

Role of discourses in framing migration

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Content

- Discourses
- “Migration crisis” in the Slovak political discourse
- Discourse in your home countries

- Why do you think I assigned you to read about that particular topics?
- How do you understand *discourse*?

Importance of discourses

Discourse formulates the ways we look at things, we describe them, what meanings we ascribe them and thus how we act. (Levitas 2005)

- we (re)produce mental representations and meanings through discourses
- it offers us a certain perspective on how we look at things
- it offers particular ways on how we produce knowledge about things
- it influences the way we act
 - (re)production of mental models (and influencing the behaviour = integral part of discourses (political, media)

Importance of discourses II

When we talk about migration, inevitably, we will come across topics of INCLUSION or EXCLUSION

Social exclusion/inclusion anchored in discourses (Levitas 2005)

→ different discourses will frame and tackle inclusion/ exclusion/ solidarity and related problems differently

It is important to realise:

- Who has access to discourses – resources; economic, social and cultural capital → power (symbolic & substantial)
- Who defines the insiders/outsideers
- How they characterise/define boundaries (what is the crucial feature of the boundary)
- How they represent relation between inclusion/exclusion and inequality (who is the one “to blame”?)

Media discourse and construction of reality

- signifying power of media: power to influence knowledge, beliefs, values, social identities, social relations
- media discourse is necessarily selective
 - on the side of production: limited range of media formats and products, limited sources
 - on the side of reception: selective exposure, selective perception, and selective retention
- such selection helps to organize social reality into meaningful blocks and patterns (Berger – Luckmann: semantic fields)
- on the other hand, these same selection simplify social reality (stereotypes, prejudices, labels)

Media agenda setting

- media discourse could be crucial when reporting affairs or events of which their recipient has no or only little experience
- „migration crisis“ in Czech Republic

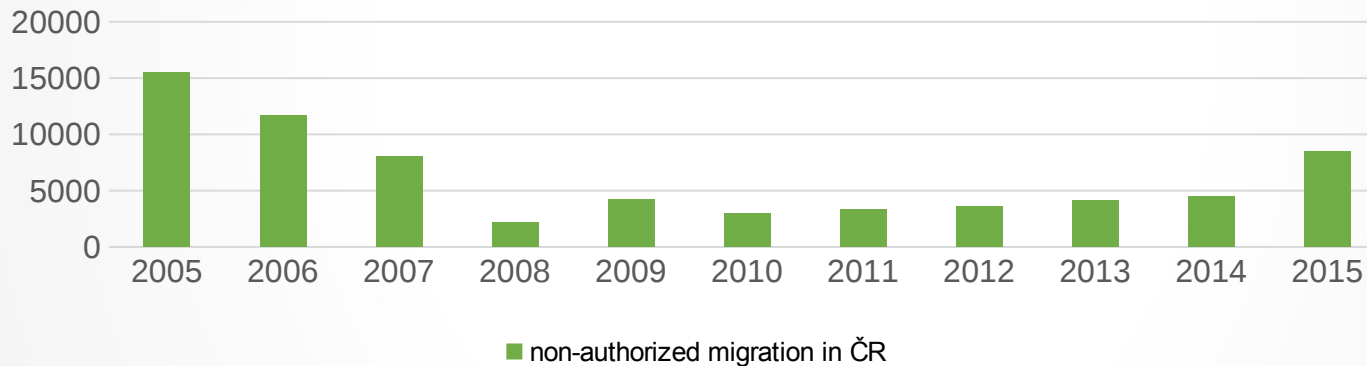
- media agenda
- political agenda
- public agenda

Theory of securitisation

- **security problem** – a situation, in which an event, a course of action or an actor is **evaluated as a threat** to the particular object of reference (person, nation, value system etc.) and thus **requires safety measures** to be taken in order to ensure the safety of the object of reference.
- **constructivist approach** to security – an issue becomes a security threat not because it essentially is one, but because it is presented and perceived as such (Buzan, Weaver, de Wilde 1998: 24; Balzacq 2011:1).
- While security is an outcome of the process in which “(...) issue is presented as posing an **existential threat** to a designed referent object”, **securitization** is a process in which the existential threat is designed, so extraordinary means can be legitimized (Buzan, Weaver, de Wilde 1998: 25).
- “Action outside normal political measures” (Buzan, Weaver, de Wilde 1998: 23-24).
- Security sectors: Political, Military, Societal, Environmental, Economic

Migration in Czech Republic

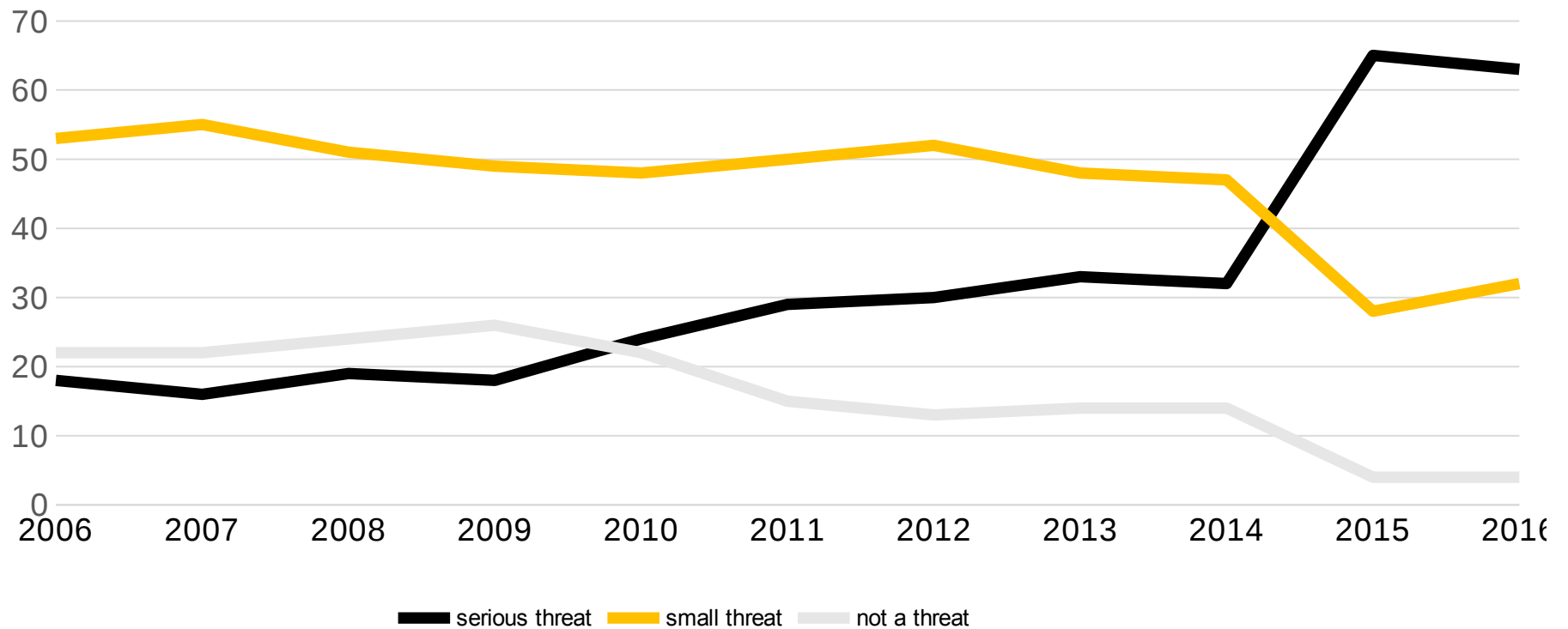
- In **2015** only **134** citizens of Syria, **38** citizens of Iraq and a few people from Afghanistan applied for **asylum** in the Czech Republic.
- Not-authorized stay in CR: Syria (**2 016**), Afghanistan (**585**), Iraq (**404**), all (**8563**)



Report on migration and integration of foreigners, Ministry of Interior (2015)

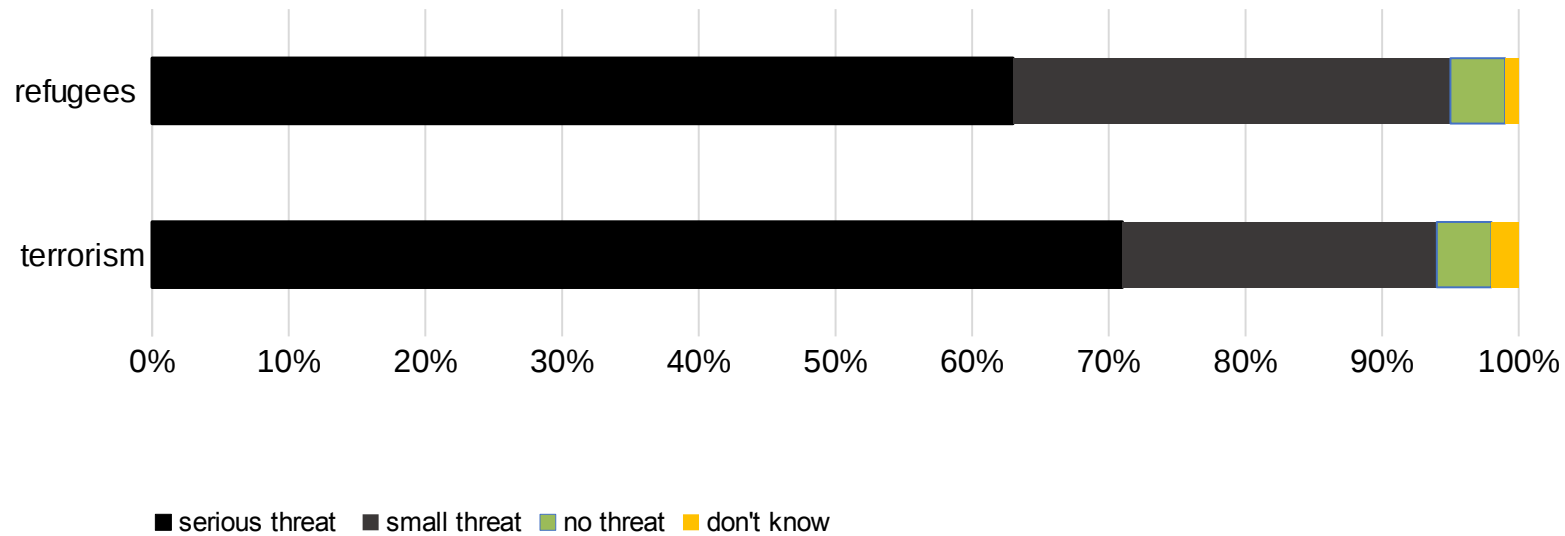
Czech public on refugees as a threat

The actuality of a threat - refugees



Czech public on refugees as a threat

Actual threats for the Czech Republic



Exercise 1

- What events are presented?
- How are events represented? Is value of security relevant in here?
How – security of whom is emphasized? At expense of who?
- What seems to be important in the picture?
- Who seems to be important?
- How are migrants presented?
- What might be the relationship between the actors in picture?

Exercise 2

- What is the source(s) of information?
- What topic(s) is it covering?
- Who are the actors in the story?
- How they are presented, described? What attributes are associated with them/ascribed to them?
- How are the relationships between actors in the story characterised, presented?
- What about pictures? Who is in it? Does it match the story? What should the picture say?

Increasing numbers of immigrants

- <http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/overview>
- [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Asylum_applications_\(non-EU\)_in_the_EU-28_Member_States,_2006%E2%80%932016_\(thousands\)_YB17.png](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Asylum_applications_(non-EU)_in_the_EU-28_Member_States,_2006%E2%80%932016_(thousands)_YB17.png)
- [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Number_of_\(non-EU\)_asylum_seekers_in_the_EU_and_EFTA_Member_States,_2015_and_2016_\(thousands_of_first_time_applicants\)_YB17.png](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Number_of_(non-EU)_asylum_seekers_in_the_EU_and_EFTA_Member_States,_2015_and_2016_(thousands_of_first_time_applicants)_YB17.png)
- <https://www.minv.sk/?statistiky-20>

The Slovak context

- Legislation focusing on immigration (entry, conditions, permits)
- No integration policy until 2014
- More restrictive conditions for naturalisation
- Institutional settings – primacy of control & regulation
 - significant asymmetry between control & integration

In 2015 and 2016...

- ... the Slovak government adopted the Anti-terrorist measures (in fast-track action)
- ... SMER-SD (governing party) leads the election campaign under the banner “*We protect Slovakia*”
- ... the Slovak government increased budget on police and on technological control of external border
- ... the Slovak Prime Minister openly accused Muslim immigrants of terrorism, raping the Slovak women and changing the character of the country
 - <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/islam-has-no-place-in-this-country-says-slovakian-prime-minister-weeks-before-it-takes-over-eu-a7052506.html>
 - <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35718831>
- ... the Slovak Prime Minister claimed necessity to control all Muslims living in Slovakia
- ... the European Commission adopted the decision to relocate 120,000 people

Political discourse on “quota”, migrants and values

- Two dichotomies around which solidarity is discursively constructed:
 - Economic immigrant vs. political refugee (pre-quota period)
 - Christian vs. non-Christian (Muslim) refugee (post-quota period)
 - different representations invoked in political argumentation
- Missing the perspective of fundamental human rights (the case of Christian refugees in the only exception)

- <https://www.euractiv.com/section/justice-home-affairs/news/hungarian-official-admits-campaign-to-generate-hate-against-migrants/>
- <http://hungarianspectrum.org/2015/12/18/hungarians-fear-of-migrants-and-terrorism/>





Some conclusions

- Social exclusion/ inclusion anchored in discourses
- Us & them and positive self- & negative other-representation strategies generates particular meanings ascribed to certain groups and invokes, or simply strengthens, existing primordial boundaries
- religion as a mobilizing tool
- one of the layers of the framing of immigrants and refugees is the preservation of Slovak national identity, equated primarily with Christianity (→ Its political representatives refer to Slovakia as a Christian-Catholic nation, thus seeking to affirm Christianity as an essential Slovak value)
- invoking nationalism through religious claims in Central and Eastern Europe (=response to wider political, economic, and cultural developments)
- Such claims legitimate restrictive policies, increase of military/police budgets, exclusionary attitudes, exclusion of particular groups from solidarity

Bibliography

Béland, Daniel. 2007. "The Social Exclusion Discourse: Ideas and Policy Change." *Policy & Politics* 35 (1):123-139.

Levitas, Ruth. 2005. "Three Discourses of Social Exclusion." Pp. 7-28 in *The Inclusive Society? Social Exclusion and New Labour*. Second Edition. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.