



Partecipazione e Conflitto
<http://siba-ese.unisalento.it/index.php/paco>
ISSN: 1972-7623 (print version)
ISSN: 2035-6609 (electronic version)
PACO, Issue 17(3) 2024: 682-701
DOI: 10.1285/i20356609v17i3p682

Published 15 November, 2024

RESEARCH ARTICLE

COMPETING ARTICULATION OF NATIONAL BELONGING VIS-À-VIS IMMIGRATION: SOUTH AFRICA, CZECHIA AND SLOVAKIA COMPARED

Ondřej Filipec

Palacký University in Olomouc, Czechia

Valerie Kondo

University of Johannesburg, South Africa

Lucie Macková

Palacký University in Olomouc, Czechia

ABSTRACT: This paper examines contemporary forms of nationalism through the populist parties in South Africa, Czechia, and Slovakia. Despite South Africa's progressive constitution, economic challenges, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and global crises, have fuelled anti-immigrant sentiments, the "Put South Africans First" and "Operation Dudula" are emerging as anti-immigrant movements, wanting to reclaim entitlements for South Africans. In Czechia and Slovakia, populist parties have resurfaced amid political narratives and economic concerns. The study employs critical discourse analysis, combining desk research and textual analysis, to contrast populist discourse on migrants in South Africa with that in Czechia and Slovakia, focusing on the recent tensions. The analysis extends to populist political parties such as the Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD) party in Czechia, the People's Party – Our Slovakia (ĽSNS), and Operation Dudula in South Africa, exploring their impact on public sentiment and government responses. By identifying commonalities and disparities, the paper contributes to understanding the complex interplay between nationalism, populism, and anti-immigrant sentiments in diverse national contexts.

KEYWORDS: Central Europe, Migration, Populism, South Africa, Vigilantism

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR: Dr. Ondřej Filipec (ondrej.filipec@upol.cz)

1. Introduction

In the age of social networks and accessible news, the issue of migration has had great polarisation potential, which various political actors exploit to ensure political capital. The phenomenon might invoke fear, uncertainty, and even hostility and become integral to populist politics, offering simple solutions to extraordinarily complex problems. This is a characteristic seen not only in European countries such as Czechia and Slovakia, which are sensitive to migration due to historical reasons and relatively homogenous populations but also in South Africa, with its historical and political heritage. All three countries are characterised by unsettled conditions, which have provided fertile ground for the rise of populism and anti-immigration stances.

Despite South Africa having one of the most progressive constitutions in the world today, the social reality for many South Africans is unsettled (Dahlberg and Thapar-Björkert 2023). For example, South Africa now has a 43% unemployment rate, with the youth enduring the worst of this burden with over 70% youth unemployment (Stats SA 2022). In addition to being a potential hotbed for instrumentalizing public tension, South Africa has long struggled with growing social inequalities (Blum 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic and associated policy changes in 2020/21 increased citizens' lack of trust in the government and further exacerbated these multifaceted economic and social crises. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in early 2022 and the global energy crisis, food and fuel prices have risen in South Africa, further adding to citizens' frustrations (Blum 2022). Xenophobic discourse and scapegoating of immigrants for political and economic failures such as the foretasted have grown socially acceptable in mainstream politics. WhatsApp and X (Twitter), among other social media platforms, appear crucial for these dynamics in South Africa.

Studies have shown that racism, nationalism, exclusion, and perceptions of outsiders as physical security threats all contribute to xenophobia (Cilliers 2020). The media in South Africa portrays immigrants as being involved in the steeped rate of increase in crime, human and drug trafficking, and youth delinquency related to drug abuse and promiscuity (Landau and Segatti 2009; Hiropoulos 2020). However, statistics show that foreign nationals are more likely to be victims of crime than offenders due to negative opinions about foreigners by citizens (Hiropoulos 2020; Rakubu and Malatji 2023). The "Put South Africans First" movement and the vigilante organisation known as "Operation Dudula" (Operation Pushback) have recently risen as anti-immigrant movements (Dratwa 2023). These movements are based on the premise that migrants (mainly from other African countries) are given priority over South Africans. These movements pledge to "reclaim" or "give back" what they believe South Africans are legally entitled to in terms of employment, housing, healthcare, education, and life prospects (Dratwa 2023).

At the same time, political narratives and economic concerns are similarly contributing to tensions towards migrants in Czechia and Slovakia. In the 1990s and even further down in history, there have been different populist parties and groups in former Czechoslovakia and then Czechia and Slovakia. The evolution of anti-system and populist parties with anti-Roma or anti-immigration rhetoric has been described by many, including Mareš and Milo (2019) or Bastl, Mareš, Smolík and Vejvodová (2011). The purpose of this text is not to describe each group and political party in detail but rather to look at parties in each country which have greater potential to succeed in the parliamentary elections and which have been an integral part of the political landscape in Czechia, Slovakia and potentially also South Africa. We will also look at the different types of populism and their institutional dimensions in each country.

This paper will look at an analysis of migrant rhetoric in the main populist political parties in Czechia, Slovakia and South Africa. It will show that populist parties largely contribute to citizens' understanding of

migrants in Czechia, Slovakia and South Africa, as seen by the common public sentiment towards migrants spurred on by media calling for governments to stop supporting migrants seemingly more than citizens. The main aim of this paper is to compare the communication of the Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD) party in Czechia, the People's Party – Our Slovakia (ĽSNS) and the Operation Dudula party in South Africa to search for any similarities in the discourse of these populist parties.

Although the historical and political backgrounds of these countries differ, they are all relatively young democracies challenged by societal polarization, which has led to the emergence of populist parties and movements¹, including their leaders exploiting media platforms to exacerbate social tensions and undermine social cohesion, thereby capitalizing on public dissatisfaction to advance their political objectives. In the selected countries, populist rhetoric frequently revolves around portraying migrants as existential threats to the nation, employing a binary narrative to bolster their appeal.

2. Existing research and methodology

The central concept of this research is populism, as the paper will address new forms of contemporary populism, nationalism, and anti-immigration stances in different national contexts of three different countries. This is a challenging task due to several reasons. Firstly, in the European context, populism is usually mentioned and explained in the context of liberal democracy, whereas in South America, for example, it is used differently (Houwen 2011). The term populism has been used by different authors, often to brand different movements, parties or leaders (D'Eramo 2013) and the Central European context is not an exception (Carpenter 1997; Deegan-Krause and Haughton 2009; Císař and Kubát 2021). In the context of Central Europe, the rise of populism has been linked to democratic backsliding or sovereignty (Hanley and Vachudova 2020; Guasti 2020; Brusenbauch, Meislová, and Buckledee 2021). On the other hand, populism in South Africa, or generally in the Global South, is assessed on a much lesser scale (see for example Halisi 1998; Vincent 2011; Cousins, Saturnino, Sauer, and Ye 2020; Fölscher, de Jager, and Nyenhuis 2021), with considerable attention paid to the Economic Freedom Fighters (Mbetse 2015; Van der Westhuizen 2023). The context in which populism emerges varies and different variations render us unable to find a universal definition.

The second problem arises regarding the essence of populism as it can be understood as an ideology (Canovan 1999; Mudde 2007; Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017), but also as a political strategy (Barr 2009; Weyland 2001). For example, Berman (2021), like many others, refers to populism as a political movement that accentuates a struggle between “us” and “them.” This dichotomy makes migration an important topic for populists to use to mobilise supporters and voters. While many authors emphasize “them” as (liberal) elites and “us” as (normal) people, the division may also be based on a different logic. For example, Berman (2021) stresses that those who are identified as others are often liberal elites, but also minorities or immigrants (Berman 2021). This dichotomic understanding of society often leads to a Manichean understanding of politics.

Thirdly, some common conditions exist for emerging populism with some authors referring to the “age of populism” (Krastev 2011; Ricci 2020). Undoubtedly, social media and the issue of fake news or disinformation play a key role in this process. In this regard, Steger and James (2020) have discussed a “great unsettling” in which they describe how populist leaders’ legitimization of different definitions of “truth” or “facts” leads to the erosion of traditional political ideologies and parties’ credibility. Steger and James (2020) also aptly

¹ In the reality of Central Europe, the distinction between parties and movements is merely theoretical, as some movements function merely as parties and vice versa, due to great variability in the scope of the issues, character of the leadership, internal structure etc.

acknowledge the role of social media with the following statement: “Fattening their Twitter (X), Facebook, and YouTube platforms with transnationally produced ‘alternative facts’, the captains of our post-truth era successfully globalise their anti-globalist slogans, each communicating with and learning from each other in a global context”.

With the development of different articulations of national belonging in the past years, this paper will explore similarities and differences among political parties in various regional contexts. The analysed phenomenon has the potential for universal assessment in a distinct and diverse environment as it attracts scholars from different regions. While some authors argue for decoupling nationalism and populism, others argue for the recent conflation of the terms (Brubaker 2017). The term “the people” can be used to refer to authentic people who stand in opposition against the stranger, e.g., immigrants (Taguieff 2007), resulting in implications for collective identity and the potential conflict of the “us” vs “them” or “insider vs “outsider” dichotomy. Often, populist movements and parties rely on a strong, charismatic leader, who presents himself or herself as a protector of “the people” or “us” against “them.”

This conflict in its latent, hypothetical, or materializing form leads to the challenge of vigilantism, which can be perceived as a part of populist strategies, and a concept complementary to populism (Jaffrey 2021). However, there is a consensus that the European migration crisis of 2015/2016 stimulated both the rise of vigilant and populist rhetoric including the emergence of dominantly vigilante groups in Europe, some of them even of a paramilitary nature (Kosnáč, Lane, Toft, and Shults 2023; Mareš and Milo 2019). The rise of vigilante groups was also documented by authors in various contexts (such as Greece, Bulgaria, the USA, and others) and classification may be done on the typology as presented by Johnston (1996) who defines six main elements of vigilantism and states that it arises when an established order is under threat from transgression. However, contrary to populism, vigilantism is not a mainstream issue in Central European parliamentary politics. That is why it is not later present in this paper’s analysis in the parts dedicated to these two countries.

To understand the impact of political and media rhetoric on public sentiment towards immigrants, this study will use a critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach with a research design that combines two data methodologies: desk research and textual analysis (Tarisayi and Manik 2020). This paper will contrast South African populist discourse on migrants from surrounding nations with that of the Czech and Slovak populist parties which frequently refer to migration from the Middle East and Africa, to invoke anti-Islamic sentiments and xenophobia in Czechia and Slovakia (Öztürk 2019; Pickel and Öztürk 2021).

The article may be considered empirically driven and a comparative analysis as it compares three political actors in three countries. This article aims to identify commonalities and disparities in their conduct, communication, and performance by examining the distinct case studies of South Africa, Czechia, and Slovakia. As most studies focus on individual countries or provide regional comparisons (e.g. Central Europe), this study is unique due to the involvement of countries with different geographic positions and social, historical, and economic backgrounds. We have selected two countries with shared history (Czech Republic and Slovakia) and a different case of South Africa to illustrate similarities and differences between the countries. All three countries have undergone democratization processes in the 1990s. This horizontal comparison will help us understand processes related to populism across different regions and their links to migration in a broader context. Furthermore, it can also lead to transfers of knowledge among regionally oriented scholars.

To ensure comparative results, the structure and content of each case are harmonized. The text of individual cases starts with an assessment of the migration experience of the country (exposition to migration flows and characteristics of the country concerning migration - for example, important minorities, the number of asylum seekers, etc. This is followed by a discussion of the political reaction within the country, mainly in the case of relevant political parties and leaders. After that, a genealogy of the political actors under assessment is presented. In the case of Slovakia, it is the neo-fascist LSNS Party (People's Party – Our Slovakia), in the case

of Czechia it is the populist SPD party (Freedom and Direct Democracy); and in the case of South Africa, it is Operation Dudula - thereby introducing the party genealogy and broader ideology. This part also focuses on the success of the party/group in politics and a program of the party is briefly introduced. Finally, each case is concluded by assessing party communication on social media with illustrating quotes concerning migration presented.

3. Case studies

This section assesses the contextual migration situation, anti-immigration sentiments and specific individual actors in the selected countries. As shown further, despite vastly different conditions and different actors' strategies, the anti-immigration rhetoric is remarkably similar to a strategy that fits well into the populist discourse.

3.1. South Africa

The discourse surrounding cross-border immigration is contentious and emotionally charged in host countries globally. A concerning global trend involves governments and right-wing conservative groups attributing socio-economic issues, such as crime, disease, unemployment, and poverty, to immigrants. This scapegoating phenomenon is not unique to South Africa; instances can similarly be observed in the United States, Türkiye, England, and France. The manifestation of this hostility towards non-nationals is defined as xenophobia. Since South Africa's independence in 1994, the country has witnessed a growing wave of anti-foreigner sentiment, with over 936 violent xenophobic incidents reported, resulting in numerous casualties, displacements, and shop lootings, particularly notable in 2008, 2015 and 2021 (Institute for Security Studies 2022).

In the past decade, South Africa has grappled with escalating levels of poverty, inequality, and unemployment, often referred to as the “triple challenge” (Winkler, Tyler, Keen, and Marquard 2023). With over half the population living in poverty and a Gini coefficient of 0.65, indicating severe inequality, the country faces significant economic disparities. The exceptionally high unemployment rate, particularly among the youth, exacerbates these challenges. Corruption further compounds the issue, with an annual loss estimated at R27 billion (approx. 1.4 billion USD) (Kota and Hingston 2021), impacting critical sectors like healthcare and housing. Despite these challenges, South Africa remains an attractive destination for various African migrant groups, drawn by the comparatively robust economy, a judiciary grounded in the rule of law, and respect for human rights. The country's commitment to international conventions, such as the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, underscores its obligation to support refugees through legislation like the Refugees Act 1998 (Act 130 of 1998), providing rights to work, travel, and access social services (Institute for Security Studies 2022).

Public perception plays a significant role in shaping the narrative around immigration. The 2021 South African Social Attitudes Survey revealed a widespread misconception, with almost half of the population believing in exaggerated figures of immigrants in the country. Xenophobic rhetoric from public officials and anti-migrant groups has contributed to this myth. Contrary to these beliefs, a 2022 report by the Institute for Security Studies clarified that there are approximately 3.95 million migrants in South Africa, constituting 6.5% of the population, a figure consistent with international norms. These figures challenge the prevalent notion that the country is overrun with migrants, disproving claims that suggest exceedingly high migrant figures (Institute for Security Studies 2022). Regarding refugees, in 2019 there were 280 004 refugees in the country of whom 189 491 were asylum seekers and 90 513 had official refugee status, with the majority from conflict-

ridden countries such as Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, South Sudan, Somalia, and Zimbabwe. However, the country faces challenges in processing asylum claims, with around 96% rejected (HSRC 2021).

Accusations have been levied against migrants, asserting their responsibility for subpar service delivery in areas such as public housing, health, and education. This stems from the belief that some see these services as reserved for citizens only and increasingly compromised as migrants utilize them. Advocates of this perspective such as the Dudula movement contend that the removal of migrants from the country would lead to increased job opportunities, reduced crime rates, and enhanced service delivery for citizens. However, the underlying assumptions attributing these problems to immigrants or their contribution to deteriorating local conditions are seldom scrutinized.

In an unwillingness to acknowledge their failures, politicians and public officials often exploit their positions of authority to divert public anger away from themselves. Public officials and politicians redirect citizens' anger toward migrants, deflecting attention from state failures related to poor governance, corruption, and a lack of responsiveness to community needs. This concept of blame-shifting is known as scapegoating (Cilliers 2020; Tarisayi and Manik 2020). Blaming immigrants also provides a convenient explanation for the frustrations of an increasingly dissatisfied population. Narratives that consistently blame immigrants for social ills are likely to fuel xenophobia, shaping the public perception of diverse immigrant groups as an undifferentiated mass, perceived as a menace to the well-being and security of host populations, as observed by Crush and Ramachandran (2009).

The repercussions of scapegoating and xenophobic rhetoric were evident in 2020 when community-based groups mobilized around an anti-immigrant agenda. Notable examples include Operation Dudula and the unrelated Dudula movement in the Johannesburg township of Alexandra. Both the Operation Dudula and Dudula groups attribute a variety of socio-economic challenges, including high crime levels and unemployment, to immigrants. President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa has vocally opposed anti-migrant protests and condemned vigilante groups for harassing and attacking migrants. He likened their behaviour to strategies employed by the apartheid regime to oppress Black communities (Al Jazeera 2022). Despite his launch of the National Plan to combat racism and xenophobia in 2019 (Republic of South Africa 2019), these efforts appear lacklustre and ineffective. Advocates against xenophobia emphasize the need for the government to take more decisive steps, particularly targeting influential political leaders who incite xenophobic violence through uninformed rhetoric on various platforms of influence (PSAM 2019; Human Rights Watch 2020).

Established in 2021 by Nhlanhla “Lux” Dlamini (also Mohlauhi), Operation Dudula originated from the #PutSouthAfricansfirst discourse on Twitter, which attributed the economic challenges of COVID-19 to migrants (Myeni 2022). Criticized by migrant rights activists as xenophobic and dangerous, Operation Dudula marks the formalization of sporadic waves of xenophobia-driven vigilante attacks in South Africa since the end of white-minority rule in 1994 (Myeni 2022). Presenting itself as a civic movement with an anti-migrant stance, the term “dudula” in Zulu, means “to push,” “force out” or “knock down” which seemingly implies an intent to expel migrants from the country encapsulates the group’s mission. Operation Dudula gained prominence with its inaugural march on 16 June 2021 in Soweto, targeting individuals believed to be foreign drug traffickers and businesses employing immigrants (Myeni 2022). Subsequently, the movement’s popularity led to the emergence of other anti-immigrant groups adopting the name or variations of Dudula across South Africa’s provinces.

Operation Dudula claims to address crime, unemployment, and inadequate health services attributed to an “influx of illegal immigrants” (BBC News 2022). The group advocates for small businesses to hire South Africans exclusively and urges migrant shopkeepers to close down and leave the country. Accusations of violence against African immigrants, including forcibly closing shops and raiding properties, have also been levelled against Operation Dudula. Additionally, advocacy groups allege collusion between the South African

police, the Home Affairs Department, and Operation Dudula during raids (Al Jazeera 2023). Currently led by Zandile Dabula, elected president in June 2023, Operation Dudula lacks a manifesto or policy beyond its stance on foreigners, emphasizing that “foreigners are the root cause of South Africa’s economic hardship” (Africa News 2022). The group, with no formal membership structure, maintains high visibility on social media and comprises affected members in low-income South African communities, commonly called townships.

As current polls suggest a potential decline in support for the governing African National Congress (ANC) political party, Operation Dudula aspires to fill this political vacuum and transform from a local anti-migration vigilante group to a national political party participating in the upcoming national elections (Al Jazeera 2023). Despite President Cyril Ramaphosa condemning Operation Dudula as a vigilante-like force dividing Africans, supporters credit the movement for its perceived effectiveness in ousting undocumented migrants (PSAM, 2019). However, the Foundation for Human Rights (2021) contends that Operation Dudula’s vigilantism contradicts the South African Constitution and international laws, which guarantee fundamental human rights to all individuals, regardless of migration status. The group’s methods, including intimidation, harassment, abuse, theft, and property destruction, have led to instances of violence, including the murders of both migrants and South Africans (Foundation for Human Rights 2021). Consequently, migrants and refugees residing in communities which support Operation Dudula express heightened concerns for their safety (Africa News 2022).

Xenophobic attacks have extended beyond physical encounters to the virtual realm through social media which has been identified as a key contributor to heightened tensions between South Africans and foreign nationals (Africa News 2022). Consequently, social media is recognized as a catalyst in the ongoing xenophobic crisis. Throughout the years, several politicians have made statements concerning the number of immigrants in the country, contributing to perceptions of South Africa being overrun by immigrants. In 1997, the first post-apartheid Home Affairs minister, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, asserted, without substantiation, that between 2.5 million and five million illegal migrants were burdening the country’s socio-economic resources. Deputy Police Minister Bongani Mkongi, in 2017, claimed that 80% of inner-city Johannesburg was under migrants’ control (Africa Check 2019). More recently, Marcia Barron, a member of the South African political party ActionSA, inaccurately posted a tweet stating that there are “an estimated minimum of 15 million illegal immigrants in South Africa, according to SA Home Affairs (probably a lot more) that makes up between 20% to 25% of our population.” This is however an inaccurate statement that has been regurgitated by political leaders in South Africa over the years and contributed to online xenophobic rhetoric such as #15millionlegalmigrants on X (Africa Check 2023).

X (formerly known as Twitter) hosts the #PutSouthAfricansfirst movement, which gained prominence in 2021, providing a platform for individuals to express their opinions on the presence of migrants in South Africa. This hashtag was utilized by politician Herman Mashaba’s Twitter account in 2020, accompanied by a video of alleged crimes committed by foreigners without providing evidence to support the allegations (Centre for Analytics and Behavioural Change 2020). Despite claims of being patriotic and non-violent, there are X (Twitter) accounts associated with key political figures participating in the movement which have verged on encouraging hate and endorsing violence towards foreigners (Centre for Analytics and Behavioural Change 2020). Those in favour of this hashtag and similar ones such as #xenophobia; #nigeriansmustgo and #PutSAfirst state that these hashtags and ensuing conversations surrounding them are not xenophobic but are merely to highlight how locals are allegedly not being prioritised in their own country (BBC News 2022). The hashtag #putsouthafricansfirst has been used in over 393,000 tweets and generated more than a billion impressions to date – this shows how influential and far-reaching social media can be (Centre for Analytics and Behavioural Change 2020).

Despite #PutSouthAfricansFirst being a popular hashtag on South African X (Twitter), it struggled to translate its massive online presence into real-world impact. The movement organized marches against

foreigners, which were poorly attended, highlighting a disconnect between its online and physical presence (Daily Maverick 2022). Notably, the movement gained traction when Operation Dudula emerged as a splinter group from a faction within the #PutSouthAfricansFirst movement, displaying its desired real-world impact (Africa News 2022).

Populism often capitalizes on existing grievances, presenting simplified solutions to complex issues. In the South African context, the economic struggles and perceived threats from immigrants become potential fuel for populist narratives. Operation Dudula's emergence as a potential national political entity reflects populist dynamics in which movements such as Operation Dudula born from anti-migrant sentiments thrive on translating social media discourse to produce real influence. The use of scapegoating by politicians further aligns with populist strategies, redirecting public anger and frustration away from systemic issues. Social media's role as a catalyst in spreading xenophobic sentiments or in South Africa's case, afrophobic sentiments also aligns with populist strategies, as these platforms can amplify divisive rhetoric for greater political influence. Anti-migrant sentiments fuelled by social networks are also the case in Slovakia, where the issue of migration stimulated the rise of a neo-fascist party, which shares a sense of populism and vigilantism with Operation Dudula.

3.2. Slovakia

During the Communist era, Slovakia (as part of Czechoslovakia) was seen as a country of origin for many migrants. Since the creation of an independent state in 1993, Slovakia has been a country on the periphery of Europe and mainly outside migration flows with just a few noticeable exceptions. One was a slight increase in asylum seekers from former Yugoslavia in the mid-1990s. However, the number of applicants was still low until the 15th of August 1995 when 144 people applied for refugee status - of which 40 were granted (SME 1995). The improved economic conditions of the country, which accelerated after Slovakia entered the European Union (EU) in 2004, slightly changed the position of the country as it became an increasingly transit country on the road from Balkan to Germany or Northern Europe and occasionally also a target country (Macková, Harmáček, and Opršal 2019). Between 1st January 1992 to 30th July 2017, Slovakia accepted 246 refugees from Afghanistan, 209 from Iraq, 37 from former Yugoslavia, 37 from Romania, 36 from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 34 from Cuba, 34 from Armenia and 31 from Somalia (Euractiv 2017).

As the International Organization for Migration noted, out of all EU countries, Slovakia has the third lowest proportion of foreigners, 58 498 people, representing 1.07 % of the population according to the latest census (2021). Approximately a third of this number live in the capital, Bratislava (Slovak Statistical Office 2021). Despite the relatively stable situation of settled minorities, the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine led to an increased number of migrants in Slovakia. As of August 2023, approximately 122 thousand Ukrainian applications for asylum, temporary protection or similar types of national protection schemes in Slovakia were recorded (UNHCR 2023).

Migration was not typically a hot topic for political agendas in the past. However, the situation changed during the 2015/2016 European "migration crisis". This is a paradox as the country was then out of migration flows. The topic penetrated and was accelerated into public discourse by the 2016 national elections once it was raised by populists within both the government party SMER (Smer - Social Democracy) under the leadership of Robert Fico as well as the opposition, notably People's Party – Our Slovakia (ĽSNS) under the leadership of Marian Kotleba. Internally, Slovak position towards migration was characterized by the "fortification" of migration policies and externally manifested mainly by criticizing EU migration policies and also refusing redistribution quotas adopted by the EU ministers of Interior in September 2015 (Filipec, and Macková 2019). Slovakia also took further action against redistribution quotas by later submitting a case with

Hungary to the Court of Justice of the EU. In this regard, migration contributed to the sharp polarization of the country, providing fertile ground for anti-immigration stances.

Despite SMER representatives trying to utilize the political capital of anti-immigration rhetoric, ĽSNS went even further. The genealogy of the party is complicated and might be linked to the previous project of Marian Kotleba, who was the leader of the political party “Slovak Togetherness” (Slovenská pospolitost’ - Národná Strana), which was banned in March 2006 for being incompatible with the Slovak Constitution. The party's ideology was based on Slovak nationalism and fascism, including adoration of the controversial Slovak state from 1939 to 1945 (Slovenský štát). Its leader, Jozef Tiso openly discriminated against minorities including Jews and Roma (Pravda 2008). Members of the party and its followers wore black uniforms which replicated Hlinka Guards clothing (an organization similar to that of Nazi Schutzstaffel). They wore black flags, invoking ideas of nationalistic vigilantism. In many aspects, contemporary ĽSNS followed up on Slovak Togetherness, however, ĽSNS balanced its ideologies more skilfully on the edge of the law without providing direct grounds for its dissolution. This stance proved successful as an attempt to ban the party by the Slovak General Attorney was unsuccessful in 2017.

During the ongoing trial against ĽSNS in 2020, invited historians openly labelled the party as “neo-Nazi” (Czech TV 2020). In 2021, however, ĽSNS later changed its statute, thus contributing to a party split. Controversies surrounding the party and its members and hardline stances on polarising issues contributed to the party's visibility and relative success in elections. During the 2016 Parliamentary elections, ĽSNS received 8.04 % of popularity votes which was enough to gain fourteen out of 150 mandates. The success was repeated during the 2019 elections to the European Parliament, where the party succeeded in securing two mandates with 12.07 %, as well as in the 2020 Parliamentary elections, which resulted in seventeen mandates and a 7.97 % popularity vote. It seems that in an unstable Slovak party system, ĽSNS represents relatively stable anti-system, far-right opposition which echoes radical views on several topics including migration or national belonging.

Elements of vigilantism were manifested with the salute “on guard!” and the establishment of vigil “civil patrols” on local trains to “protect decent citizens.” This was all in contrast to the official party position as the statutory programme of the ĽSNS is free from controversial issues (ĽSNS 2021). However, during its early state of existence, the party was well known for its anti-minority rhetoric, towards the Roma minority which was openly labelled as “parasites.”

In 2010, the ĽSNS party presented its 14-point programme to create a “better Slovakia” with the first point calling for “Removing unlawful benefits given to Roma parasites rather than decent citizens” (ĽSNS 2010). The 2015/2016 European migration crisis led to ĽSNS highlighting this topic in the party's officially published 2016 programme. One of the points stressed that “we will not allow migrants to occupy Slovakia” and another stated that “migration is a national suicide.” Migrants were depicted as parasites who freely obtained everything while destroying the country's Christianity, European culture as well as the society which accepted and took them in. The party specifically mentioned sexually motivated assaults on women by migrants in the Köln am Main, stressing that they would not allow this to happen to Slovak women: “We will not give them our women and our country. We will defend our land” (Naše Slovensko 2016). As a solution to tackle the migration crisis, ĽSNS promised to renew the protection of borders, direct the military to protect the country's borders, and also refuse migrants access to the country while expelling all migrants pushed into Slovakia by the EU or accepted by the government (Naše Slovensko 2016). Overall, migration-related issues counted 247 words (15.5 %) of the 1,890-word-long party program. The program itself was quite polarised. While it highlighted the invasive character, criminality and parasitism of migrants on one hand, it also focused on poverty and danger for Slovaks on the other hand. Moreover, an assessment of claims in the programme has proven that various statements were not based on facts (Beňová 2020).

Due to the strong tone, the programme and its ideas went viral on social media, resulting in ĽSNS being one of the most successful topics on social networks as measured by the number of followers. It is important to mention, however, that Marian Kotleba and other party leaders also led a campaign based on personal contact: they visited several cities and appeared at anti-immigration demonstrations, in which they often campaigned for “zero migration” (see, for example, Štefančík and Hvasta 2019, 176). The issue of migration is communicated almost permanently on the official party profile and profiles of people tied to ĽSNS. After Marian Kotleba, the most visible political party leaders on social networks were Milan Uhrík and Milan Mazurek until Mazurek and Uhrík contributed to a party split and entered the Republika (republic) movement. All of them are known for very controversial statements regarding migration. Probably the most controversial expression is when Milan Uhrík shouted at a group of Muslim migrants “I f*ck your Allah” (YouTube 2020). This was later evaluated as hate speech. In his Facebook posts, Uhrík for example advocated Adolf Hitler, labelled people of African descent as “half apes,” migrants as “dirty parasites,” and called for “radical and fast acts” or proposed beatings of migrants (Radio Express 2020).

On the other hand, for his intentionally racist interview on the radio Frontinus, Mazurek faced trial which he lost and was sentenced to pay a fine of 10,000 Euro. He was later deprived of his mandate in the Slovak National Council (Deník N 2019). While Milan Mazurek curated his image as that of a street fighter and rebel, Milan Uhrík built an image of a cultivated and educated intellectual. Holding a PhD from the Institute of Energy and Applied Electrotechnics in Bratislava and speaking several foreign languages, Uhrík served as a member of the European Parliament where he raised controversial issues including migration or crimes caused by migration. Meanwhile, Marian Kotleba built up an image of the “strict father” Slovakia needed and a protector of Uhrík and Mazurek. However, he did not allow either of the men to progress and take true leadership positions in a party with the title of Kotleba.

The ĽSNS Party split contributed to further fragmentation on the far right in Slovakia at the time when migration became again a hot topic with potential for political mobilization. Despite migration not having a prominent role in ĽSNS’ 10-point program, it might be expected that the topic will be raised again by both the ĽSNS and the Republika movement parties. Due to experience with administrative procedures and court trials, both parties do their best to avoid controversies beyond legal limits, this includes a concerted effort in departure from visible vigilantism. Similar trends in anti-immigration rhetoric by political leaders can also be seen in the case of Czechia.

3.3. Czechia

Czechia, similarly to Slovakia, underwent a democratic transformation in the 1990s and has become a country of immigration, rather than emigration. The 1990s brought a relatively *laissez-faire* approach towards immigration that was only tightened after 2000 (Drbohlav 2010). However, as a country that had little experience with foreigners, the 1990s brought various skinhead patrols that were aimed against the local Roma population or attacked foreign students (Mareš and Milo 2019). Following this period, the early 2000s also continued with a form of vigilantism – that of the “National Guard” in various peripheral regions of Czechia. Another rise in vigilante groups came around in 2015 when the European “migration crisis” hit. However, unlike the arrival of Ukrainian refugees in 2022, this did not affect Czechia substantially. The “racializing” discourse surrounding the migration from the Middle East was present even after the number of migrants entering the EU dropped. However, despite expectations of difficulties on how the country would deal with the arrival of Ukrainian refugees, there was no large-scale opposition such as the one towards the migration situation in 2015/2016. In 2022, there were 1.1 million foreigners in a country of 10.5 million (CZSO 2023). People with asylum and subsidiary protection only form a minority of all foreigners in Czechia. In 2022, there were ninety-two positive asylum decisions and 387 cases of granted subsidiary protection (MoI 2023). This is

in contrast with the number of temporary protections granted to Ukrainian citizens, which stood at 373 thousand in 2023 (UNHCR 2023).

If far-right and far-left ideological stances can be labelled populism, then Czechia has dealt with populism from the first moments of its existence. This can be mainly due to the long-term presence of the communist party in the parliament or the early success of far-right nationalists under the leadership of Miroslav Sládek. However, the last decade is linked to the populist Action of Dissatisfied Citizens - Akce nespokojených občanů (ANO) movement of the billionaire Andrej Babiš, and the strongly anti-immigration party SPD (Freedom and Direct Democracy) of Tomio Okamura who succeeded in attracting votes of both far left and far right voters. Unlike populism, the political ideology connected with vigilantism has a long tradition in Czechia going back to the interwar period (Mareš and Milo 2019). However, the current form of vigilantism is connected with pro-Russian sentiments and nostalgia for the communist regime (Mareš and Milo 2019). Many of these sentiments had anti-Islamist attitudes. There were four main vigilante groups during the period after 2015. The first one “Czechoslovak reserve soldiers against the war planned by the NATO command” was founded at the beginning of 2015. The new “Czechoslovak Reserve Soldiers for Peace” split from this original group. Another group was “National Home Guard” founded in the summer of 2015 (Mareš and Milo 2019). At the end of 2017, several members left the “National Home Guard” and established a new organisation – the “Land Home Guard”.

However, all the groups mentioned above are marginal. These small groups sympathise with the main “anti-immigration party,” which is currently SPD (“Freedom and Direct Democracy”). SPD was established in 2015 when some party members split from the “Dawn of Direct Democracy” party that no longer exists. The programme of this party has some nationalistic elements and proclaims resistance towards Islam and migration. The SPD is a predominantly populist and radical party, although with a tendency to attract far-right voters as well (Stojarová 2018). Another important aspect of this party is the emphasis on the referendums and the possibility to revoke the mandate of certain politicians. In terms of international affairs, it strives to broaden the issue of the referendum to the question of NATO or EU membership. The SPD party has some elements of right-wing populism. At the same time, it has borrowed the call of some of its voters who previously voted for the Czech communist party (Kolman 2017). The party's emphasis is on “ordinary people”, and some of the topics it stresses are often seen as left-wing (relating to expensive housing and food prices). This shows no simple right and left-wing division when classifying this party. Interestingly, it is the fastest-growing party in Czechia in terms of membership (Brodničková 2023).

The SPD won twenty out of two hundred seats in the 2021 Czech parliamentary election (CZSO 2024). This was two seats less than in the previous election in 2017. In both instances, the party got around 10% of the votes and stayed in opposition. An analysis showed that the potential voters of the SPD were those with lower incomes or unemployed (Tungul, Zemplerová, Kudrnáč, Drea, Charvát, Šimanová, Poláček, Sojková, Škodová, Maškarinec, and Dvořák 2019). Havlík and Kluknavská (2023) show that SPD supporters criticise economic support for Ukraine and refugees in the Czech Republic. They also have the most positive attitudes towards Russia compared to other voters. In the 2019 European Parliament election, SPD won two mandates out of twenty-one with 9.1% of the votes. It ended as the fifth most successful party (Filipec and Charvátová 2022). The party also had its candidate in the presidential election in January 2023, receiving 4.45% of the votes and ending up in fifth place. However, the party has not been successful in the senate election, which only selects one candidate per district. It has so far not won in any of the previous four senate elections since 2016.

The programme of SPD contains ten points. While opposition to migration is not a standalone point, it is reflected in the first point titled “We do not want to be a province of the EU, we want to develop and defend the sovereign Czech Republic.” On this point, it states: “We want strict conditions for the immigration policy of Czechia. We do not want maladapted immigrants here or the arrival of Islamic religious fanatics” (SPD

2024). The other points deal with the social system “for good citizens,” direct democracy, accountability of politicians, restricting the power of bailiffs, and law on the origin of property (SPD 2024). The latter two points cannot be placed in the right-wing spectrum. The party's programme also mentions the proclamation: “We reject favouritism and positive discrimination against people based on their race, ethnicity or gender” (SPD 2024). It is hard to conceive how positive discrimination against immigrants in Czechia would look like based on the ongoing negative discrimination that they face (Pejchal 2018).

When it comes to social media, the party is active on Facebook. The communication through X is done by the party leader, Tomio Okamura. While the X account offers a mix of different themes and critiques of other parties, there are also occasional posts relating to migration. What Okamura often does is take a case from another country that is mentioned in the media and then relate it to immigration. For example, the post on X from 31st December 2023 states,

“The SPD movement is the only party in the Czech Parliament that opposes the Islamization of Czechia and Europe. We don't want any mosques or Muslim immigrants here. We are pushing for a ban on the promotion of Islamic ideology in Czechia. We want a safe Czech Republic! (Okamura 2023).”

The party communication is done through its Facebook account. Previous research found that the SPD videos had a higher rate of viewing, “likes” and sharing than was the case with images (Filipec, Garaj, and Mihálik 2017), the situation differed in the European elections when the average rate of viewing the videos was lower than that of images (Filipec and Charvátová 2022). The communication of the party often presents a one-sided view (Filipec, Garaj, and Mihálik 2017) leaving out the benefits of migration.

Some SPD communication on Facebook deals with critiquing the current government and the European Union. Nonetheless, the party is in touch with other parties in the Identity and Democracy group in the European parliament and displays joint pictures with other European party leaders (Le Pen, Salvini). Interestingly, the party uses the slogan “For the SPD, Czechia and the interests of its citizens come first” (SPD 2023). This is similar to slogans in other countries that put the respective country in the “first” place. Some of the recent visual posts on Facebook also use some slogans such as “law and justice should not be a luxury” and similarly, “having children should not be a luxury,” which are seen as traditionally left-wing.

Placing the SPD party on the traditional left- or right-wing political spectrum is difficult. While the party can be seen as anti-immigration and its rhetoric is against (mainly Muslim) migrants, it also raises topics such as social justice that are often seen as left-wing. Moreover, the party also promotes its international ties to other populist party leaders in Europe to display its international orientation (simultaneously being anti-immigrant and anti-EU). Vigilante appeals or attempts are not however an inherent part of the party strategy.

4. Discussion

This study presented three populist parties in three countries and despite different geographic locations or historical context, it revealed considerable similarities.

Firstly, in all three countries, some actors make use of migration as a useful tool to mobilize supporters. However, in South Africa, there is an observable tendency to use migration as a scapegoat strategy to ensure support on the one hand and label “the other” as a threat to citizens' access to resources on the other. In both Central European countries, migration is presented as a threat to the way of life. This is because Slovakia and Czechia are homogenous countries not exposed to many migrants. Populist parties have in this regard emotionally weaponised this aspect of association with migrants (see, for example, Jelínková 2019) as fear is used as an emotion to mobilize support. Concerning this finding, it might be expected that there can be an

interpretation and strategy shift in the case of real migration impact. This shift can be partially observed concerning immigration from Ukrainian refugees, which surged in the two countries in the spring and summer of 2022. In other words, the migration crisis of 2015/2016 was merely virtual in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and the current wave of Ukrainian migrants is well absorbed (Czech Republic) or not significant due to the transit character of the country (Slovakia). Yet, migration serves well to polarize society.

One particular example is a mass shooting that tragically occurred at Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic in December 2023 in which fourteen people died. Shortly after the attack, disinformation spread on social networks claiming that the murderer was Ukrainian, or that the assault rifle originated in Ukraine (see, for example, Czech Elves 2023). This might be considered an attempt at a communication shift from “scaring” with migration to a “scapegoating” and “blame” rhetoric, which is commonly observable among populist parties. Migrants are sometimes portrayed as those who receive high subsidies or misuse generous state support. In the case of Ukrainian migrants, populist parties often make use of social media platforms to blame them. Blame rhetoric towards migrants is a common aspect of populist communication in all three countries and is often linked to social media for a wider and more palpable reach with citizens.

Secondly, social media is key in spreading communication (often provocative, one-sided, polarizing, false, or full of disinformation) to mobilize support in all three countries. In the case of South Africa, social networks played a key role in establishing Operation Dudula and mobilizing its supporters, and in both Central European countries, social networks are vital tools to ensure interaction with party supporters. Both populist leaders, Tomio Okamura in Czechia and Marián Kotleba in Slovakia, or other important party members, skilfully mobilise social networks — in comparison to other politicians in the country, they have a remarkably high number of followers which might be due to the controversial leaders themselves coupled with the sensational content they post.

Thirdly, a common feature is conditions or at least part of the conditions supportive of populism. Poverty, unemployment, and unsettlement, accompanied by frustration or deprivation of suitable living conditions, seem to provide fertile ground for populism. In this regard, the situation is dire in South Africa, which faces much higher unemployment rates, inequality, and other structural problems that have frustrated citizens. Political leaders have mobilized this frustration and directed it against migrants by way of targeted statements which scapegoat migrants and deflect away from governmental and political corruption which has eroded the country’s structural ability to function. It seems that in such a fertile environment, populism better employs the elements of xenophobia and vigilantism than in the relatively homogenous societies of Central Europe where vigilant groups are marginalized without a real chance to enter parliamentary politics. In other words, the coexistence of negative economic and social conditions opens the ground for radical forms of populism, which is well supplemented with vigilantism.

In the case of all three populist actors, they fail to offer a complex program aimed at the solution of existing problems. Instead, populists focus on partial aspects of the issues with little constructive contribution to the debate. In the case of Operation Dudula, as of January 2024, the program has not even been published yet, while in the case of Czech SPD or Slovak LSNS, the program was reduced to several simple points relying on repeated mottos or slogans. This has implications for both understanding populism as an ideology or political strategy, as it offers political actors the advantage of flexibility and not being bound or rather accountable to its principles.

The relationship between migration, populism, and vigilantism seems to be a vital area for research in political science, especially in terms of factors that help to prevent conflict and violence against migrants. Understanding this relationship may also help create effective tools and policies that may prevent negative shifts and manipulation of citizens through crises within populist strategies or at least limit their impact on the well-being of citizens.

5. Conclusion

This article focused on populism in the context of national belonging and migration. It compared the attitudes of three populist parties in three different countries: in the case of Slovakia, it was the neo-Nazi ĽSNS Party (People's Party – Our Slovakia), in the case of Czechia it is the populist anti-immigration SPD party (Freedom and Direct Democracy) and in the case of South Africa, it is the Operation Dudula movement. The article introduced the genealogy of the parties and broader ideology. It also focused on the parties' success in politics and the program of the parties. Finally, it illustrated the parties' social media communication by illustrating quotes.

The article revealed several important similarities and differences regarding the populist use of migration as an issue for political mobilization. Despite economic and social differences, including heterogeneity of the countries under assessment, it was revealed that migration is used in a comparable way as a scapegoat or blame strategy, or a topic invoking emotional reaction. Despite the visible vigilante characteristics of Operation Dudula in South Africa, vigilantism is in the context of both Central European parties almost absent and only partially observable in the case of the ĽSNS Party at the initial stages of its existence. However, other issues are leading to vigilantism in Central Europe as historically, the Roma were a target of vigilante groups. This was the case in many peripheral regions in the 1990s and early 2000s and seemed to quiet down in the later period. This leads to an understanding of constructing a racialised populist discourse in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, with the “other” seen as a visibly different migrant or a resident who does “not conform” to the community (hence, the label “unconforming” often used to frame the Roma by the populist parties in the Czech Republic and Slovakia). This is partly given by the absence of a real “threat” arising from migration, as both countries were, before the 2022 arrival of Ukrainians, practically intact from migration.

However, this situation may change in the future if the countries fail to address the relatively high number of refugees coming from Ukraine after the Russian aggression or in case of worsening economic and social conditions in both countries. The political situation in both countries can also change and there can be more extremist parties having a prominent say in addressing migration as a threat. On one hand, the more formal institutional dimension might prevent vigilantism per se. On the other one, the case of South Africa shows that less formal and newer institutional structures can be more prone to vigilantism. However, there needs to be further research to ascertain this. Yet, the relationship between populism and vigilantism, including the dynamics and development of populism – whether as an ideology or political strategy – remains an interesting and promising area of research with many potentially valuable results. Despite focusing on three different countries, the implications are more general. While in South Africa vigilantism is rampant - it was not always the case in the past. As a result, South Africa can be portrayed as an example of what can potentially happen in other countries due to populist radicalization. In Czechia or Slovakia, the negative labelling of Ukrainian migrants may invoke fear and perception of danger that might be later exploited by the actors employing vigilantism and potentially result in violence.

References

Africa News (2022), *South Africa: Anti-immigration movement ‘Operation Dudula’ launched in Durban*, *Africa news*. Retrieved January 5, 2024 (<https://www.africanews.com/2022/04/10/south-africa-anti-immigration-movement-operation-dudula-launched-in-durban/>).

- Africa Check (2019), *Unproven that Hillbrow, nearby areas are '80% foreign national' as claimed in much-shared video*. Retrieved January 5, 2024 (<https://africacheck.org/fact-checks/reports/unproven-hillbrow-nearby-areas-are-80-foreign-national-claimed-much-shared#:~:text=A%20widely%20shared%20claim%20from%202017%20by%20the,provide%20a%20better%20picture%20of%20the%20city%E2%80%99s%20population>).
- Africa Check (2023), *Are there 15 million undocumented immigrants living in South Africa? No, another action SA party member repeats old, incorrect claim*. Retrieved January 5, 2024 (<https://africacheck.org/fact-checks/spotchecks/are-there-15-million-undocumented-immigrants-living-south-africa-no-another>).
- Al Jazeera (2022), *Ramaphosa likens anti-migrant attacks to apartheid actions*. Retrieved January 5, 2024 (<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/4/12/ramaphosa-likens-anti-migrant-attacks-to-apartheid-actions>).
- Al Jazeera (2023), *South Africa's Operation Dudula vigilantes usher in new wave of xenophobia*. Retrieved January 5, 2024 (<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2023/9/26/south-africas-operation-dudula-vigilantes-usher-in-new-wave-of-xenophobia>).
- Barr R. (2009), "Populists, Outsiders and Anti-Establishment Politics", *Party Politics*, 15(19): 29-48.
- Bastl M., M. Mareš, J. Smolík, and P. Vejvodová (2011), *Krajní pravice a krajní levice v ČR*, Prague: Grada.
- BBC News (2022), *Dudula: How South African anger has focused on foreigners*. Retrieved January 5, 2024 (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-60698374>).
- Beňová Z. (2020), "Comparison of the Importance of the Migration Issue in the pre-election Programme of the Selected Political Parties in 2016 and 2020", *Slovak Journal of International Relations*, 18(3): 292-309.
- Berman S. (2021), "The causes of populism in the West", *Annual Review of Political Science*, 24: 71-88.
- Blum C. (2022), *Against thy neighbour: The rise of xenophobic populism in South Africa*, *Zusammenhalt begreifen*. Retrieved January 5, 2024 (<https://fgzrisc.hypotheses.org/3033>).
- Brodničková K. (2023), *Nejvíc přibylo členů SPD, padá ODS*. Revised June 27, 2023, Retrieved January 5, 2024 (<https://www.novinky.cz/clanek/domaci-nejvic-pribylo-clenu-spd-pada-ods-40435925>).
- Brubaker R. (2017), "Between nationalism and civilizationism: The European populist moment in comparative perspective", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 40(8): 1191-1226.
- Brusenbauch Meislova M., S. Buckledee (2021), "Discursive (re) construction of populist sovereignty by right-wing hard Eurosceptic parties in the 2019 European parliament elections: Insights from the UK, Italy, Czechia and Slovakia", *Journal of Language and Politics*, 20(6): 825-851.
- Canovan M. (1999), "Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy", *Political Studies*, 47(1): 2-16.
- Carpenter M. (1997), "Slovakia and the Triumph of Nationalist Populism", *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 30(2): 205-219.
- Centre for Analytics and Behavioural Change (2020), *#putsouthafricansfirst: Spreading hate speech, inciting violence, breaking the law*. Retrieved January 5, 2024 (<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-10-28-putsouthafricansfirst-spreading-hate-speech-inciting-violence-breaking-the-law/>).
- Cilliers J. (2020), *Stories of Us and Them: Xenophobia and Political Narratives*, thesis. Retrieved January 5, 2024 (<https://scholar.sun.ac.za/server/api/core/bitstreams/ff5f82e2-f029-4a88-b876-3e736244d654/content>).
- Císař O., M. Kubát, (2021), "Populismus in Tschechien. Ein ostmitteleuropäischer Regionalvergleich", *Osteuropa*, 70(4-6): 115-130.
- Cousins B., S. M. Borrás, S. Sauer, J. Ye (2018), "BRICS, middle-income countries (MICs), and global agrarian transformations: internal dynamics, regional trends, and international implications", *Globalizations*, 15(1): 1-11.

- Crush J., & Ramachandran, S. (2009). Xenophobia, international migration and human development. Paper 2009/47. New York: United Nations Development Programme, 44.
- Czech Elves (2023), *Speciál: Střelba na Filosofické fakultě – odraz události na dezinformační scéně*. Retrieved January 5, 2024 (<https://cesti-elfove.cz/special-strelba-na-filosoficke-fakulte/>).
- Czech TV (2020), Historici u soudu označili Kotlebovu stranu za neonacistickou. Líčení se asi protáhne. Czech TV, Revised June 8, 2020, Retrieved January 5, 2024 (<https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/svet/3115109-historici-u-soudu-oznacili-kotlebovu-stranu-za-neonacistickou-liceni-se-asi-protahne>).
- CZSO (2024), *Elections*. Retrieved January 5, 2024 (<https://www.volby.cz/pls/ps2021/ps?xjazyk=CZ>).
- CZSO (2023), *Data on number of foreigners*. Retrieved January 5, 2024 (<https://www.czso.cz/csu/cizinci/number-of-foreigners-data#rok>).
- Dahlberg M., S. Thapar-Björkert (2023), “Conceptualizing xenophobia as structural violence in the lives of refugee women in Gauteng, South Africa”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 46(12): 2768-2790.
- Daily Maverick (2022), *Who is behind South Africa’s xenophobic nationalism?* Retrieved January 5, 2024 (<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-04-28-who-is-behind-south-africas-xenophobic-nationalism/>).
- Deegan-Krause K., T. Haughton (2009), “Toward a More Useful Conceptualization of Populism: Types and Degrees of Populist Appeals in the Case of Slovakia”, *Politics & Policy*, 37: 821-841.
- Deník N (2019), *Mazurek v parlamente koční, súd mu potvrdil vinu za rasistické reči*. Revised September 3, 2019, Retrieved January 5, 2024 (https://dennikn.sk/1571676/mazurek-v-parlamente-konci-sud-mu-potvrdil-vinu-za-rasisticke-rci-v-radius/?fbclid=IwAR0tGoD9C_zQ22KeupxIkRurcVhXcWaReE5xa7fguuILint0dddfwvfWzso).
- D'Eramo M. (2013), “Populism and the new oligarchy”, *New Left Review*, 82: 5-28.
- Dratwa B. (2023), *Digital Xenophobia is on the rise in South Africa*. Retrieved January 5, 2024 (<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2023/03/07/digital-xenophobia-is-on-the-rise-in-south-africa/>).
- Drbohlav D. (2010), *Migrace a (i) migranti v Česku: kdo jsme, odkud přicházíme, kam jdeme?* Prague: Sociologické nakladatelství.
- Euractiv (2017), *Slovensko má silnú tradíciu prijímania utečencov*. Revised November 7, 2017, Retrieved January 5, 2024 (<https://euractiv.sk/section/spravodlivost-a-vnutro/opinion/slovensko-ma-silnu-tradiciu-prijimania-utečencov/>).
- Filipec O., Charvátová, D. (2022). Mezi lži a manipulací: analýza facebookové komunikace SPD před evropskými volbami 2019. *Dyskursy polityczne w Polsce i Czechach po roku*, 97-112.
- Filipec O., M. Garaj, J. Mihálik (2018), “Ako komunikuje pravica: Komunikačné aktivity vybraných (krajne) pravicových politických strán v Českej republike a na Slovensku pred parlamentnými voľbami v rokoch 2016 a 2017”, *Politické vedy*, (3): 183-212.
- Filipec, O., L. Macková (2019), “Fortifying against the Threat: Can Walls Stop Irregular Migration?”, *Slovak Journal of Political Sciences*, 19(1): 61-87.
- Fölscher M., N. de Jager, R. Nyenhuis (2021), “Populist parties shifting the political discourse? A case study of the Economic Freedom Fighters in South Africa”, *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 59(4): 535-558.
- Foundation for Human Rights (2021) *Operation Dudula’s anti-migrant vigilantism - FHR*, Foundation for Human Rights. Retrieved January 5, 2024 (https://fhr.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/FHR-OPERATION-DUDULA-PAMPHLET_WEB-FINAL.pdf).
- Guasti P. (2020), “Populism in Power and Democracy: Democratic Decay and Resilience in Czechia (2013-2020)”, *Politics and Governance*, 8(4): 473-484.
- Halisi C. R. D. (1998), “Citizenship and Populism in the New South Africa”, *Africa Today*, 45(3/4): 423-438.

- Hanley S., M. A. Vachudova (2020), "Understanding the illiberal turn: democratic backsliding in Czechia", in L. Cianetti, J. Dawson, and S. Hanley (eds.), *Rethinking 'Democratic Backsliding' in Central and Eastern Europe*, New York: Routledge, pp. 34-54.
- Havlík V., A. Kluknavská (2023), "Our people first (again)! The impact of the Russia-Ukraine War on the populist Radical Right in Czechia", in G. Ivaldi, E. Zankina (eds.), *The Impacts of the Russian Invasion of Ukraine on Right-Wing Populism in Europe*, European Centre for Populism Studies, pp. 90-101.
- Hiroopoulos A. (2020), "South Africa, migration and xenophobia. Deconstructing the perceived migration crisis and its influence on the xenophobic reception of migrants", *Contemporary Justice Review*, 23(1): 104-121.
- Houwen T. (2011), *The non-European roots of the concept of populism*, Sussex European Institute: University of Sussex.
- HSRC (2021), *Addressing the marginalisation of refugees and asylum seekers in South Africa*. HSRC. Policy Brief. HSRC Policy Brief 04 - Marginalisation of Refugees and Asylum Seekers.indd
- Human Rights Watch (2020), *South Africa launches plan to combat xenophobia and racism*. Retrieved January 5, 2024 (<https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/03/25/south-africa-launches-plan-combat-xenophobia-and-racism>).
- Institute for Security Studies (2022), *Scapegoating in South Africa - Busting the myths about immigrants*, Institute for Security Studies. Retrieved January 5, 2024 (<https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/sar-53.pdf>).
- Jaffrey S. (2021), "Right-wing populism and vigilante violence in Asia", *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 56(2): 223-249.
- Jelínková M. (2019), "A Refugee Crisis Without Refugees: Policy and media discourse on refugees in Czechia and its implications", *Central European Journal of Public Policy*, 13(1): 33-45.
- Johnston L. (1996), "What is vigilantism?", *The British Journal of Criminology*, 36(2): 220-236.
- Kolman P. (2017). *Je Okamurova SPD extrémní pravice a je to vůbec pravice?* Retrieved January 5, 2024 (<https://www.reflex.cz/clanek/volby/83517/je-okamurova-spd-extremni-pravice-a-je-to-vubec-pravice.html>).
- Kosnáč P., J. E. Lane, M. D. Toft, F. L. Shults (2023), "Paramilitaries, parochialism, and peace: The moral foundations and personality traits of Slovenskí Branci", *PLOS ONE*, 18(3): e0281503.
- Kota Z., D. Hingston (2021), *South Africa's corruption busters: Short-changed on funding and political commitment*, PSAM. Retrieved January 5, 2024 (<https://psam.org.za/news/south-africas-corruption-busters-short-changed-on-funding-and-political-commitment/>).
- Krastev I. (2011), "The age of populism: reflections on the self-enmity of democracy", *European View*, 10(1): 11-16.
- Landau L. B., A. W. K. Segatti (2009): *Human Development Impacts of Migration: South Africa Case Study*. Published in: Human Development Research Paper (HDRP) Series, Vol. 05, No. 2009
- ESNS (2010), *Marian Kotleba a Ludová strana Naše Slovensko predstavujú 14 krokov pre budúcnosť Slovenska a našich detí*. Authors' archive.
- ESNS (2021), *Stanovy politickej strany: Kotlebovci - Ludová strana Naše Slovensko*. Retrieved January 5, 2024 (<http://www.isnaseslovensko.sk/stanovy.pdf>).
- Macková, L., J. Harmáček, Z. Opršal (2019), "Determinants of international migration from developing countries to Czechia and Slovakia", *Ekonomický časopis*, 67(9): 931-952.
- Mareš M., D. Milo (2019), "Vigilantism against Migrants and Minorities in Slovakia and in Czechia," in T. Bjørgo, and M. Mareš (eds.), *Vigilantism against Migrants and Minorities*, London: Routledge, pp. 129-150.
- Mbete S. (2015), "The Economic Freedom Fighters – South Africa's turn towards populism?", *Journal of African Elections*, 14(1): 35-59.

- MoI (2023), 2022 International protection *report*. Retrieved January 5, 2024 (<https://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/souhrnna-zprava-o-mezinarodni-ochrane-za-rok-2022.aspx>).
- Mudde C., C. R. Kaltwasser (2017), *Populism. A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mudde C. (2007), *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Myeni T. (2022), *What is Operation Dudula, South Africa's anti-migration vigilante?*, *Al Jazeera*. Retrieved January 5, 2024 (<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/4/8/what-is-operation-dudula-s-africas-anti-immigration-vigilante>).
- Naše Slovensko (2016), *10 bodov za naše Slovensko – Volebný program politickej strany*. Retrieved January 5, 2024 (<https://www.naseslovensko.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Volebn%C3%BD-program-2016.pdf>).
- Okamura T. [@tomio_cz], “We, the North Africans and the blacks, are the ones who hold the power!”, X. Revised December 31, 2017, Retrieved January 5, 2024 (https://twitter.com/tomio_cz/status/1741452195994784176).
- Öztürk C. (2019), “Islamophobic right-wing populism? Empirical insights about citizens’ susceptibility to islamophobia and its impact on right-wing populists’ electoral success: Eastern Europe in a comparative perspective”, *Religion and Society in Central and Eastern Europe*, 12(1): 39-62.
- Pejchal V. (2018), “Hate Speech Regulation in Post-Communist Countries: Migrant Crises in the Czech and Slovak Republics”, *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, 7(2): 58-74.
- Pickel G., C. Öztürk (2021). The varying challenge of Islamophobia for the EU: on anti-Muslim resentments and its dividend for right-wing populists and Eurosceptics—Central and Eastern Europe in a comparative perspective. *Illiberal trends and anti-EU politics in east central Europe*, 57-80.
- Pravda (2008), *Ministerstvo vnútra rozpustilo Slovenskú pospolitost'*, *Pravda*. Revised November 14, 2008, Retrieved January 5, 2024 (<https://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/159558-ministerstvo-vnutra-rozpustilo-slovensku-pospolitost/>).
- PSAM (2019), *Xenophobia in South Africa: What needs to be done and who should be held accountable?*, *PSAM*. Retrieved January 5, 2024 (<https://psam.org.za/news/xenophobia-in-south-africa-what-needs-to-be-done-and-who-should-be-held-accountable/>).
- Radio Express (2020), via STOP ĽSNS. Retrieved January 5, 2024 (https://www.facebook.com/stopslSNS/videos/186081889160264/?paipv=0&eav=AfZh4E3_yTWIheKCuus8IbK-maEqadzYP11MPx_qLIUgMdgTS0RqIui3JVLX0tZrLIQ&_rdr).
- Rakubu K. A., T. Malatji (2023), “Fear of victimization among illicit immigrants in South Africa: Illicit Immigrants”, *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science*, 12(4): 383-391.
- Republic of South Africa (2019), *National Action Plan (NAP) to Combat Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance*. rep. Republic of South Africa. Retrieved January 5, 2024 (https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201903/national-action-plan.pdf).
- Ricci D. M. (2020), *Political Science Manifesto for the Age of Populism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Slovak Statistical Office (2021), *Sčítanie obyvateľov, domov a bytov 2021*. Retrieved January 5, 2024 (<https://www.scitanie.sk/>).
- SME (1995), *Na Slovensku hľadajú občania bývalej Juhoslávie zväčša len dočasné útočisko*. Revised August 19, 1995, Retrieved January 5, 2024 (<https://www.sme.sk/c/2128758/na-slovensku-hladaju-obcania-byvalej-juhoslavie-zvacsa-len-docasne-utocisko.html>).
- SPD (2023), *Pro SPD je Česká republika a zájmy jejích občanů na prvním místě*. Retrieved January 5, 2024 (<https://www.spd.cz/pro-spd-je-ceska-republika-a-zajmy-jejich-obcanu-na-prvnim-miste/>).
- SPD (2024), *Program*. Retrieved January 5, 2024 (<https://www.spd.cz/program-vypis/>).

- Stats SA (2022), *South Africa's youth continues to bear the burden of unemployment, Quarterly Labour Force Survey*. Retrieved January 5, 2024
(<https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0211/P02113rdQuarter2022.pdf>).
- Štefančík R., M. Hvasta (2019), *Jazyk pravicového extrémizmu*, Bratislava: EKONÓM.
- Steger M., P. James (2020), "Disjunctive globalization in the era of the great unsettling", *Theory, culture & society*, 37(7-8): 187-203.
- Stojarová V. (2018), "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", *Open Political Science*, 1(1): 32-45.
- Taguieff P. (2007), *L'illusion populiste. Essai sur les démagogies de l'âge démocratique*, Paris: Flammarion.
- Tarisayi K. S., S. Manik (2020), "An unabating challenge: Media portrayal of xenophobia in South Africa", *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 7(1): 1-12.
- Tungul L., A. Zemplinerová, A. Kudrnáč, E. Drea, J. Charvát, J. Šímanová, J. Poláček, L. Sojková, M. Škodová, P. Maškarinec, T. Dvořák (2019), *Middle Class at a Crossroads*, Prague: Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, TOPAZ.
- UNHCR (2023), *Operational Data Portal. Ukraine Refugee Situation*. Retrieved January 5, 2024
(<https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>).
- Van der Westhuizen C. (2023), "Populism as African Fascism? Examining the Economic Freedom Fighters in Postapartheid South Africa", *Africa Today*, 69(3): 3-25.
- Vincent L. (2011), "Seducing the people: Populism and the challenge to democracy in South Africa", *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 29(1): 1-14.
- Weyland K. (2001), "Clarifying a contested Concept: Populism in the Study of Latin American Politics", *Comparative Politics*, 34(1): 1-22.
- Winkler H., E. Tyler, S. Keen, A. Marquard (2023), "Just transition transaction in South Africa: an innovative way to finance accelerated phase out of coal and fund social justice", *Journal of Sustainable Finance & Investment*, 13(3): 1228-1251.
- Youtube (2020), *Milan Mazúrek a pravá tvár LSNS*. Retrieved January 5, 2024
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UhmEOuXIeI>).

AUTHORS' INFORMATION

Dr. Ondřej Filipec is a Czech political scientist and international relations specialist who has been working since 2011 as a senior lecturer and assistant professor in EU studies at the Faculty of Law, Palacký University in Olomouc, Czechia. His research focuses on security issues, including radicalization, terrorism, and migration. He is an active member of several associations including the Czech Association for European Studies, the Czech Political Science Association, and the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence in EU Law. Dr. Filipec is the executive editor of the Slovak Journal of Political Sciences responsible for the area of European studies.

Valerie Kondo is an anthropologist and the director and founder of Anthroqual, a research consultancy specializing in the provision of qualitative research services. Her research focuses on migration in Africa, particularly Southern Africa. Valerie is currently a PhD candidate in Anthropology at the University of

Johannesburg, where her thesis explores the lived experiences of undocumented female migrants in the borderlands of South Africa.

Dr. Lucie Macková is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Development and Environmental Studies at Palacký University Olomouc, Czechia. She holds a Ph.D. in international development studies from Palacký University Olomouc and master's degrees in international relations and European studies from Central European University and in international relations and social anthropology from the University of St. Andrews. She has published on the themes of migration, skilled migration and development.