation. In this context, when the Prime Minister of Poland creates an image of a threat that could potentially disrupt the vicarious identification with the community of 'pure, cultured people' he can cause ontological insecurity on a societal level linked with a feeling of shame. One can lose their sense of self-identity and their self-esteem when they are told that accepting the very existence of the *other* (domestic LGBT community) means that they do not belong to the community of the 'better, cultured people'. Moreover, Browning refers to

[46] Browning, 'Brexit, existential anxiety and ontological (in)security', 339.

the anxieties of fate and death – when one can no longer vicariously identify with a given community, they cannot maintain the illusion of "immortality by proxy" nor can they continue to "internalise the community's collective achievements".[47] The statement of the Prime Minister therefore implies that by the very fact of acknowledging the existence of a domestic LGBT community, one rejects the whole cultural heritage of anticity and its historical legacy. Similarly, the following statement of the leader of the Law and Justice party also served the purpose of creating the feeling of shame and guilt by implying that those who accept or belong to domestic LGBT communities reject the virtue of freedom:

We must protect freedom. Imposing such views is part of what is known as political correctness in the West. In some countries, however, this political correctness has turned into a mechanism for eliminating freedom of speech, freedom of education and freedom of opinion. Poland must remain an island of freedom!

Jarosław Kaczyński on LGBT, September 2019

The leader of the Law and Justice party suggests that the threat of the other is coming from 'the West'. A metaphor of Poland as an "island of freedom" implies that the other has already eliminated freedom elsewhere, and the Law and Justice in Poland is presented as the last bastion defending certain virtues. This sense of urgency created by the speaker can have a particular effect on the audience whose sense of self is endangered in face of the other. In the above example Kaczyński presents the LGBT not as a community or a group of people but rather as an abstract concept framed into an external threat coming from outside of the country. Hence, he denies the very existence of the domestic LGBT community. This serves the purpose of creating and alternative societal narrative which would be the basis for maintaining ontological security.

[47] Ibid.

The below excerpts from two statements both on the topic of migration and LGBT exemplify how *the other* can be presented either as an external or internal threat:

We need to say clearly and plainly that this is an attack on Europe, on our culture and on our traditions.

Beata Szydło on migration, May 2017

It is not true that in order to modernise Poland, in order to catch up with the West, we have to abandon our tradition, because this is what we are told! We are being told this by very large, powerful forces in our country, and this is a lie! It is a path to nowhere.

Jarosław Kaczyński on LGBT, September 2019

In the statements delivered by the members of the Law and Justice party Europe is presented both as being attacked by the other, as well as the very source of such threat and attacks. In the second excerpt on the topic of LGBT, the leader of the Law and Justice party not only makes a reference to the West but also creates a vivid, yet fairly vague image of a threat coming from within the country described as 'large, powerful forces.' The analysis of the statements shows that migration is usually depicted as a threat coming from the outside and endangering Europe as a whole, while LGBT is presented either as a threat which comes from outside of the country, but not outside of Europe, or as a threat from within the country. Hence, there is a visible dichotomy in the representation of Europe and the West, as well as in the representation of the other as either external or internal threat. As already mentioned, the image of home in case of a threat of immigrants is that of a nation invaded by an outsider. However, in case of LGBT the image of home is more complex and may even seem ambiguous. Home is here presented as a community of people believing and protecting certain values which could be understood quite broadly and include culture, historical legacy, tradition or freedom. Therefore, the depiction of the other invading the community is not restricted by physical borders and such other can come both from outside and from within the

country. In case of migration the feeling of ontological insecurity can be associated with a physical threat and the anxieties of death and fate. As for LGBT, the ontological security is usually disrupted by the feeling of shame and guilt and refers to an intangible realm. I elaborate on this aspect in the following section where I describe how LGBT community could be presented as a threat to family.

2.2.3. Category III: *The other* as a threat to family

The last of the identified categories focuses on how the domestic LGBT community is framed into *the other* and disrupts home understood as a family. The analysed statements in this category usually depict *the other* as an intangible threat to family values, but in some cases they also refer to a physical threat to children. Both in the depiction of the other as a tangible and intangible threat, the societal ontological security is shaken by the feeling of shame and guilt. Family is one of the most personal spheres of one's life which is why the other presented as a threat to family can cause a strong feeling of ontological insecurity on a societal level. This can be exemplified by the below excerpt from the statement delivered by the leader of the Law and Justice party.

If we place our trust in the family, we must pay attention to the fact that we have here a great problem, a great difficulty and a great danger. This threat is an attack on the family, and it is an attack carried out in the worst possible way, because it is an attack on children.

Jarosław Kaczyński on LGBT, March 2019

The image of threat is fairly vague and it is difficult to clearly state whether the presented threat is of a physical or intangible nature. The main purpose of the speaker is to cause the feeling of shame within the Polish society by implying that those who acknowledge, accept or belong to LGBT community are turning against their own families. A similar approach can be observed in the below-listed excerpts from two analysed statements.

It will lead to the collapse of the most elementary social structures, including the most basic one - the family.

Jarosław Kaczyński on LGBT, September 2019

We are a pluralistic society, we respect people with different views, different orientations, including sexual orientations. But respect for these kinds of people is one thing, and another thing is to impress Poles and demoralise Polish children with behaviour and views that are completely contrary to Polish tradition.

Jarosław Gowin on LGBT, July 2019

The image of a threat in the above excerpts is relatively similar to those presented in the second category of my analysis (The *other* as a threat to civilization/culture) as it refers to 'the collapse of social structures' and threat to 'Polish tradition'. However, I decided to analyse them under a separate category because the statements referring to family and children can have a somewhat different impact on the audience. The feeling of anxiety is exacerbated by the fact that in this context the other does not only invade home understood as a state or cultural community, but it endangers the most intimate understanding of home, which is family. The members of the society can therefore experience profound anxiety, shame and distrust, as they realise that the other is not coming from the outside but is already among them. This may lead to the situation where people of the same nationality and cultural background turn against each other as they perceive that even those who were the closest to them including their friends, colleagues and acquaintances may in fact endanger their family only because of their sexual orientation.

Some statements which present the other as a threat to family also refer to a physical threat posed by the domestic LGBT community.

Did Rafał Trzaskowski inform us what lgbt really is? DID HE MENTION THAT IT PROMOTES PAEDOPHILIA, AMONG OTHER THINGS? People are being sold the lie that it is a fight for equal rights for homosexuals. WARSAW CITIZENS, WHY DO YOU ACCEPT YOUR CHILDREN BEING HARMED! [as posted on Twitter]

Barbara Nowak on LGBT, February 2019

This statement has a visible intention of creating the feeling of shame within the society as it states that by approving of equal rights of LGBT people one agrees for their children being harmed. It also creates an image of the 'enemy among us' and links LGBT community with an increased risk of sexual crimes committed on children. Both statements referring to the domestic LGBT community as a threat to family values and those linking LGBT with a physical threat to children prove particularly effective in creating ontological security on a societal level because, as opposed to the other two categories of analysis, they refer to 'home' understood as the most private and emotional realm.

Conclusions

Many IR scholars who analyse the link between populism and ontological security argue that the rise of populism is an outcome of general anxieties caused by an 'epistemic chaos', with populist leaders framing the general ill-defined anxieties into more tangible threats. However, in my research I follow Steele's claim that critical situations, which are a premise for ontological insecurity, 'both enable as well as are created and performed by the populist politics'.[48] By analysing the statements delivered by the members of the populist party which has been ruling in Poland since 2015, I empirically show how critical situations can enable the rise of populist politics as well as how populist leaders create and perform critical situations. By examining the discourse of the Law and Justice party on the topic of migration and LGBT, I also argue that populists can to a certain extent manipulate the image of home in order to be able to frame both external and domestic communities into ontological threats.

This study is relevant to the ontological security scholarship within the field of International Relations as it shows that *any* group can be rendered a threat by a populist leader or a party in order to create the feeling of ontological insecurity within certain segments of society. Although there are numerous studies analysing the link between migration and populism and how populist politicians depict refugees and asylum seekers as a threat, those studies often lack a more comprehensive approach. This is why in my research I conducted a comparative analysis of a discourse focused on two majorly different groups, namely on refugees and LGBT people, as it allows to draw broader conclusions of how different groups of people, both internal and external, can be rendered a threat.

The main restriction of this study is a relatively small sample size. Undoubtedly, a larger sample of the analysed statements would be necessary in order to present more conclusive remarks. However, in my research I was able to show certain trends in the number

[48] Steele and Homolar, 'Ontological insecurities', 216.

of statements on the two analysed topics within the timespan covering two parliamentary elections, one local and one presidential election. Similar studies focused on the analysis of different groups rendered a threat could be conducted in other countries where populism has been on the rise in recent years. The examples of case studies for a possible continuation of this line of research could include Hungary and the analysis of the so-called 'Soros mercenaries' rendered a threat by Fidesz (both internal and external) or the United States with a comparison of immigration from Latin America as an external threat and the news media described by Donald Trump as 'the enemy of the people'[49] as an internal threat. This could help shed new light on the link between ontological security theory and populism in general, as well as further engage with Steele's approach to ontological security and especially the role of critical situations in both enabling populist politics and being created by them.

[49] Marvin Kalb, *Enemy of the People: Trump's War on the Press, the New McCarthyism, and the Threat to American Democracy* (Washington DC, Brookings Institution Press, 2018).

Annex 1 – list of statements

The list below includes 30 statements which are the subject of this research in a chronological order. The statements were delivered by the following members of the Law and Justice party:

Jarosław Kaczyński - Leader of the Law and Justice party, former Prime Minister of Poland (2006-2007), Deputy Prime Minister of Poland since 2020

Andrzej Duda - President of Poland since 2015

Mateusz Morawiecki - Prime Minister of Poland since 2017

Mariusz Błaszczak - Minister of Defence of Poland since 2018

Beata Szydło - former Prime Minister of Poland (2015-2017)

Witold Waszczykowski – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland (2015-2018)

Jarosław Gowin – former Deputy Prime Minister of Poland (2020-2021), former Minister of Education (2015-2020)

Przemysław Czarnek – Minister of Education and Science of Poland since 2020

Antoni Macierewicz – former Minister of Defence of Poland (2015-2018)

Stanisław Pięta – Former member of Parliament (MP) of Poland (2005-2007)

Ryszard Legutko - Head of the Law and Justice Delegation to the European Parliament since 2011

Krystyna Pawłowicz – former Member of the Parliament of Poland (2011-2019), Judge of the Constitutional Tribunal since 2019

Barbara Nowak - former Law and Justice councillor in Krakow (2010-2014)

Krystian Frelichowski – Law and Justice councillor in Bydgoszcz since 2018

The list also includes electoral campaign video of the Law and Justice party for regional elections in 2018 and Twitter post by the Official Twitter account of the Law and Justice party in Dolnośląskie voivodeship of Poland.

Beata Szydło – Statement delivered at a press conference in Jastrzębie Zdrój, Poland, 3 September, 2015. TV transmission by TVN24: https://tvn24.pl/polska/beata-szydlo-pis-o-kryzysie-imigracyjnym-i-problemie-uchodzcow-ra574039-3312491

Andrzej Duda – Statement delivered at the Economic Forum in Krynica Zdrój, Poland, 9 September, 2015. https://pch24.pl/prezydent-duda-o-imigrantach-nie-zgadzam-sie-na-system-kwotowy-to-dyktat-silnych/

Jarosław Kaczyński – Statement delivered at 100th meeting session of the Polish Parliament (Sejm), 16 September, 2015. https://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/StenoInter7.nsf/0/A8CA0F4060DE3B1CC1257EC200722812/%24File/100_a_ksiazka.pdf

Jarosław Kaczyński – Statement delivered at an electoral meeting in Maków Mazowiecki, Poland, 13 October, 2015. As cited by *Newsweek* magazine: https://www.newsweek.pl/polska/jaroslaw-kaczynski-o-uchodzcach/89mwbx3

Beata Szydło – Statement delivered on 23 November, 2015. As cited by *Dziennik.pl* magazine: https://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/polityka/artykuly/506339,premier-beata-szydlo-bedziemy-namawiac-kraje-ue-do-refleksji-w-sprawie-uchodzcow.html

Mariusz Błaszczak – Radio interview for *RMF FM*, 9 May 2016. As cited by WP.PL magazine: https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/mariusz-blaszczak-o-uchodzcach-nie-przyjmiemy-nikogo-kto-zagrazalby-bezpieczenstwu-6027386168157313a

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