Research Article

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Populist, Radical and Extremist Political Parties in Visegrad countries vis à vis the migration crisis. In the name of the people and the nation in Central Europe

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Abstract: The paper looks at the political party scene in Visegrad countries before and after the influx of refugees and compares how much the negative reactions were instrumentalised not only by the extremist and radical right parties but by the newly emerged populist formations as well as the well-established mainstream parties across the whole political spectra. Until the “migration crisis”, the far right parties focused mainly on Roma issue, anti-Semitism, anti-communism, anti-establishment and used anti-NATO, anti-EU, anti-German, anti-Czech, anti-Slovak or anti-Hungarian card. Since 2015, the parties re-orientated against immigrants, more precisely against the Muslims presenting them as a threat and also increased their criticism on the EU. However, the mainstream parties also accepted far right topics and actively promoted them. The result is then mainstreaming of xenophobia, nationalism and marginalization of far right parties as their flexible voters move to the populist subjects.

Keywords: Visegrad countries; populism; extremism; radicalism; media; migration crisis.

Introduction

The so called European refugee crisis started somewhere around 2015 and since then, the European Union is struggling to cope with the crisis, launching plans to fight the migrant smuggling, proposing quotas for relocation of asylum seekers among the EU members and increasing funding for patrolling the Schengen borders. The refugee crisis revealed a gap between the old member states believing in solidarity and the new member states suddenly refusing to share the burden. The politicians in Visegrad countries used the opportunity of crisis and added to their already well established populism a new component – nationalism. Out of the Visegrad countries, Hungary had the second highest proportion of the asylum requests and the highest proportion of asylum applications to its population in the peak of the crisis in 2015, despite sealing the borders with Croatia, followed by Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia on the tail. The number of

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final positive decisions on application are far below the EU average in all of the countries. The Visegrad states serve mainly as the transit countries using the readmission agreements and the Dublin regulation. Their representatives stand firmly against quotas and claim that the quotas cannot function due to the absence of legal instruments and the fact, that once refugees apply for the asylum, they cannot be put into detention centers, use the freedom of movement in the Schengen area and move to their final destination – Germany or Sweden.

The aim of the paper is to look at the political party scene in Visegrad countries before and after the influx of refugees and compare how much the negative reactions were instrumentalised not only by the extremist and radical right parties but by the newly emerged populist formations as well as the well-established mainstream parties across the whole political spectra. How has the communicative repertoire of extremist and radical right parties evolved as their mainstream counterparts have attempted to reposition themselves? How has the communicative repertoire of all the parties across the political spectrum changed? The ambition here is thus to track the communication patterns of extremist and radical right parties, populist formations and lonely wolves within the mainstream parties as well as the various aspects of discursive opportunities as integral to opportunity structures since 2000.

**Conceptual remarks and Who is who?**

There is no consensus regarding terminology related to extremism, radicalism and populism. With a certain degree of simplification, we could state, that Anglo-Saxon world uses the term radicalism for what is coined extremism elsewhere else, whereas the German academic world quite strictly distinguishes between the radical and extremist right. Betz and Immerfall define right-wing extremism on the basis of two core traits: ‘the fundamental rejection of the democratic rules of the game, of individual liberty, and of the principle of individual equality and equal rights for all members of the political community, and their replacement by an authoritarian system in which rights are based on ascribed characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, or religion; and the acceptance, if not propagation, of violence as a necessary means to achieve political goals both at home and in foreign policy’. The radical right parties stress their commitment to representative democracy and the constitutional order, abandoning ideological baggage that might sound too extremist (Betz and Immerfall 1998). Sticking to the German tradition, the extremist parties are therefore treated in this text as those positioned at the right end of the right–left axis, while radical right parties would be positioned more to the centre and not stand in opposition to the constitution. The terms extreme right parties and radical right parties are interchangeable. Extremism (extremist parties) is then hostile towards democracy seeking for its replacement with authoritarian regime, while radicalism (extreme and radical parties) is illiberal but essentially democratic operating within the constitutional settings. A common term is needed for both categories due to the fact that political parties change over time and their positions, ideology and strategies are not rigid. The term far right will accordingly be used from this point on for right extremist as well as right radical parties as a term which has been established for the purpose of research in Central Europe and is widely acknowledged there. Far right is not a perfect term as spatial analogies are of no use, but still there is no better terminology offered so far.

As there is no consensus either about the conceptualization of radical right and extreme right either, the conceptualization used in this text is based on the work of Cas Mudde. The radical right parties are then defined as political parties with a core ideology that is a combination of nativism, authoritarianism and populism; nativism is defined as an ideology which holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by

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2 Betz and Immerfall stick to the term Neo-Populist Parties.
3 This approach has also been criticized. Roberts speaks of ‘the lack of satisfactory operational indicators of extremism’ resulting in difficulty establishing the dividing line between radicalism and extremism (Roberts 1994: 466. For more discussion of the relativity of the term ‘extremism’, see, e.g., Carter 2005:14–22).
4 The problems inherent in applying the right–left axis must nevertheless be borne in mind as the right–left continuum is restricted in its ability to characterize regional party politics or post-communist context in general.
members of the native group (‘the nation’) and that non-native elements (persons and ideas) fundamentally threaten the homogeneity of the nation-state. Mudde draws on the American tradition of including a nativism – nativist dimension which embodies a combination of nationalism and xenophobia. He then defines authoritarianism as the belief in a strictly ordered society in which infringements on authority are to be severely punished. Authoritarianism includes law and order and ‘punitive conventional moralism’. Mudde then defines populism as an ideological feature and not merely a political style. He draws chiefly on the conceptualization of Canovan and regards populism as a thin, centred ideology that sees society as being ultimately separated into two homogeneous, antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ vs. ‘the corrupt elite’, arguing that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people. In the populist democracy, nothing is more important than the ‘general will’ of the people, not even human rights or constitutional guarantees (Mudde 2007). Havlík and Pinková differentiate two categories of populism. Exclusively populist political parties build their identity upon their populist appeal, their program tends toward the vague, is subject to frequent changes and is difficult or practically impossible to place in one of the traditional party families. An ideological vacuum is thus typical for exclusively populist parties. Non-exclusively populist political parties, by contrast, combine a populist appeal with another, clearly outlined program. The populist appeal thus serves in this case as a (more or less logical) complement to the party’s primary program (Havlík and Pinková 2012).

The case of the Czech Republic is quite straightforward, there are two political parties which can be labelled as exclusively populist political parties: Public Affairs (Věci veřejné, VV) and ANO (Havlík 2016), whereas the party Dawn (Úsvit) and the subsequent Party of Direct Democracy (SPD, Strana přímé demokracie) currently fits into the (populist) radical right party family no matter it was based initially purely on the anti-elitist appeal and pro-people appeal. The Republicans (SPR-RSČ) fit also in the same cluster, however the party was only relevant in the 1990’s and plays only a marginal role after 2000 despite the repeated strives for its revival (Stojarová 2016). In Hungary, by contrast, there is no party, which could be labelled exclusively populist. The far right was in the 1990’s represented by MIÉP and currently by Jobbik and then there are Fidesz and Hungarian Democratic Forum (Magyar Demokrata Fórum, MDF) which are described in the academic literature as populist parties, though which fit in quite well into the conservative party family and also the environmentalist party Politics Can Be Different (Lehet Más a Politika, LMP) being labelled as a populist player (Havlík 2012). In neighboring Slovakia, the (populist) radical right is represented by Slovakian National Party (Slovenská národná strana, SNS), the extremists then by LSNS, whereas SMER fits into the social-democratic party family though applying populist tools and being described as a populist party in academic literature. The Ordinary People and Independent Personalities (Obyčajní Ludia a nezávislé osobnosti, OĽaNO) was set up as a protest party with strong anti-elitist appeal but over a time it added program and ideological basis to its profile, while the party We are the family (Sme rodina) is clearly populist subject still lacking any ideology. In Poland, League of Polish Families (LPR, Liga Polskich Rodzin) and party Samoobrona (Self-defense, Samoobrona Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej, SRP), the former one labelled as radical right party, the latter one as peasant agrarian populism of protest were parties which enjoyed their peak in the first decade of the new millennium and since 2007 have become marginalized and have been out of parliament. Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS) is regarded as soft-populist or anti-liberal (Wojtas 2012; since 2015 we have a new formation Kukiz’15 with strongly anti-elitist appeal but not exclusively populist as linked to the national patriotic groupings. Besides these parties, there are also populist lonely wolves who are either part of existing political formation or act independently, classical example would be Czech president Zeman or Polish MEP Janusz Korwin-Mikke. Interesting case is also former Czech president Václav Klaus, who plays on euro-sceptic, nationalist, xenophobic card but not on behalf of the people, but rather on behalf of the elites. To sum it up, we have two extremist parties (ESNS, MIÉP), seven radical right parties (Dawn, SPD, Jobbik, LPR, SNS, Kukiz’15, RN) as representatives of the broad far right, and then populist formations from different party families ANO, VV, Fidesz, We are the family, SMER, PiS, Samoobrana, some of them employing nationalism.
The Visegrad radical right parties include Dawn, SPD, SPR-RŠČ, SNS, Kukiz’15, RN, LPR, while MIÉP and ĽSNS could be carefully classified as extremist right parties which strive for different constitutional settings. Jobbik was initially extremist party which has been moving to the center, slowly leaving its demands for revision of Trianon, breaking ties with the Hungarian Guard and trying to present itself as modern and realistic party and most recently in some issues swapping the position with the governing Fidesz. Nevertheless, as remarked earlier, these labels should be treated cautiously as the party positions are fluid and change over the time. The only exceptionally successful and long-standing parties in the Visegrad context are Jobbik and SNS, all other parties seem to be the party for one use. We also observe sudden disappearance of well-established parties such as MIÉP and Samoobrana and only one term of populist formation VV as their voters seem to shift towards the parties who managed their expectations more efficiently and so the steady rise of populist formation is evident in all of the countries. The popularity of parties using populist tools has been steadily rising since 2000 in all of the countries, Czech Republic being the latecomer with ANO winning the elections as lately as 2013. We can observe one steady rise of populist party – Fidesz since the so called refugee crisis, though this seems to be rather synergy effect of the change of the electoral law, ties of the politicians with the media, employing of populist tools based on ethno-nationalism and so bringing more voters from Jobbik value added charismatic leader.

5 Jobbik has been three times represented in the parliament, twice in the European parliament and is extensively represented on the local level. SNS was part of five Slovak parliaments, once part of European Parliament, part of Vladimir Mečiar and Robert Fico governments and its failures were mainly caused by party instability – in 2002 the party fell below electoral threshold due to a party split and the scenario repeated ten years later in 2012 elections. The party is also well represented at the local level and its gains suggest that there exists a stable group of voters prone to nationalistic and xenophobic rhetoric; the main rival became the competing party on the far right spectrum – ĽSNS (Kluknavská and Smolík 2016).
The nationalism and xenophobia of Jobbik and SNS have been embodied in the anti-neighbor feelings (anti-Slovakism/anti-Hungarianism/) and anti-Ziganism. The neighboring nation (Slovaks/Hungarians) and Romas were demonized and denigrated and the inequality between them and the state nation (Hungarians/Slovakians) was further reaffirmed. The anti-Jewish sentiments and focus on Christian element have always been part of their ideological tool. Nevertheless, Jobbik has been striving to change the image and transform the party into a mainstream one, expelling militant members and punishing those denying Holocaust. In 2015, Gábor Vóna announced he would like to change the whole policy of Jobbik in order to attract new electorate and being acceptable for moderate voters. He likened the new Jobbik to Spanish Podemos, Greek Syriza or French National Front. Pursuing this goal, his rhetoric moderated; the antisemitism, racism and revision of Trianon Treaty are absent in his speeches and the appeals rather focus on the promotion of cultural and territorial rights of Hungarians living abroad. Furthermore, Jobbik presents as the only party, which is capable of ousting the Fidesz-led government and hypothetically we could observe what was once unthinkable – a purely tactical alliance between Jobbik and the liberal political parties in order to break the political stranglehold of Fidesz.

The migration crisis brought a new topic for the parties ant they reoriented towards the immigrants and presented them as a threat creating “breeding ground for spreading terrorism in Europe and world”. It also gave an impetus to criticize the EU for accepting refugees and refusing so the EU narrative and solidarity message. The initial SPR-RSC strong nativist appeal combining ethnic nationalism and xenophobia was displayed in the racist invectives against Roma population and Vietnamese, anti-German feelings, opposition to membership of Czech Republic in NATO and in the EU or in criticism of foreign investments and sale of state-owned companies to foreign firms and with the migration crisis turned to a new target: "There are problems with the gypsies, but they are still our citizens. Better a gypsy, than an incomer". (Valášek 2016). Also LSNS adapted to the situation: “We will accept not even one immigrant!...Slovakia is not Africa...We refuse to do national suicide! We refuse to play dunces!”. Jobbik is rather milder and talks about immigration issue as a security threat: “No Vacancy” sign should be put up at Europe’s borders” (Jobbik undated). The same tendency is observable in the other issues. The populism is inherent in the extremist parties; in their programs as well as style, all of them being set up as a protest parties.

The Dawn (and then subsequent SPD) is quite exceptional in a row in a sense, that its ideology evolved and from the purely populist subject it moved more to the populist radical right. The party focus was initially on the corrupted politicians, on the principles of direct democracy, referenda and accountability of the politicians; the so called migration crisis triggered a change and the party’s ideology shifted towards the protection of national values, anti-Islamism, targeting the EU, and advocating a national state and sovereignty as the remedy for the crisis. The supranational institutions were then portrayed as the culprits while the victims once again as the helpless people (Okamura 2015). The biggest stress is put on the concept of nation: “We have two tasks ahead of us in this century. To survive as a nation and as an independent Czech Republic where our descendants would still be at home. Our task is to build in this country a democracy run by a citizen and not the Brussel lobby or oligarchy siphoning off funds and were the citizens always achieve law and justice. This is our task and we owe it to the founders of our country – Masaryk, Štefánik and Beneš” (Okamura 2015). The main target became Islam and the migrants – most of the videos and texts on Facebook and Twitter are dedicated to the issue of protection of national and state sovereignty, identity and the threat coming from the Muslims: “Migrants already rape our women” (Twitter 9/11/2016), No to veils in Czech schools (Twitter 15/11/2016), Migrants brought syphilis (Twitter 18/11/2016), We have to hinder import of Islam (Twitter 19/11/2016) while only a minor contributions are

6 Quite amusing in this context is the statement of Ján Slota that „the Slovaks are genetically stupid after the electoral debacle in 2002 (Konečný and Zetocha 2005).

7 Old hand in politics Jobbik no longer talks about leaving the EU (no matter it promoted secession for more than a decade), while the greenhorn LSNS explicitly refuses the EU membership and calls for referendum about Slovakexit. Kotleba party talking about secession from “criminal gang NATO” while Vóna’s party claiming that Hungary’s membership in the NATO is rather a “security risk for Hungary” which is in harsh contrast with the statements from the time of Magyar Garda accenting the national traumas of Hungary from Trianon Treaty in 1919 and being left behind by the West in 1956 and strongly promoting not to cooperate with the traitors (Jobbik 2014).
dedicated to update issues such as American elections or anti-elite appeal in regards to the anniversary of Velvet Revolution (Twitter Tomio Okamura).

The accented national tradition and anti-Ziganism has always been part of ideology of all of the parties under our scrutiny, whereas anti-Jewish sentiments and focus on Christian elements is shared by all of them except of the Czech parties Dawn and SPR-RSČ. The migration crisis gave an impetus to all of the parties to harshly criticise EU and strengthen their Euroscepticism, national and Christian (Poland) narrative, focusing on the national values against the ill liberal Europe (LGBT rights, feminism, right to abortion, legalisation of euthanasia). Hungary makes and exemption in the stance towards the Islam, but the migration crisis has been changing slowly this narrative extensively. For many years, the Hungarian far right saw in Islam the antithesis of Jews and so did not play any role in its rhetoric. Most recently, the far right parties as well as the exclusively populist Fidesz incorporated the anti-Islamism in their stances talking about sealing the borders and saving the country and the formerly Muslim-friendly public discourse has become increasingly fearful of Islam.

Communication patterns of populists and other competing players

The parties which fit the cluster populist are currently extraordinary successful in Poland (PiS), Hungary (Fidesz) Slovakia (SMER) and the Czech Republic (ANO), all four being members of the government and except of the Czech ANO all well-established parties which have participated in previous governments or served as opposition parties. The Czech parties ANO (meaning Yes) as well as the Public Affairs and the Slovak OĽaNO, are the only ones which have been exclusively populist. These parties were based on their anti-establishment (anti-corruption) appeal, calls for more direct democracy and were formed as typical protest parties and profited from the malaise of the Czech and Slovak voters stemming from the ongoing political crisis, distrust in the political institutions and established political players and dissatisfaction of the voters with the politics as such. The party Public Affairs faded away after one term being part of the government, whereas the party ANO proved in 2017 elections that it is not a party for one use. OĽaNO has placed on the third place in the second elections in a row (2012, 2016) and in 2014 succeeded in the EP elections with one the gain of one seat. None of the Czech populists focused much on mainstreaming of nationalism and xenophobia and were rather based on the purely populist appeal defending the interests of the people against the corrupted elites. On the contrary, the Polish and Hungarian case clearly shows the opposite. The well-established political parties Law and Justice and Fidesz are clearly representatives of the parties based not only on populism but rather those who actively seek to promote nationalism and xenophobia within the public discourse. The governments formed by PiS undermined the whole political system in Poland, disrespecting the checks and balances system which was established after 1989 and concentrating power in the hands of the government. The national conservative ideology of PiS perfectly fitting in the Polish context was misused and strengthen vis à vis the migration wave and the internal ongoing crisis in the EU. Kaczyński used the Eurosceptic and anti-German card polarizing the society similarly to his counterpart Orbán in Hungary and the Czech president Zeman. Also the Hungarian government has been trimming of the democracy shifting the regime to the illiberal one by dismantling system of checks and balances and undermining the rule of law. Next to dismantling the democratic system, the parties actively speak on behalf of their nations not based on the civic principle but on the ethnic one. Hungary was together with Slovakia, Czech Republic and Poland the countries which challenged the aim to redistribute the refugees streaming on the European continent based on the solidarity and rather proposed “flexible solidarity”, whereby countries that do not want to take migrants could contribute to the EU’s migration policy with other means (manpower, equipment etc). It was also Orbán, who ordered to build a fence on the border with Serbia in order to protect not only the entry to Schengen area, but

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8 Antisemitism is not really present in the Czech Republic. Probably the only representative of antisemitism would be Adam B. Bartoš, president of the marginal extremist National Democracy (Národní demokracie) party.
particularly with the aim to preserve to Hungary to Hungarians. Orbán along with Slovak Prime Minister Fico presented migrants as dangerous and malicious strangers who are economic migrants and not refugees coming to take jobs, undermine security and the standard of living and constitute a terrorist threat. The Hungarian prime minister perceives and presents the EU as the source of chaos and no-go zone against which the Hungarian government is ready to defend its people. A set of anti-immigration laws was adopted which included making a criminal offence passing a newly built fence on the border with Serbia with a punishment of up to three years in a prison. Similarly the PiS leader Kaczyński warned before migrants as "they already brought diseases like cholera and dysentery to Europe as well as “all sorts of parasites and protozoa, which....which not dangerous in the organism of these people, could be dangerous here” (Cienski 2015).

If we look at the Slovak party scene, the closest competitor to the far right parties (SNS, LSNS) would be left wing populist party SMER which offers light nationalism to the voters. The research indicates, that in 2010 when SNS lost more than half of its electorate was mostly in favor of SMER and that the other two beneficiaries of the SNS electoral losses were the Freedom and Solidarity (Sloboda a Solidarita, SaS) and the far right Kotleba’s party proving the high volatility of the electoral support and weak voters’ alignments to the far right (Gyarfasova 2013). Despite of the fact, that SaS presents itself as libertarian party supporting e.g. sexual minorities’ rights, its leader stands strongly against the immigration and offered to “put the immigrants on the military boat and send them back home” as “the great amount of migrants means less freedom for our citizens” asserting that he is a Slovak nationalist: “As the Mohamed is a key figure in Islam, Jesus is a key figure in Christianity. However, Jesus spread Christianity with word, Mohamed with a sword”. (Šimečka 2017, Sulík 2016). Besides these parties, there is Hungarian ethnic party Bridge (Most/Híd), the populist starry-eyed OĽANO harnessing the emotions of the people and last but not least we have We are Family party, also populist party fighting the corrupted political oligarchy, using the anti-immigration and Eurosceptic card. So to sum it up, there is not even a single liberal political party sitting in the Slovak parliament which would not promote at least soft nationalism. The only political party promoting Solidarity with the migrants is the Hungarian ethnic party Bridge (Most-Híd 2015).

In Poland, the closest competing players to the far right (LPR, Kukiz ’15) would be Law and Justice Party which succeed in mainstreaming nationalism, later on firmly opposing EU immigrants quotas and spreading fear among the population. This tactic led to the complete ejection of LPR from the political stage in 2007 and subsequent marginalization of the party. Populism of LPR – that enjoyed the peak of its popularity in the middle of the previous decade – was simply nativist and rather defensive in its nationalism, which is a big difference in comparison to Kukiz ’15, which emerged in 2015 elections, and is openly aggressive and xenophobic. Unlike in Slovakia, the opposition to nationalist and xenophobic parties (within the Polish cultural context) exists and is embodied mainly in the Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska, PO), discredited after 8 years in the government but still having a reasonable share in the both chambers, EP as well as regional assemblies, then in pro-European liberal party Modern (Nowoczesna), and conservative The Polish People’s Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe, PSL).
Table 2: Nationalism, Populism and Polish political parties.

| LPR | PiS | PO | PSL | Modern | Kukiz’15 |
|-----|-----|----|-----|--------|----------|
| Nationalism | x | x | | | x |
| Anti-immigration | x | | | | x |
| Populism | | x | | | x |

In Hungary, the closest competing player to Jobbik and MIÉP is the already mentioned Fidesz and its satellite party Christian Democratic People’s Party (Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt, KDNP). The scholar Heller notices that the lines between the discourses of moderate right and radical right politics have been blurring. As the boundaries become more and more porous, the languages of right wing radicalism become more and more accepted in Hungary (Heller 2010, Szabó and Bene 2015). The Hungarian opposition is occupied by the discredited, socialist and therefore rejecting nationalism Hungarian Socialist Party (Magyar Szocialista Párt, MSZP), Democratic Coalition, (Demokratikus Koalíció, DK), and the green pro-European Politics can be different (Lehet Más a Politika, LMP), the by-product of the crisis of confidence in politics and political parties promoting social inclusion of disadvantaged citizens namely Roma people.

Table 3: Nationalism, Populism and Hungarian political parties.

| Jobbik | MIÉP | Fidesz | MSZP | LMP | DK |
|-------|------|--------|------|-----|----|
| Nationalism | x | x | | | |
| Anti-immigration | x | | | | |
| Populism | | x | | | |

The closest relevant competing parties for contemporary Czech far right parties depicted would be the communist KSČM and populist ANO. Despite of the claimed socialist and communist heritage, the Czech communists are outstanding in their nationalism. It is not only extremist or populist parties which would share similar views with populist radical right, but it is sometimes the issue of solitary politicians from traditional democratic parties\(^9\) and as voters in the Czech Republic face an electoral marathon in the upcoming years\(^10\) there is wide range of politicians who resort to nationalism and populism. One stream of the national conservative Civic Democratic Party (Občanská demokratická strana, ODS) also stresses more and more the patriotic, anti-EU anti-migration line. Basically, the rest of the parties are shilly-shally in their view on migration typically displayed on the governing Social Democrats occasionally claiming solidarity with refugees but with harsh anti-immigrant ex-Minister of Interior Chovanec in their lines. Both parties do not oppose solidarity, but at the same time, they are against directed quotas and more for stabilisation of failed states and the country of origins of refugees and preventing so the inflow of migrants to Europe (ČSSD 2015, KDU-ČSL 2015).

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\(^9\) E.g. the ex-mayor of Moravian town Vsetín, contemporary regional governor and the former leader of KDU-ČSL Jiří Čunek (who became famous in the 1990’s for moving the Gypsy families out of the centre of the town into the city suburbs into entirely unsatisfactory conditions), Senator Jaroslav Doubrava from Communist party and then North Bohemian movement, senator for ODS Jaroslav Zeman, local politician and former MP for ODS Ivana Řápková, MP Jiří Šulc from ODS, Jana Bobošíková, expelled member of KDU-ČSL Daniel Kalenda, ex-social democrat Jana Volfová and many others.

\(^10\) The elections for parliament in 2017 and for president in 2018. If there are no early election, the next year without elections could be as late as 2027.
Table 4: Nationalism, Populism and Czech political parties

|                  | Úsvit/SPD | ANO | ČSSD | ODS | TOP09 | KSČM | KDU-ČSL |
|------------------|-----------|-----|------|-----|-------|------|---------|
| Nationalism      | x         | x   | x    |     | x     |      |         |
| Anti-immigration | x         | x   | x    |     | x     | x    |         |
| Populism         | x         | x   | x    |     |       |      |         |

Czech President Miloš Zeman belongs to those who help the mainstreaming of radical right populism. He uses populist techniques, both inclusionary as well as exclusionary rhetoric, dirty language and blue jokes to spread fear and stir up emotions to give the impression that he is not the elite, but that he belongs to the normal people. The arguments are not only about his position towards immigration, he also departed from the common EU line on the Israel/Palestine conflict, Russia generally, the Ukraine conflict, the relationships with China, stirring up emotions against the EU leadership and its political correctness and spreading fear of foreign rule among people. His anti-migration and anti-political correctness stance, sends a message, that being anti is not out anymore but rather in. Zeman is supported by extremists and radicals, neither distances from them nor refuses invitations to the far right meetings.

Media, migration and far right politics

The state of media in Visegrad countries is 28 years after the regime change in a very poor condition. According to the Freedom House, Hungary belongs to the 20 countries, which suffered biggest media freedom decline in 2015 and it is considered only partly free unlike the other Visegrad countries which all achieved the status free; Poland was depicted as a country which should be closely monitored in the upcoming years due to the important changes which gave the government greater control over the public media; Czech Republic received worse rating due to the concentrated media ownership as well as ownership by politicians (Freedom House 2016). There is also a trend of an increasing pro-Russian disinformation campaign in Central Europe. There are more than hundred of webpages in CEE which openly present a mouthpiece of Kremlin, being pro-Russian, anti-West, anti-establishment and democracy as such or in the case of Poland, they just distort Polish-Ukraine relations in order to install a Russian dominancy. Quite often, they have an unknown owner, publish unsigned news which are not necessarily true and quite often have strong pro-Russian interest with the aim to distort relations with the EU states.

The media have always treated extremists and radicals either neutrally (rallies and demonstrations) or negatively (brutal attacks such as arson attack in Vítkov in 2009) depending on the nature of the news. The leader of extremist Republicans Sládek was condemned psychopath by media as well as by the political and intellectual elites many times while Dawn leader Okamura has been portrayed as not really competent xenophobe after he posted on Facebook his manual how to treat the Muslims (IPM 2015). Research from Slovakia shows that the extremist LSNS is mainly framed in the media in terms of extremist threat and the failure of the authorities and similarly SNS receives the great amount of criticism in the media. However, despite the prevalent negative framing, the increased media attention for the extremist

11 Molotov cocktails were thrown to the house inhabited by a Roma family. The most seriously injured was a three-year-old girl, who suffered life-threatening burns on 80% of her body. This event triggered chain of news which contributed to the negative image of extremism in the media (Newton media a.s. 2010).

12 In 2015, Okamura shared on his Facebook profile a recipe how to deal with the radical Islamist in the Czech Republic signed by member of Dawn presidency Jiří Kobza. The text called for Czechs to walk their dogs or piglets around mosques or to boycott the kebab sellers stating that every bought kebab is another step towards burkas. This call resulted in wave of critique and genesis of new satiric Facebook sites, Facebook users were sharing parodies and montages on a mass scale and media then portrayed Okamura as not really competent xenophobe (IPM 2015).
party made Kotleba highly salient and visible in the public debate facilitating so his electoral success (Kluknavská 2015; Pčolinský and Štensová 2007). The far right parties quite often gain attention of the media through the activity of their leaders which is being condemned by the media and the political and intellectual elite as lunatic. It is not only their nationalist and xenophobic rhetoric being criticized but also the uncontrolled anger manifested in violence against the political opponents (ex-leader of SNS Slota or Sládek from SPR-RSČ) or excesses tied to the drunkenness (Slota).

Similarly, in Hungary, most of the journalists employ a strategy of exclusion against the far right parties and politicians and provide as little media visibility for Jobbik as possible. Nevertheless, the media still do accent the topics and frames that are heavily advocated by the far right party. The confusing message is than that the radical right narratives appear in the media but the radical right politicians and parties are treated as persona non grata of the Hungarian media space (Szabó and Bene 2015). The scholars agree, that the media are partially responsible for radicalization of the public discourse by covering the topics of the radical right intensively and that there is a clear-cut correlation between the salience and framing of certain issues in the news media and the electoral fortune of the radical parties (Szabó and Bene 2015). Even though Czech Republic does not face any immigration, there has been a clear rise in media news informing about the so called refugee crisis. The Non-profit journalist project Hlídací pes revealed in 2015 its analysis which showed that the most negative reportages stem from the tabloids Blesk and Aha! Seconded by the leftist daily Právo; the rest of the dailies referred about the refugees in neutral or positive way (Hlídací pes 2015). The private TV Prima was accused from manipulation with the news related to incoming refugees and the interpretation of one of the refugee’s statement which proved to be incorrect and insulting. Even though the reportage was encountered with opposition from the media freedom activists accompanied with the interpreters which found out that the TV management instructed the reporters to present refugees as threat, problem and crisis, the television never reacted to these findings. Council for television and media ordered an analysis which proved that the framing message of TV Prima was not objective presenting refugees as a threat (Rada pro rozhlasové a televizní vysílání 2016) and confirmed that the TV Prima was breaking the ethical standards, ignoring basic journalistic demands for objectivity and balance. Similar situation happened in Hungary, where a leaked memo revealed that a public agency instructed reporters to avoid showing images of women and children in their coverage of the refugee crisis (Freedom House 2016). The European Journalism Observatory conducted the cross-border research in the Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Poland, UK and Ukraine examining three newspapers in each country (left, right, tabloid) covering three pivotal events concerning migrants in September 2015 and found out that newspapers in Western Europe were generally more compassionate towards the plight of migrant and refugees compared to Eastern European countries which remained generally “negative, unemotional and anti-EU” (European Journalism Observatory 2015). Migrants are presented as foreigners, with different culture attributes which are perceived negatively as a potential of threat. The negative picture in the media can lead to the frustration of ethnic minorities in the society and contribute to the rise of islamophobia and xenophobia in the Visegrad countries so the media consciously or unconsciously support radical right parties giving high visibility to the far right topics and by their framing (c.f. Multikulturní centrum Praha 2007, Sedláková 2007, Veselková 2016, Topinka 2006/2007, Klvačová and Bitrich 2003, Kluknavská 2015, Szabó and Bene 2015).

Conclusion

Paradoxically enough, having almost no immigrants in three of the countries under our scrutiny, the migration crisis contributed to the mainstreaming of nationalism and xenophobia in all of Visegrad countries. Until then, the far right parties focused mainly on Roma issue, anti-Semitism, anti-communism, anti-establishment and used anti-NATO, anti-EU, anti-German, anti-Czech, anti-Slovak or anti-Hungarian card. Since 2015, the parties re-oriented against immigrants, more precisely against the Muslims presenting them as a threat and also increased their criticism on the EU. However, the mainstream parties also accepted far right topics and actively promoted them. The result is then mainstreaming of xenophobia,
nationalism and marginalization of far right parties as their flexible voters move to the populist subjects. What we have seen is the trend of mainstreaming of nationalism via populist players Fidesz, SMER, PiS and the Czech president Zeman supported by the mainstream pop music which quite interestingly also accepted nationalism from neo-Nazi subculture. Volatility and flexibility of the populist political parties is a constitutive feature of those and brings along the instability of the party systems. What we observe, is a berlusconisation and kremlinization (setting up pro-Russian disinformation webs) of media, zemanisation of public discourse (mainstreaming of nationalism by populist leaders), orbanisation of politics (dismantling democratic liberal order) and polarization of the society, all this at the expense of extremists and radicals. Populism supplemented with soft nationalism is a reality, while extremist and radical parties are not that successful as not having stable voters base. What is also striking, is the fact that populist parties can even steal the votes from traditionally and well established parties such as Christian-Democrats in Slovakia and Czech Republic, when discredited. Mainstream media refrain from nationalism and xenophobia, but they contribute to the increase of those by framing certain topics of far right.

In all four countries, the society has been polarized over the issues of migration, relation towards the EU and Russia having one liberal-leftwing pole standing against the illiberal tendencies of the Polish and Hungarian government, in the case of Slovakia, against the mainstreaming of radicalism (SNS in the government, ĽSNS a strong regional player, Fico´s mainstreaming of nationalism) and in the case of Czech Republic against the coalition of polarizer Czech president Zeman and his ally populist oligarch and ex-minister of finance Babiš. In all four countries civil society groups organize demonstrations against illiberal tendencies but also in all of the countries opposition against the nationalist prime ministers Orbán, Fico, Kaczyński and president Zeman, remains fragmented and not able to topple down the current establishment and gain the majority votes of the people in the parliamentary or as in the case of Czech Republic, presidential elections.

Populism can be seen as a threat or a challenge. In the case of Hungary and Poland, the change in the constitutional setting of post-1989 democracies proves the former, while in Czech Republic and Slovakia it still could present a challenge for the respective politics in those two countries. The Slovak opposition remains fragmented and is currently not able to challenge SMER. The contemporary Czech political crisis is still ongoing and open with no clear winners. Populism accompanied with nationalism is currently substituting communism in its role of a universal spectre which is hunting Europe. As Benjamin Arditi, Paraguayan political scientist from Mexico University once argued, populism can be like a guest who comes late and drunk to dinner, does not behave with respect and manners and instead spells out the painful troubles of the group (Arditi 2005). So far, in Poland and in Hungary, the guest not only disrupted the party, but dissolved it and launched a new one under his rules. Not only that, the guest started to delimit the party along the ethnic lines, oppose the other supranational parties previously befriended with and brainwash the people with his own ideology hindering the new guests to come and stay labelling them as strange and threatening. The party got polarized, half of it started to believe a new leader, half of it started to oppose the new rules. In the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the party was only disrupted and painful troubles were spelled out but it was enough to polarize the society along the cleavage cosmopolitan vs. communitarian and enlarge already existing gap between the EU older states and the new ones. A new specter of national populism spread its claws over Central and Eastern Europe and became a many headed beast that takes different forms and is extremely difficult to fight with. The question remains open whether this is the beginning of an end of the great multi-ethnic supranational party.

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