COMPREENDENDO AS RESPOSTAS À MIGRAÇÃO. A CRISE DOS REFUGIADOS E O PARADOXO POLONÉS.

Understanding Responses to Migration. The Refugee Crisis and the Polish Paradox

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Resumo

A crise dos refugiados de 2015 causou uma onda de migração sem precedentes na UE, levando a União a realizar mudanças em sua abordagem de gestão migratória. No entanto, os membros do Grupo de Visegrado demonstraram uma resistência contínua em aceitar o esquema de realocação da UE. Acadêmicos que estudam o discurso observaram a securitização da migração nesses países, mas pouco se escreveu sobre o contexto específico desses processos. Este artigo utiliza a Polônia como estudo de caso e baseia-se no argumento de Balzacq (2010) sobre a importância do contexto social e histórico. Segundo Balzacq (2010), o discurso é inerentemente moldado e limitado pelo seu contexto, em vez de existir de forma isolada. Portanto, este artigo analisa o ambiente no qual o discurso securitizador da migração na Polônia foi adotado, considerando o contexto distal e próximo. Explora como o complexo histórico e o pano de fundo sociocultural da Polônia—caracterizado por padrões de emigração, desafios demográficos, forte apoio à UE e valores cristãos—facilitaram paradoxalmente o processo de securitização. Os resultados enfatizam a interação entre fatores estruturais e políticos na definição das políticas migratórias. Compreender essas dinâmicas é essencial para enfrentar os desafios migratórios em curso, fortalecer a solidariedade na UE e formular respostas políticas eficazes para futuras pressões migratórias.

Palavras-chave: União Europeia, Migração, Polônia, Crise dos Refugiados, Securitização

Abstract

The 2015 refugee crisis caused an unprecedented shockwave of migration in the EU, causing the Union to make changes in its approach to migration management. The members of the Visegrád Group, however, showed continuous reluctance to accept the EU's relocation scheme. Scholars studying discourse have observed the securitization of migration in these countries, but little is written about the specific context of these processes. This article uses Poland as a case study and builds on Balzacq's (2010) point about the importance of the social and historical context. As claimed by Balzacq (2010), the discourse is inherently shaped and limited by its context rather than existing in isolation. Therefore, this article analyses the setting in which the Polish securitising discourse on migration was adopted by looking at the distal and proximate context. It highlights how Poland's complex historical and socio-cultural background—marked by emigration patterns, demographic challenges, strong EU support, and Christian values— paradoxically facilitated the securitisation process. The findings emphasize the interplay between structural and political factors in shaping migration policies. Understanding these dynamics is essential for addressing ongoing migration challenges, fostering EU solidarity, and formulating effective policy responses to future migration pressures.

Keywords: European Union, Migration, Poland, Refugee Crisis, Securitisation

Introduction: context and analytical framework

Since 2015, the EU has seen substantial migration pressures from a range of different routes. The flow of migration from Turkey in 2020, the 2021 "crisis" at the Polish-Belarus border, and most recently, the Russian invasion of Ukraine have all firmly put migration at the top of the European political agendas. However, the 2015 refugee crisis caused the first shockwave of migration in the EU and with it an unprecedented challenge for migration management. Following the Arab Spring and the Syrian civil war, over one million refugees reached European soil in 2015 alone, presenting a 'major shock' to the Common European Asylum System (Hatton, 2020), leading to important debates about migration management and relocation within the EU.

The Visegrád Group (V4), who unlike most western EU member states have had less practice of dealing with large numbers of migrants, resisted the EU's plan to

distribute asylum seekers across member states. As a result, on April 2, 2020, the European Court of Justice (ECJ), ruled that Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic had breached their obligations under EU law by refusing to accept their share of 120,000 migrants as part of the relocation scheme agreed in the summer of 2015 (Court of Justice of the European Union, 2020). However, despite the ruling, the three member states did not seem to regret their decision. The spokesperson of the Polish government, Piotr Müller, stated that while the Polish Government acknowledges the decision, the ruling "won't have any implication in practice as the decisions concerning relocation expired in September 2017" (PolskieRadio24, 2020). In fact, he claimed that the EU ended obligatory relocation because of the position taken by Poland and other members of the V4 (PolskieRadio24, 2020). The subsequent "New Pact on Migration and Asylum", presented by the European Commission in September 2020, introduced an obligatory solidarity mechanism that allowed member states to choose whether they want to contribute to relocation, sponsorship of return, or operational support. But despite the increased level of flexibility for member states' support (Kabata, 2020), the V4 disputed this new proposal, showing their determination to block any obligatory solidarity in EU migration management.[1]

Scholars have studied the attitude of central European countries towards migration from various angles, with a substantial amount of studies exploring the role of discourse and political narratives in order to establish whether we can observe the securitisation of migration in these countries. Zaun (2018), for example, studied the anti-migrant attitude that was fed by right-wing populists in the V4 countries, highlighting the importance of the national electorates in the refusal to adopt refugee quota systems. Also focusing on narratives, scholars have analysed the discourse on migration in comparative case studies (Goździak & Márton, 2018), or single case studies such as Hungary ((Bocskor, 2018; Szalai & Gőbl, 2015), Slovenia (Vezovnik, 2018) and Poland (Kabata & Jacobs, 2022; Krzyżanowska & Krzyżanowski, 2018; Troszyński & El-Ghamari, 2022). The

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[1] Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic have the strongest views, but Slovakia also raised concerns and the V4 + Estonia and Slovenia sent a joint position on it raising concerns about some aspects.

unambiguous conclusion from these studies is that migration has indeed been securitised in the respective member states.

However, as argued by Balzacq (2010, 36) "discourse does not occur nor operate in a vacuum". While discourse analysis has been key in understanding whether securitisation takes place, it has not been able to reveal why and when securitisation is successful. Discourse is produced in a specific context, which might contain enabling or obstructing factors to the securitisation process. The context is therefore, as suggested by Balzacq (2010), a vital level to consider when trying to understand the impact of the securitising agent and the securitising act. Making sense of those factors can be challenging and complex. To mitigate this challenge, Balzacq follows the suggestion made by Margaret Wetherell (2001), which is to distinguish between distal and proximate contexts to enhance analytical clarity. The latter refers to "the sort of occasion or genre of interaction the participants take an episode to be" (Wetherell cited in Balzacq, 2010, 37). It is related to what Mark (Salter, 2008), following Erving Goffman's dramaturgical analysis, calls "settings", exploring "the politics of that successful process of (de)securitization" (Salter, 2008, 321). The distal context on the other hand, is concerned with the sociocultural embeddedness of the discourse and thus "includes things like social class, the ethnic composition of the participants, the institutions or sites where discourse occurs, and the ecological […] and cultural" environments (Wetherell cited in Balzacq, 2010, 37).

This article aims to understand the securitisation process that took place in Poland, in response to the 2015 refugee crisis. While successful securitisation has been established in existing scholarly work (see Kabata & Jacobs, 2022), this article instead takes a more "activist notion of scholarship" (Salter, 2008) and asks why it was possible for the Polish ruling party to securitise the 2015 refugee crisis and successfully convince its audience that refusing to participate to the EU relocation scheme was a justifiable response to the threat of immigration. The single case study of Poland will allow for an analysis of the phenomenon of securitisation "in depth and within its real-life context" (Yin, 2009, 18). With the presence of successful securitisation confirmed in other

scholarly work, Poland represents a so-called "typical case", as it sheds "light upon the logic" of securitisation (Balzacq 2010, 34), in aiming to understand its why and how.

Building on (Balzacq, 2010) point about the importance of the social and historical context, this article analyses the setting in which the Polish securitising discourse on migration was adopted. More specifically it looks at the distal and proximate context and proposes various factors which could help understand why the securitising discourse in Poland worked (Kabata & Jacobs, 2022). It first explores the complexities of four factors relevant to the distal context; Poland's history of emigration, demography, EU membership, and religion, and then proceeds to discuss the proximate factor of national politics and related politics in the wider central European region to understand why the discourse adopted by the Polish ruling party, Law and Justice (PiS),[2] was able to convince society that migration is a threat and that Poland can oppose the EU on this issue. The selection of factors is based on aspects of specific contextual relevance and builds on existing literature discussing Polish attitudes to migration (e.g.Buchowski, 2020). Unpacking contextual factors of successful securitisation discourse will help understand not only the Polish response to the refugee crisis, but also to current and future migration pressures.

1. Poland's distal context

1.1. A history of emigration

A first factor to be considered in the analysis of the distal context of the securitisation of migration in Poland is its history of emigration. With a strong inclination of Polish residents to emigrate and low levels of immigration, Poland presents an "exception in contemporary Europe" (Okólski 2007, 11). Polish people have emigrated for both political and economic reasons and went looking for a better life in many different, sometimes distant countries, with significant Polish communities in the US, France, UK and Germany (Portal Gov.pl, n.d.). On the surface, the Polish history of

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[2] In Polish, Prawo i Sprawiedliwość.

emigration clashes with its securitisation of migration and the Polish refusal of the EU migration policies. This section explores whether this seemingly contradictory factor can help explain the successful securitisation of migration in Poland.

Poland's long history of emigration has witnessed various waves of migration to other countries, from the period of the partitions of Poland (1772-1815), to the 'Great Emigration' after the collapse of the November Uprising in 1831, and emigration during and after World War I and II. While border crossings were severely restricted during the Stalinist period, the liberalisation of migration laws saw a substantial increase in emigration numbers between 1960 and 1980, with many Polish citizens moving to the West. Immigration to Poland was, however, largely absent during this period due to strict immigration policies (only allowing Polish people to repatriate from the Soviet Union) and the low standard of living at the time (Buchowski 2020, 75).

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Polish emigration numbers continued to rise and with the new post-1989 political context also came new political perceptions. It became increasingly clear to political leaders that Polish emigrants could help maintain a sense of Polish national identity. During the 1990s, Poles residing abroad were granted the right to take part in Polish elections and the new Polish TV channel "Polonia", widely accessible in Europe and the US, came into being (Iglicka 2007, 13-15). Emigration from Poland did not end with its independence after the fall of the Iron Curtain as its accession to the European Union (EU) in 2004 opened new possibilities for migration in search of professional opportunities. When Poland became an EU member, the number of Poles emigrating to other members of the Union increased considerably (Buchowski 2020, 75). Polish emigration again was a topic of debate, high on the Polish political agenda as several million Poles left for – predominantly – western and northern European states (Krzyżanowska & Krzyżanowski 2018, 3). Currently, it is estimated that between 18 and 20 million Poles and people of Polish origin live outside Poland, which places Poland in sixth place in the world in this regard relative to the population of the mother country (Portal Gov.pl, n.d.).

However, despite Poland's profile as a country of consistently high emigration, the country was reluctant to accept migrants – economic or otherwise – through the EU relocation scheme. The Polish Government claimed on various occasions that Poland will not agree to the relocation scheme as those planned for relocation were not refugees but economic migrants (see for example Dobski, 2017). Poland pointed out that it is the member states' right to decide whether or not to allow economic immigrants to enter (Radio Kraków, 2015). Given its history of emigration, this might seem to clash with its own experience. And indeed, data has shown that the Polish public traditionally were among the most supportive of immigration in Europe throughout the 2000s. However, in contrast with these accepting views, "in the 2014 European Social Survey, 34.3 per cent of Poles said that no Muslims should be allowed to Poland, [which] may stem from the historically strong religious component of Poland's national identity" (Wiącek 2017, 175).

Indeed, wider historical and cultural aspects have played a role in this attitude and might help explain this seemingly contradictory attitude to immigration. Polish emigration has not only helped Poles find better lives economically and politically, but throughout many years, it has also "helped to maintain the sense of national identity among Poles" (Iglicka 2007, 13). Emigration in Poland has always been considered in socio-cultural and nationalist frameworks. (Krzyżanowska & Krzyżanowski2018, 3) sum it up as follows:

> "Relatively little attention has been paid, for instance, to the class-based character of outward migration (…) or to the fact that various deep-seated discriminatory patterns in the Polish society (e.g. anti-Semitism) were often at the roots of different waves of emigration. At the same time, few have been concerned to grapple with Poland's internal cultural diversity (or, in most cases, acute lack thereof). This has ultimately had a profound influence upon the post-1989 Polish public sphere and, crucially, has left the national media ill-prepared for addressing migration and multiculturalism (…) or indeed many other forms of pluralism or diversity.

In short, while Poland's longstanding history of emigration on the surface might contradict its unwillingness to help migrants under the EU relocation scheme, the

association of emigration to a stronger Polish identity, and related deep-rooted socio-cultural factors help better understand its position.

1.2. Polish demographics

Another distal factor to explore to help understand the securitisation of migration in Poland and its opposition to the EU relocation scheme involves Polish demographics. Two aspects are particularly relevant when exploring Poland's lack of willingness to accommodate migrants: the number of foreigners residing in Poland, and the age demographics within the Polish society (linked to shortages in the labour market).

Poland experienced many waves of emigration, but until recently, it has had little exposure to immigration. Between 1980 and 2016, the numbers for immigration never exceeded emigration, with the former never higher than 17400 migrants (GUS, 2018), so for many decades, immigration was not a major issue in Poland. In 2015, in a country of 38 million inhabitants, there were only 168,217 foreigners with valid documents to stay in Poland (The Office for Foreigners 2020). This is a small proportion of foreigners compared to the situation in other EU Member States, such as France or Germany. Moreover, these countries have witnessed some associated challenges, including in relation to integration, tensions between growing immigrant communities and local communities, as well as terrorist attacks, while Poland has not faced any challenges of this kind. Poland, unlike Hungary, also did not face significant numbers of refugees at its borders during the refugee crisis. This experience again seems to contradict the Polish refusal to allocate refugees, as they did not face the challenges of growing immigrant communities and potential social tensions, especially given the relatively small number of 6182 refugees allocated to Poland under the EU relocation mechanism (Council of the European Union, 2015; European Union, 2015a, 2015b).[3]

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[3] 5082 applicants based on Council Decision (EU) 2015/1601 and 1100 applicants based on Council Decision (EU) 2015/1523 and the Outcome of the Council Meeting from 20 July 2015.

The Polish response to EU migration management becomes even more surprising when considering Poland's ageing population and shortages in its labour force. According to the Central Statistical Office (GUS),[4] already in 2013, the average Polish citizen has aged 7 years since the 1990s (GUS, 2014). The elderly population grows faster than the EU average: whereas in the EU, the overall percentage of people aged 65 and over grew from 15.8 per cent in 2001 to 19.7 per cent in 2018 (i.e. by 3.9 percentage points), in Poland, it grew from 12.4 per cent to 17.1 per cent (4.7 percentage points) (Polski Instytut Ekonomiczny 2019, 1) (Eurostat, 2019). The ageing population, in combination with a growing economy after EU accession and continuing emigration, has resulted in labour market gaps (Hargrave et al. 2023, 4). The Ministry of Investment and Economic Development (MIR) pointed out that "in 2030 employers will struggle to fill every fifth job" ("Będą Zachęty Dla Obcokrajowców Na Polskim Rynku Pracy," 2018).

On the surface, Poland's demographics might not explain the successful securitisation of migration. But the homogenous nature of Polish society, with a low percentage of foreigners, can help clarify the securitisation process by applying the Integrated Threat Theory (ITT). According to this theory, when analysing the perception of an out-group as a threat or danger by an in-group, there are five antecedent factors to consider: intergroup conflict, status inequalities, the strength of in in-group identification and also knowledge of the out-group and intergroup contact. ITT suggests that a lack of knowledge about an out-group is strongly related to a higher perception of threat and a tendency to stereotype. Also, the more positive contact between the two groups, the less perception of threat (Croucher, 2017).

Accordingly, as Poles do not live in a multicultural society, they may display unwelcoming attitudes towards immigrants. Further, they often rely on the political elite (and national media) for information on the issue, which in the case of Poland has emphasised problems around migration. During the refugee crisis, narratives produced by the Polish media or by prominent politicians were rather pejorative. The PiS adopted

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[4] In Polish, Głóny Urząd Statystyczny.

securitising discourse that very explicitly presented immigrants as a threat to Polish society (Kabata & Jacobs, 2022). Similarly, the discourse used by national media portrayed migration as a problem and contributed significantly to the moral panic (Strupiechowska, 2018).

The labour shortage mitigated this somewhat, but at the same time emphasised that the government did not take an equally inhospitable attitude to all immigrants. Poland implemented policies to simplify employment procedures for immigrants entering Poland, although mainly focusing on immigrants from countries to Poland's eastern border (Kacperska, 2018). According to the work of Kacperska (2018, 150-152) based on the data from GUS, the number of work permits issued in 2016 almost tripled since 2014, with 83.4 per cent of the work permits issued to Ukrainians.

The MIR addressed the challenges to the Polish labour market in preparation of a new comprehensive migration policy. However, the policy was stopped in its preparatory stage after the Deputy Minister, Paweł Chorąży, claimed that Poland needed a migrant labour force that consisted of workers that were not only from Ukraine; a statement that eventually cost the minister his job (Puto, 2019). These tensions in the Polish Government's approach to migration were also visible in the Strategy for Responsible Development until 2020 (Rada Ministrów, 2017). It focused on the need for a comprehensive migration policy, which would include the integration of foreigners and incentives for them to settle in Poland and simultaneously consider concerns relating to national security. The Strategy emphasises that "the expected scale of labour immigration will not fully fill the gaps in the labour market" (Rada Ministrów 2017, 28) while asserting that "due to the intensified migration flows in Europe, there is also an important issue of ensuring state security" (Rada Ministrów 2017, 152). The document states the following: "[a]s the experience of some European countries shows, the costs of solving demographic problems and the needs of the labour market through exclusive immigration of separate religious and cultural groups may in the long term outweigh the potential gains and jeopardise the cohesion of social structures. Therefore, there is a need for a new national migration policy that will effectively combine all the (…) aspects of migration

and predict their consequences" (Rada Ministrów 2017, 152). This quote indicates how the specific demographical situation of Poland, which would indicate a welcoming attitude towards migrants, was used to securitise migration: the exploitation of the lack of familiarity with foreigners and fear towards migrants to present them as a threat and select a more familiar 'other' (immigrants from Eastern Europe) to help address the problems labour market shortages.
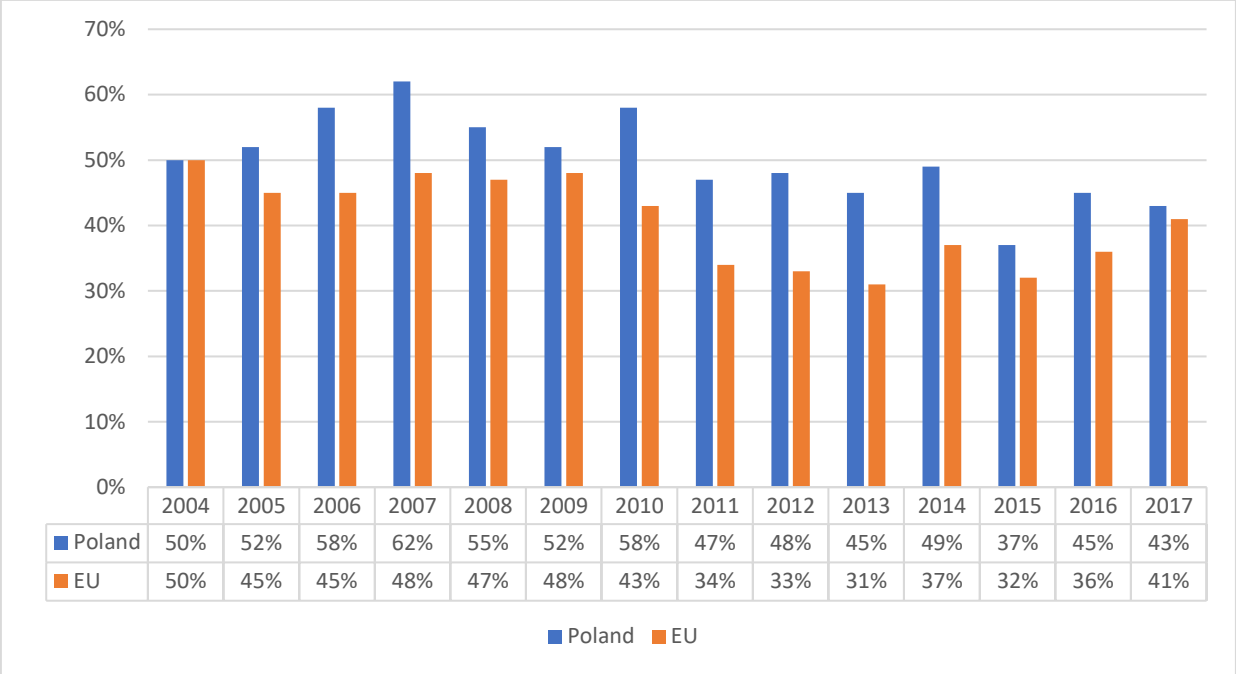
1.3. EU membership

Poland has always been a country with a positive attitude towards EU membership and the EU in general. According to the data from Eurobarometer (see Figure I), Poland has generally recorded a more positive attitude towards the EU than the average EU Member State[5] (European Commission 2004-2017).[6]

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[5] With one exception in the accession year (2004), when the levels of trust were equal.
[6] This statement is based on data from Standard Eurobarometer. In the years when the study was conducted more than once, the latest report was analysed.

Figure 1. Trust in the European Union

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Poland	50%	52%	58%	62%	55%	52%	58%	47%	48%	45%	49%	37%	45%	43%
EU	50%	45%	45%	48%	47%	48%	43%	34%	33%	31%	37%	32%	36%	41%

Source: Own presentation based on data from the Standard Eurobarometer (European Commission, n.d.).).

Given this positive attitude towards the EU, it can seem paradoxical that Poland so strongly opposed the EU decision on the relocation scheme and showed no remorse for its refusal. Scholars have identified a mismatch between the view of Polish citizens on the one hand and the view of the Polish political elite on the other (Guerra, 2021). Polish citizens have generally recognised that Poland and the Polish population have largely benefited from EU membership. However, a decline in trust could be observed at the time of the refugee crisis. Although trust in the EU was low across EU member states at this time, in Poland, 2015 was the first year when the majority of people distrusted the Union (European Commission, 2015).[7] Even though the trend reversed already in 2016 and 2017, the distrust remained high.

While some of this distrust can no doubt be explained by events within the EU, the Polish Government at the time also successfully securitised migration to gain public

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[7] In 2015, 39 per cent of Polish respondents distrusted the EU.

support for its opposition to EU decisions in migration management. Convincing the population that the EU was making wrong decisions in this respect helped legitimise the decision of the Polish Government to oppose the EU on this issue (Kabata & Jacobs, 2022). When the PiS came to power in 2015, it was already cynical about the EU, which resulted in years of disagreement between the PiS and Brussels, despite an overwhelming EU supportive public. Members of the Party portrayed migration as a threat to Polish culture and security and did not hesitate to emphasise how migration had caused security issues on other EU member states (with higher numbers of migration and less homogenous societies) (Kabata, 2021).

Interestingly, Schwell (2016, 268) argues that it was EU accession that brought about a focus on terrorism and irregular migration, both issues which had not previously been considered a security threat in Poland. As Schwell (2016, 264) explains, after the transformation brought about by the end of the Cold War, Poland needed to adapt to a post-communist reality and prepare for its "return to Europe". Poland's aspiration to join the EU led to serious changes in Polish legislation which had to adapt to the acquis communautaire of the Union. This included adaptions in the field of Justice and Home Affairs, with a particular focus on immigration and asylum law and policy.

Indeed, according to Anna Kicinger, interestingly it was asylum law that '"became the most 'Europeanised' part of the Polish migration policy" (Schwell 2016, 264). The changes brought by EU accession could be seen, for example, on the Polish-Ukrainian border, where previously the practice of joint border control (so-called one-stop control), based on mutual trust and recognition, had to be stopped. For border guard officials, the impact of this change meant a reassessment of "relations with the East", which would later be reframed as "security risks in several respects" (Schwell 2016, 267). This suggests that the accession process has played a key role in the securitisation of migration and border control as they were not viewed as major security issues before EU membership was on the cards for Poland.

In short, while there is strong support for the EU on a societal level, the path pursued by the political elite (especially since 2015, but potentially generated already

during the EU accession process), has adopted a Eurosceptic narrative, especially in relation to migration and migration management. The role of the political elite is further discussed below as the proximate factor that helps explain the successful securitisation of migration in Poland, resulting in the public's acceptance of the Polish rejection of the EU relocation scheme.
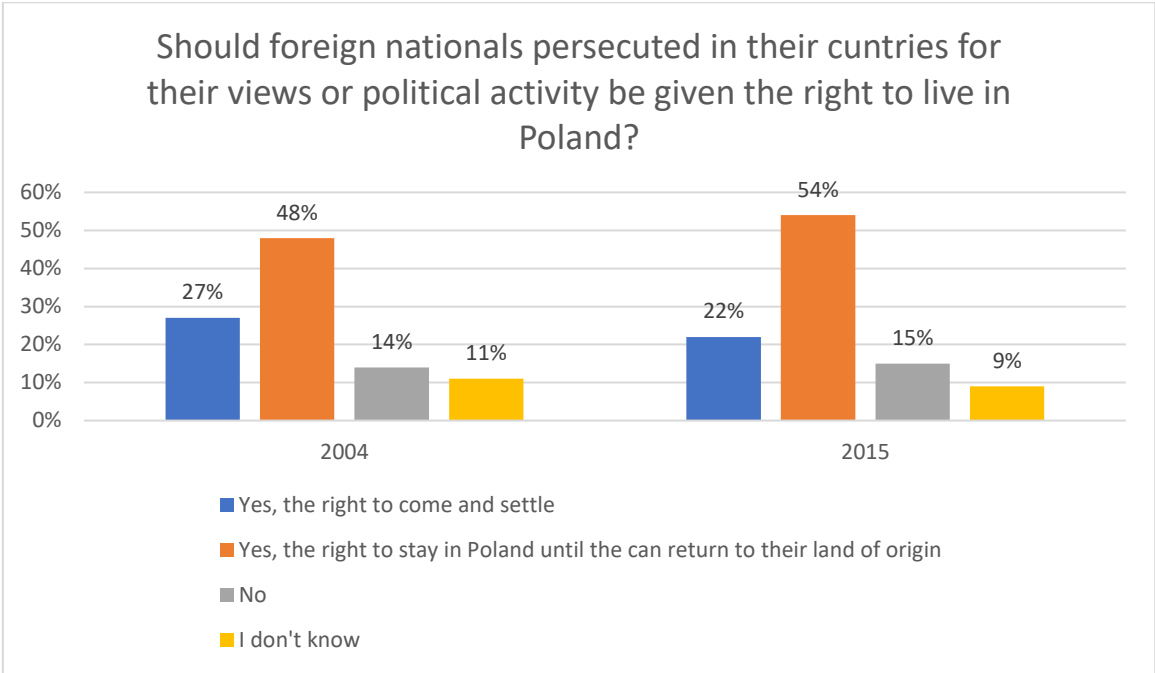
1.4. Religion

Poland can be considered a Catholic country. Sources suggest that between 85 and 95 percent of Poles consider themselves Catholic (GUS 2018; Pędziwiatr, 2018). According to Kamil (Kaczmarek, 2018), who analysed the stance of bishops in the debate on accepting refugees, the position of the Catholic Church differs from country to country, despite the very clear message from Pope Francis calling on European Catholics to help and welcome refugees (Kaczmarek, 2018). A logical assumption would be that a Catholic country such as Poland would accept the Pope's advice and welcome refugees under the EU relocation scheme.

When examining willingness of Poles to accept refugees,[8] it becomes clear that the Polish society was indeed largely in favour of offering help to refugees already in 2004 but also in 2015 (see chart no. 2). However, as visible on Figure III, this attitude changed between 2015 and 2017. The support for refugees decreased from May 2015, when 58 percent supported the idea to accommodate refugees in Poland, to October 2017, when only 33 percent of Poles thought that Poland should accept refugees and allow them to settle in Polish society. While this demonstrates a significant drop, the reduction in support is even larger when the respondents were told that these refugees would come from the Middle East and Africa (Figure IV).

Figure 2. Poles on the matter of accepting refugees.

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[8] Due to the lack of data on Catholic Poles specifically, and the high percentage Catholics in Poland, the analysis considers Poles as such.

Should foreign nationals persecuted in their cuntries for their views or political activity be given the right to live in Poland?

Legend:
- Yes, the right to come and settle
- Yes, the right to stay in Poland until the can return to their land of origin
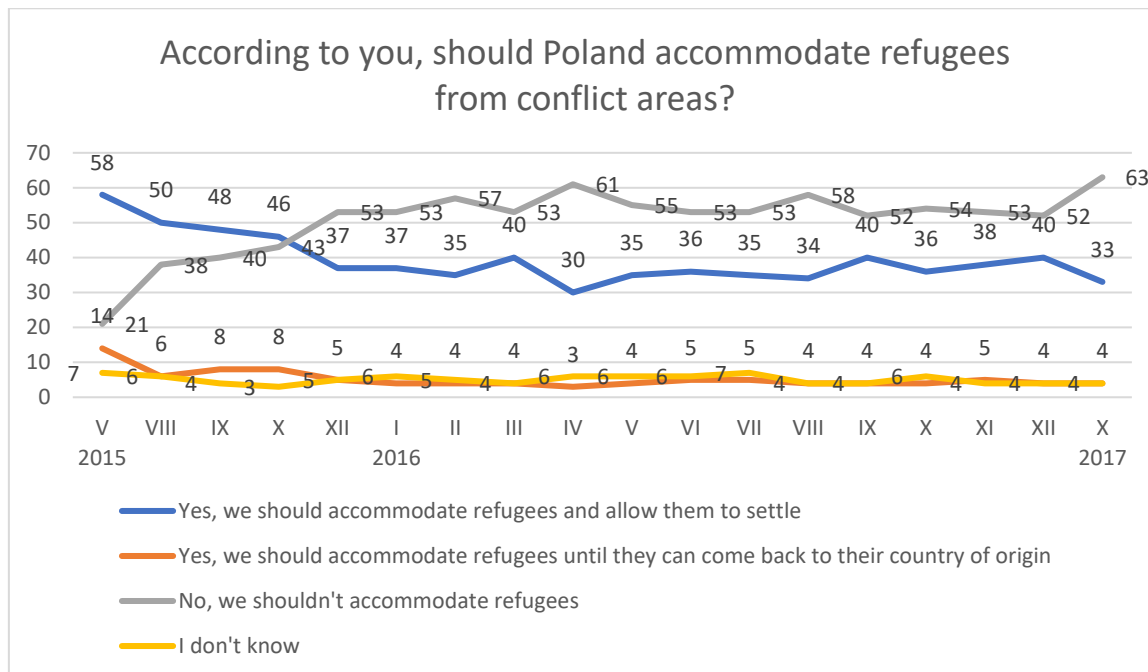- No
- I don't know

Source: Adapted from Public Opinion Centre (CBOS, 2015a) 6/2015.

Figure 3. Attitude towards refugees (without stating their country of origin).

According to you, should Poland accommodate refugees from conflict areas?

Source: Adapted from Public Opinion Centre (CBOS, 2018) 87/2018.

Figure 4. Attitude towards refugees from the Middle East and Africa
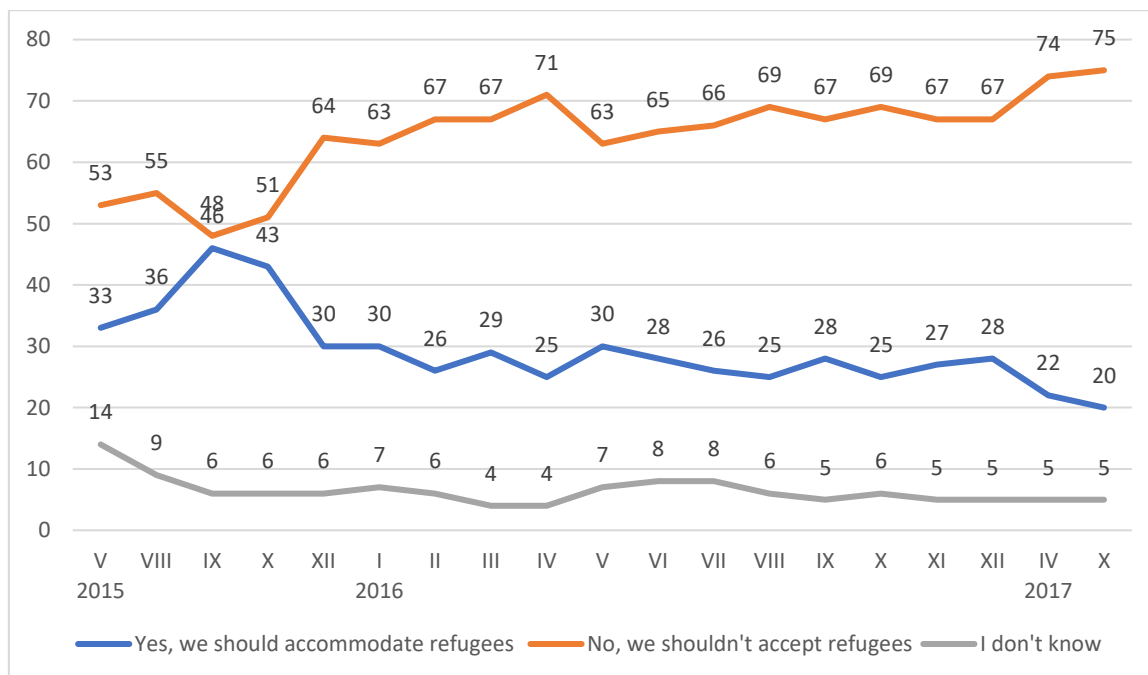
Source: Adapted from Public Opinion Centre (CBOS, 2018) 87/2018.

Figure 4 shows that in May 2015, only 33 per cent of Poles believed that Poland should relocate refugees from the Middle East and Africa. This percentage further decreased to 20 per cent by October 2017. The slight increase between May and August 2015 reflects the political context in Poland in the summer of 2015 when parliamentary elections took place. The support for refugees from the Middle East and Africa started to decrease in September when the campaign intensified and directly focused on the so-called "Migration Crisis" (with prevailing securitising discourse) and then dropped drastically between October and December at the time of the election and the subsequent victory of the anti-immigration PiS.

Observing the difference between Figures III and IV, Poles drastically changed their opinion when they were told that the refugees would come from the Middle East and Africa. Studies have shown that Poles are among the most anti-Islam nations in Europe: Poland ranked third out of eight in 2011 (just after Hungary and Italy) in terms of the percentage of people (47,1 per cent) thinking that there are too many Muslims in their country.[9] Moreover, it ranked second in the number of people believing that Islam is too demanding (62,3 per cent) and it is a religion of intolerance (61.5 per cent) (Zick et al. 2011, 61). This anti-Muslim attitude cannot be explained by the negative experience of Poles as in 2011 the country hosted only 5,100 Muslims, around 0,013 per cent of the total population in Poland (GUS, 2013).

This shows that the Pope's call was not approved in Poland, with visible reluctance to support refugees, for example, by some young priests taking an "active part in anti-refugee and anti-Muslim demonstrations" (Pędziwiatr 2018, 461). This resulted in the normalisation of Islamophobic sentiments and an increase in Polish nationalism, in which Islam was presented as the most important 'religious other', and therefore a key threat to the Polish Christian nation. Although there were some statements emphasising the need to help refugees, for example, from Bishop Krzysztof Zadarko (Tomasz Królak, 2015) and Cardinal Nycz (Polast News, 2017), many other such statements focused on

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[9] France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal.

helping refugees in their country of origin (Kaczmarek, 2018). The Polish Bishop Conference (KEP) also pointed out that the secular authorities are responsible for providing control, security and help to refugees in Poland (KEP, 2015). Furthermore, the Church did not call on the Polish Government to accept refugees and offered no support when the previous Prime Minister Kopacz decided to accept the allocated refugees (Kaczmarek, 2018). In short, the Polish Catholic Church washed its hands of the refugee 'problem'.

In fact, the Polish Church was quite divided on this matter. While some representatives of the Polish Catholic Church have declared their support for the relocation of refugees, regardless of their religion, this willingness was not shared by all. For instance, priest Adam Kaczor stated that "[m]obilization is needed to put a dam on the Muslim flood" and that "[t]he Pope is unreliable in this matter", explicitly opposing the head of the Catholic Church (Żytnicki & Nyczka, 2015). Priest Ryszard Winiarski presented six reasons why he is against the relocation of refugees, claiming that they present an enormous threat to the security of the state, the catholic religion, human rights, freedom and democracy (ks. Ryszard Winiarski, 2015). Moreover, Archbishop Głódź not only argued that refugees should have stayed in their countries where they could receive our help, but also criticized dioceses that accepted refugees (Łupak, 2017).

This dichotomy in the Catholic Church in Poland is likely to be intertwined in politics, as it has close ties with specific political parties. Especially PiS, who won both the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2015, has emphasised the importance of religion in its discourse (Kowalczyk, 2015). In the face of PiS and its anti-immigration discourse, the Polish Catholic Church was caught in a cleft stick. An example of this relation is priest Rydzyk, famous for his wealth and controversies around the financial support he receives from PiS, who argued in 2017 that if it was not for the miracle of PiS winning the elections, we would now have Muslims in Poland (Orłowski, 2017). In short, the anti-pluralist stance in Polish society also extends to religious affiliations, and while some were supportive of Pope Francis' suggestions to welcome refugees, many important

figures in the Polish Catholic Church have been very vocal about their opposition to this idea, using strong anti-Muslim discourse, which in turn influenced societal views.

2. Poland's proximate context: national politics and the wider Central European region

The final section examines the proximate factor of the wider political context in and around Poland at the time of the refugee crisis. This section explores whether the political setting, or the politics of the successful process of securitisation in Poland helps to understand the Polish response to the EU relocation scheme.

Prior to the 2015 parliamentary elections, the Polish Government was formed by a coalition between the Civic Platform (PO) and the Polish People's Party (PSL), who had been in power since 2007. With the 2015 elections, the PO and PSL lost to the PiS together with representatives from Poland Together (PR)[10] and United Poland (SP)[11]. Both the PO and PiS have been dominating the Polish political arena since the elections in 2005. The programmes of both parties were initially quite similar, and members were mainly right-wing politicians, but this has gradually changed. While PiS is still considered a right-wing, national-conservative party, the PO has shifted political focus and can now best be described as a central party supported mainly by the centre and left (and less the right).

The PO's loss in the elections can be explained by various factors. These include the lack of new ideas and the uncertainty of winning, fatigue of the electorate after 8 years, the fall in popularity of the left-wing parties, unpopular and controversial policy decisions (for example, extending the retirement age to 67), Bronisław Komorowski losing the presidential elections in 2015, as well as the fact that Donald Tusk (the previous Prime Minister) left Polish politics to take a position in the EU, leaving less popular Ewa

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[10] In Polish, Polska Razem.
[11] In Polish, Solidarna Polska.

Kopacz as the Prime Minister (Jażdżewski, 2015). According to polls, among the main reasons for voting for PiS was to avoid another win for the PO (CBOS, 2015b). Importantly, another difference between PO and PiS was their stance on the EU relocation scheme: while PO showed a willingness to accommodate refugees, PiS did not, and outlined a different approach to manage this issue. In response to the perceived threats of Russian imperialism, illegal migration and terrorism, PiS' pre-election programme put forward proposals to strengthen the Polish Border Force by transforming it into a police and military service (Polko 2018, 350).

Although in the first few months after the change of government, Prime Minister Beata Szydło promised to honour the previous government's commitments on refugees, from the very outset, the issue of migration was attached to the question of security. This was further intensified by the terrorist attacks in Brussels in March 2016. In the immediate aftermath of the attacks, the Polish Government drew a link between migration and terrorism and saw this as a window of opportunity to withdraw from its obligations under the EU treaties and announced that it would no longer participate in the EU refugee relocation system. Polish resistance to the European actions regarding the "Migration Crisis" found support in the Visegrad Group (V4), which was chaired by Poland for a year from July 2016. On September 16, 2016, the V4 stated that "migration policy should be based on the principle of "flexible solidarity", which in essence means that member states should be free to decide the extent to which they would help in response to the unfolding crisis in Europe (Visegrad Group,2016, 3). Indeed, the idea of 'flexible solidarity' was the V4's response to the proposal by the European Commission to reform asylum policy in the wake of the migration crisis.[12]

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[12] The proposal of the European Commission (2016), titled "Towards a sustainable and fair Common European Asylum System", included the possibility that EU member states would not have to take part in the relocation system if they paid 250,000 euro for each migrant they chose not to accept. It contained two ways to distribute refugees: the first (so-called Dublin +) indicated that examining an asylum application would be still a responsibility of the country in which the refugee crossed the EU border (but in situations of a significant migrant influx, relocation of refugees to other Member States would take place); the second option, the distribution of the refugees, would follow the distribution and objective criteria, regardless of the country where the asylum application was submitted.

This demonstrates that the proximate context of Polish politics played a substantial role in the change of attitude to the EU relocation scheme and migration management more generally. Despite promises made by the previous government, PiS dominated the discourse on migration during the period running up to the elections and continued on this path once in power, leading to the successful securitisation of migration and the Polish public's acceptance of its refusal to adopt the EU relocation scheme. It was further strengthened in its position as the Chair of the V4 in 2016-2017, and the political support from other V4 members.

Conclusion

Adopting a more activist notion of scholarship, the broader question of this article is how securitisation moves are accepted or rejected, to better understand the context and politics of successful processes of securitisation. Building on Balzacq (2010), the article explores both distal and proximate contextual factors of the Polish case study to discover how these factors have contributed to the successful securitisation of migration in Poland in response to the refugee crisis, and to the public's acceptance of the Polish rejection to the EU relocation scheme.

The above analysis leads to several observations. First, the contextual approach adds value to the wider understanding of not *whether* but *why* securitisation processes take place. While many scholars focus on the former, exploring contextual factors can help not only answer the "why" question, but also lead to appropriate responses to securitisation discourse and practices. More comprehensive knowledge and appreciation of why securitisation takes place, not just in the context of migration, and not just in Poland, can help interpret and validate international debates on securitised issues. Beyond the Polish case on migration, it can also help enhance understanding of when opposition to the EU takes place (despite contradictory expectations) and what can be done to facilitate dialogue.

Second, the contextual factors in the case of Poland help demonstrate the complexities of social, cultural, and historical aspects of securitisation, as well as the role

of current politics. Especially the distal factors analysed above demonstrate the inherent paradoxes of the Polish case. Its history of emigration, demographic challenges, general support for the EU and the strong presence of Christian values in Polish society at first glance may suggest a more supportive stance on immigration and the EU relocation scheme. However, exploring the complexities of these factors demonstrates the power of underlying historical, and socio-cultural structures. It also suggests we cannot underestimate the power of politics, with the PiS playing a key role in the acceptance of the public, and strongly influencing the way existing structural, distal factors play out.

Third, the analysis demonstrates that the identified factors are interlinked and overlapping categorisations that will influence each other. The political context, for example, is interrelated with the role of religion (given the high percentage of Poles that are Catholic) and key religious leaders, which in itself is interrelated to the Polish perception of the Muslim faith. The identified proximate and distal factors therefore can overlap and facilitate and mutually intensify the securitisation process. In short, while the analysis demonstrates that, in line with Balzacq's argument, context is vital to explain the effect of discourse, given the inherently paradoxical nature of some aspects, it is less straightforward to determine which factors contribute to the securitisation in which manner. Nevertheless, exposing the complexities of these factors can help explain Polish and other responses to current and future migration pressures.

This is particularly relevant in the current climate. Recent events, such as the flow of immigrants from Turkey in 2020, the situation at the Polish-Belarus border, and refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine show us that the migration to the EU is ongoing. While the ECJ decided that member states opposing the EU migration management plan have broken EU law, they remained unpunished and continue to stand by their decision. This demonstrates that an increased understanding of wider contexts, and a continuous dialogue between the EU and countries like Poland (and other V4 states) is key to enhance solidarity and cooperation in the EU in migration policy decisions.

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