

BETWEEN POLITICIZATION AND SECURITIZATION: COVERAGE OF THE EUROPEAN MIGRATION CRISIS IN CZECH ONLINE NEWS MEDIA

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ABSTRACT:

According to polls, the proportion of Czech respondents who perceived irregular migration as a real and serious security threat doubled from 32% in 2014 to 65% in 2015. By means of a content analysis of the news stories published by three Czech online news portals, this study examines the extent to which images of a threat and an appeal for security were part of the media coverage of the European migration crisis. While only small differences in extent were observed among the three portals, the findings suggest that the crisis was depicted mainly in terms of governance, i.e. as a burden to the state or as a security threat. All three news portals gave prominence to qualities like urgency, extraordinariness, overload and insecurity, and attributed these qualities to the figure of an indefinite wave of migrants heading to Europe. The humanitarian dimension of the reported events was marginalised. The findings indicate a striking dependence on institutional sources, mainly government officials. Almost exclusive salience was given to the governmental agenda. Authorship of every other news story was assigned to the Czech Press Agency. Aforementioned partial characteristics of the coverage resulted in highly politicized image of the crisis, which to considerable extent was presented as a security threat.

KEY WORDS:

agenda building, European migration crisis, irregular migration, online news, securitization, threat construction

Introduction

In the summer of 2015, many European countries faced challenges associated with a growing number of refugees and irregular migrants heading to Europe. The media commonly referred to these events as a 'crisis'. Even though the Czech Republic is not a destination country for asylum seekers from the Middle East and



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North Africa, and even though it has not been significantly affected by the course of events in terms of casualties, public spending or risk, polls suggest that the great majority of Czech society perceives these irregular migrants as a threat to their country.¹ Since the vast majority of Czech citizens have no direct experience with migrants from the Middle East and North Africa, one can assume that their attitude towards migrants has been partially influenced by indirect sources of information, such as the news media, opinion leaders and social networks. As Ciaran O'Reilly puts it:

*"Unless one stands by the shore waiting for rockets to come flying by, one gleans the existence of a threat real or perceived through the media. Depending on how a threat is framed, even if its results or effects remain unaffected, the response by the audience is still based on the speech-act of journalistic presentation."*²

Nonetheless, since there are so many factors that possibly influence the audiences' attitude formation, we cannot accurately measure the size and significance of the media effect, i.e. the degree to which the news media coverage influences public opinion so that audience members believe in the substantiality and urgency of a threat. In this study, rather than pursuing the effect of media content, we want to examine the effect of securitization in the media content instead. By analysing the news media content that addresses the migration crisis and by accounting for the particular editorial practices of its production, we examine the extent and the way in which images of the proclaimed 'threat' and the appeal to security were present in the media coverage of the issue. Our aim is to discuss the antecedent organizational conditions and editorial practices that may have led to (or shaped construction) of the given threat image.³ Despite the fact that, along with television, online news portals are the most frequent sources of news⁴ the existing research on Czech media coverage of the European migration crisis omits online news.⁵ This study aspires to fill the gap.

Crisis Reporting, Foreign News and Media Coverage of Irregular Migration

News media content is an outcome of a sophisticated process of production, which is *"shaped by the bureaucratic and economic structure of that [media] industry, by the relations between the media and other industries, and most importantly, by relations with government and with other political organizations"*.⁶ Likewise, journalists' autonomy in creating news content is limited by many factors, including their professional status, the collective character of journalistic work, and the industry's techniques, conventions and other organizational aspects,⁷ e.g. the institutionalized ways of regulating journalists' individual emotionality.⁸ Thus,

1 ČERVENKA, J.: *Veřejnost o svých obavách a bezpečnostních rizicích pro Českou republiku – prosinec 2016*. [online]. [2017-02-09]. Available at: <https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/media/com_form2content/documents/c2/a2159/t9/ov170209.pdf>.

2 O'REILLY, C.: Primetime Patriotism: News Media and the Securitization of Iraq. In *Journal of Politics and Law*, 2008, Vol. 1, No. 3, p. 68.

3 RIFFE, D., LACY, S., FICO, F.: *Analyzing Media Messages: Using Quantitative Content Analysis in Research*. Mahwah, N. J.: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2005, p. 10.

4 This observation is based on the results of two recent analyses: MEDIARESEARCH: *Mezi zpravodajskými zdroji vedou Novinky.cz, zprávy v televizi sledují spíše starší lidé*. [online]. [2015-02-16]. Available at: <http://www.netmonitor.cz/sites/default/files/prilohy/150216_tz_mezi_zpravodajskymi_zdroji_vedou_novinky.cz_zpravy_v_tvetelevizi_sleduji_spise_starši_lide.doc>; MEDIAINFO: *Nejcitovanější česká média jako zdroj převzatých zpráv*. [online]. [2017-12-02]. Available at: <http://www.newtonmedia.cz/cs/mediainfo-cz/analyzy-studie/nejcitovanejsi-ceska-media-jako-zdroj-prevzatych-zprav/detail>.

5 Numerous media monitoring and broadcast analyses were prepared for The Council for Radio and Television Broadcasting Council (RRTV) of the Czech Republic. Also, there exist few academic research studies, e.g.: SEDLÁKOVÁ, R., LAPČÍK, M., BUREŠOVÁ, Z.: *Analýza mediální reprezentace tématu emigrační vlny z islámských zemí do Evropy a reakcí české politiky a společnosti na tuto emigrační vlnu*. [online]. [2017-12-02]. Available at: <http://media.rozhlas.cz/_binary/03588580.pdf>; TKACZYK, M., MACEK, J., POSPĚCH, P.: *Analýza mediálního pokrytí uprchlické krize*. [online]. [2017-04-28]. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/286454922_Analyza_mediálního_pokrytí_uprchlické_krize_vyzkumna_zprava>.

6 FOWLER, R.: *Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press*. London: Routledge, 1991, p. 222.

7 McNAIR, B.: *Sociologie žurnalistiky*. Praha: Portál, 2004, p. 64-83.

8 KOTIŠOVÁ, J.: Cynicism Ex Machina: The Emotionality of Reporting the 'Refugee Crisis' and Paris Terrorist Attacks in Czech Television. In *European Journal of Communication*, 2017, Vol. 32, No. 3, p. 252-254.

even during an unexpected crisis, media organizations tend to follow developed patterns that influence the resultant content.

In relation to crisis reporting, regardless of the nature of a specific critical event, many researchers point out the lack of source diversity and the high dependency on official sources, policy-makers and governments.⁹ While dependency on official sources could be explained as an effort to maintain the credibility of the reporting,¹⁰ some explanations refer to time or other organizational constraints that are typical for journalism.¹¹

Another tendency typical for crisis reporting manifests itself in a focus on shocking scenes (e.g. refugee movements) at the expense of analysis and detail.¹² Finally, researchers agree on the fact that less attention is paid to the context of the reported events.¹³

Regarding foreign news reporting, existing studies point to the key roles that national interest, security and ethnocentric spirit play in shaping the agenda.¹⁴ Other studies identify an alarming tendency that manifests itself in the decline in foreign correspondents, which leads to a nearly total dependence on a limited number of agency sources (in the Czech Republic there is only the Czech Press Agency).

Moreover, autonomy of correspondents and their influence on published content have been seriously limited in recent years.¹⁵ As a consequence, media organizations very often tend to passively follow the political agenda on foreign issues rather than approach it critically. As in the case of crisis reporting, scholars observe the propensity of the news media to fail to provide a wider cultural and historical background for the reported events.¹⁶

Existing studies on the news coverage of irregular migration identify two major – and at the same time, contradictory – ways in which news media assess the issue. While the former – which is concerned with human beings suffering as an important part of coverage – could be labelled as a humanitarian perspective, the latter tends to portray irregular migration as a threat and it focuses on themes and images of border protection, illegality and control.¹⁷

Most interested scholars agree that news media reporting on irregular migration manifests considerable dependency upon government statements and spokespersons, limiting its role to merely reporting a government agenda, which very often to interpret irregular migration as a security problem.¹⁸

9 POWELL, L., SELF, W. R.: Government Sources Dominate Business Crisis Reporting. In *Newspaper Research Journal*, 2003, Vol. 24, No. 2, p. 98-99, 103.

10 TSATSOU, P., ARMSTRONG, CH. D.: Responsibility to Report: The Politics of British Press Reporting of the Darfur Humanitarian Crisis. In *Global Media and Communication*, 2014, Vol. 10, No. 2, p. 213.

11 McNAIR, B.: *Sociologie žurnalistiky*. Praha: Portál, 2004, p. 88-89.

12 TSATSOU, P., ARMSTRONG, CH. D.: Responsibility to Report: The Politics of British Press Reporting of the Darfur Humanitarian Crisis. In *Global Media and Communication*, 2014, Vol. 10, No. 2, p. 201.

13 LOGAN, R. A., JAEYUNG, P., SHIN, J.: Elite Sources, Context, and News Topics: How Two Korean Newspapers Covered a Public Health Crisis. In *Science Communication*, 2004, Vol. 25, No. 4, p. 398. For more comprehensive review of research literature on crisis reporting, see e.g.: KOTIŠOVÁ, J.: Cynicism Ex Machina: The Emotionality of Reporting the 'Refugee Crisis' and Paris Terrorist Attacks in Czech Television. In *European Journal of Communication*, 2017, Vol. 32, No. 3, p. 243-245.

14 TSATSOU, P., ARMSTRONG, CH. D.: Responsibility to Report: The Politics of British Press Reporting of the Darfur Humanitarian Crisis. In *Global Media and Communication*, 2014, Vol. 10, No. 2, p. 198.

15 TERZIS, G.: *Mapping Foreign Correspondence in Europe*. New York, London: Routledge, 2015, p. 1-6.

16 OTTO, F., MEYER, CH. O.: Missing the Story? Changes in Foreign News Reporting and Their Implications for Conflict Prevention. In *Media, War & Conflict*, 2012, Vol. 5, No. 3, p. 206.

17 For more information, see: FIGENSCHOU, T. U., THORBJØRNSRUD, K.: Faces of an Invisible Population: Human Interest Framing of Irregular Immigration News in the United States, France, and Norway. In *American Behavioral Scientist*, 2015, Vol. 59, No. 7, p. 795; GALE, P.: The Refugee Crisis and Fear: Populist Politics and Media Discourse. In *Journal of Sociology*, 2004, Vol. 40, No. 4, p. 334-336; HORSTI, K.: Asylum Seekers in the News: Frames of Illegality and Control. In *Observatorio (OBS*) Journal*, 2007, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 152-157; GABRIELATOS, C., BAKER, P.: Fleeing, Sneaking, Flooding. A Corpus Analysis of Discursive Constructions of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK Press, 1996-2005. In *Journal of English Linguistics*, 2008, Vol. 36, No. 1, p. 20-25; THORBJØRNSRUD, K.: Framing Irregular Immigration in Western Media. In *American Behavioral Scientist*, 2015, Vol. 59, No. 7, p. 774-775; VAN GORP, B.: Where is the Frame? Victims and Intruders in the Belgian Press Coverage of the Asylum Issue. In *European Journal of Communication*, 2005, Vol. 20, No. 4, p. 503-504.

18 See: McKAY, F. H., THOMAS, S. L., BLOOD, R. W.: Any One of These Boat People Could Be a Terrorist for All We Know! Media Representations and Public Perceptions of 'Boat People' Arrivals in Australia. In *Journalism*, 2011, Vol. 12, No. 5, p. 610-611; BENSON, R., WOOD, T.: Who Says What or Nothing at All? Speakers, Frames, and Frame-less Quotes in Unauthorized Immigration News in the United States, Norway, and France. In *American Behavioral Scientist*, 2015, Vol. 59, No. 7, p. 816.

Constructing a Threat Image – Moral Panics and Securitization

In relation to the media construction of a threat, scholars used to employ the concept of “moral panics”, which was originally elaborated by Stanley Cohen in his book *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* published in 1972.¹⁹ However, Cohen’s original theory is concerned primarily with the way society copes with deviation (in terms of its moral evaluation), i.e. with ‘societal reaction to deviance’, and, as such, it cannot be generalized for an external security threat, no matter if the threat is real or perceived. Moreover, while Cohen’s theory claims that the source of unease lies within a particular society, irregular migration is a threat from the outside. Furthermore, despite the fact that the theory proposed by Cohen does assume a socially constructed nature of deviance, it is vague when it comes to the pragmatics of the process: it remains unclear whether we should understand this particular societal reaction to deviance as a kind of anthropological constant, collective pattern of behaviour typical for late modern societies or as a pragmatic act brought about by the particular political motivations of certain social actors.²⁰

In order to overcome foregoing shortcomings of the “moral panic” theory, we have decided to address the political context of the news media coverage of the European migration crisis with insights provided by the “securitization” theory. The core of “securitization” lies in placing an issue on a scale ranging from non-politicized through politicized to securitized, the latter “*meaning that the issue is presented as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying action outside the normal bound of political procedure*”.²¹ Thus, it follows that security, or the lack of it, is considered to be an outcome of the communication processes in society rather than of the actual living conditions. In other words, an issue becomes a security threat not because it essentially is one, but because it is presented as such. Such a constructivist approach to security is in accordance with Ulrich Beck’s notion of risks in the risk society: “*The definition of a threat is always a cognitive and social construct*.”²² This affinity makes securitization a profoundly relevant phenomenon of contemporary politics, i.e. politics in which the dichotomies of security/insecurity, internal/external and political/apolitical emerge as three main lines for political conflicts.²³ In this context it should be noted that all the above-mentioned dichotomies constitute core categories of contemporary discourse on migration.²⁴ Last, the preoccupation with security that actually leads to an increase in public anxiety regarding terrorism and immigration is believed to be fertile ground for the observed rise of populism and extremism.²⁵

Securitization is brought about by the discursive action of the securitizing agent and it is rooted in the belief that discourses on existential threats “*empower political elites to take policy measures (sometimes extraordinary) to alleviate insecurity*”.²⁶ Thus, apart from securitization that is understood as an outcome, i.e. as an intersubjectively shared and verifiable state of affairs, we need to distinguish the securitization ‘move’, which is a practice that lies in the mobilisation of heuristic artefacts (including metaphors, image repertoires, argumentation, analogies, stereotypes), and which is aimed at persuading the relevant audience about the

critical vulnerability of a referent object²⁷ In other words, the ‘securitization move’ can be depicted as the process of the “*discursive construction of particular issues as security threats*”.²⁸

If a securitization move aims to be successful, the ‘critical mass’, i.e. ‘enough amount of the right people’ must be addressed.²⁹ In late modern liberal democracies, policies are expected to gain support of the wider public, thus addressing a ‘critical mass’ cannot be completed without the means of media communication. Even though it is reasonable to expect that political elites will endeavour to influence the media with a political agenda of their own in order to complete their ‘securitization move’, the outcome and course of the process are far from straightforward. Securitization is a social practice that is always mediated by the agents’ habitus, context, the audiences’ dispositions, and power relations; its outcome is conditioned by the dispositif of the relevant social field.³⁰ As such, it can be oriented towards a goal without being consciously informed by it, at least not necessarily.³¹ Nevertheless, even when mediated and conditioned by many factors, a ‘securitization move’ does create some effect. Therefore, in this study we understand securitization specifically as (having) an effect in media content,³² more specifically, as an issue-specific media frame³³ and, with reference to the typology developed by Scheufele, as a dependent variable.³⁴ Effect is not meant here within positivist framework, i.e. as a quantitative measure.³⁵

Drawing on the basic securitization theorem, we propose to distinguish two complementary dimensions of the securitization effect in media content. The first dimension indicates the urgency of the issue, and at the level of the media performance it is indicated by the salience that the media assign to it; the second dimension refers to the specific quality of the presented events, namely a security threat that is attributed to the issue. At the level of media content, the threat quality can be understood as the presence of an issue-specific media frame,³⁶ specifically the security frame. Since the two mentioned dimensions – the salience of the issue and the salience of the attributes – are consistent with the first and second levels of the media agenda-building process, we can trace (albeit with some methodological limitations) the securitization effect in media content by means of the agenda-building analysis.³⁷

Method

This study attempts to examine the extent to which and the way the various security cues were present in the Czech online news media agenda related to the European migration crisis. As such it presents selected findings (partial evidence) of more complex research project aimed at the role of the news media in the process of securitization.³⁸ The analysis is focused on the first and second levels of the agenda-building process, i.e.

19 COHEN, S.: *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*. London : Mac Gibbon and Kee, 1972, p. 7.

20 To learn more about “moral panic” theory, see also: HALL, S. et al.: *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*. London, Basingstoke : MacMillan Press, 1978; VOLEK, J.: *Konstrukce morální paniky a sociální exkluze*. Brno : Sociální studia, Fakulta sociálních studií, MU Brno, 2000.

21 BUZAN, B., WAEVER, O., DE WILDE, J.: *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. Boulder : Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998, p. 24-25.

22 BECK, U.: *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London : SAGE Publications, 1992, p. 18.

23 For more information, see: BECK, U., GIDDENS, A., LASH, S.: *Modernizacja refleksyjna Polityka, tradycja i estetyka w porządku społecznym nowoczesności*. Warszawa : Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2009.

24 See: BIGO, D.: Security and Immigration: Toward a Critique of the Governmentality of Unease. In *Alternatives*, 2002, Vol. 27 (supplement), p. 63-66; BUONFINO, A.: Between Unity and Plurality: The Politicization and Securitization of the Discourse of Migration in Europe. In *New Political Science*, 2004, Vol. 26, No. 1, p. 28-33; HUYSMANS, J.: The European Union and the Securitization of Migration. In *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 2002, Vol. 38, No. 5, p. 756-762.

25 ALVARES, C., DAHLGREN P.: Populism, Extremism and Media: Mapping an Uncertain Terrain. In *European Journal of Communication*, 2016, Vol. 31, No. 1, p. 47-48.

26 BALZACQ, T.: A Theory of Securitization: Origins, Core Assumptions, and Variants. In BALZACQ, T. (ed.): *Securitization Theory How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve*. New York : Routledge, 2011, p. 12.

27 BALZACQ, T.: A Theory of Securitization: Origins, Core Assumptions, and Variants. In BALZACQ, T. (ed.): *Securitization Theory How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve*. New York : Routledge, 2011, p. 3.

28 McDONALD, M.: Securitization and the Construction of Security. In *European Journal of International Relations*, 2008, Vol. 14, No. 4, p. 563.

29 O'REILLY, C.: Primetime Patriotism: News Media and the Securitization of Iraq. In *Journal of Politics and Law*, 2008, Vol. 1, No. 3, p. 67.

30 For more information, see: BOURDIEU, P.: *The Logic of Practice*. Cambridge : Polity Press, 1990.

31 BALZACQ, T.: A Theory of Securitization: Origins, Core Assumptions, and Variants. In BALZACQ, T. (ed.): *Securitization Theory How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve*. New York : Routledge, 2011, p. 2.

32 VULTEE, F.: Securitization as Media Frame. In BALZACQ, T. (ed.): *Securitization Theory How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve*. New York : Routledge, 2011, p. 78.

33 DE VREESE, C.: News Framing: Theory and Typology. In *Information Design Journal & Document Design*, 2005, Vol. 13, No. 1, p. 54-55.

34 SCHEUFELE, D. A.: Framing as a Theory of Media Effects. In *Journal of Communication*, 1999, Vol. 49, No. 1, p. 107-108.

35 Actually, in the case of media content, when the degree of differentiation and variation is not fully known and values in the observed population are not normally distributed, we could not reliably assess size and significance of the securitization effect by conducting an appropriate statistical hypothesis test. For more information, see: GLASGOW MEDIA GROUP: *Bad News*. London : Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976, p. 48.

36 DE VREESE, C.: News Framing: Theory and Typology. In *Information Design Journal & Document Design*, 2005, Vol. 13, No. 1, p. 54-55.

37 McCOMBS, M. E.: *Agenda setting: Nastolování agendy - masová média a veřejné mínění*. Praha : Portál, 2009, p. 131-145.

38 See also: TKACZYK, M.: *The Securitization of the European Migration Crisis in the Czech News Media*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Brno : Faculty of Social Sciences, Masaryk University in Brno, 2017.

on the salience of the issue and the salience of the attributes.³⁹ Content analysis proved to be the most suitable method to analyse the process of agenda building, since it enables a systematic examination of a large number of news items. Nevertheless, content analysis provides only limited possibilities for accounting on reality beyond media content, including organizational aspects of media content production or political interests. Another limit of the research lies in summative character of the analysis.

Occasionally, for purposes of the analysis we applied an interpretative textual analysis to smaller units of content (e.g. subheadings). News stories included in the analysis were published on three Czech online news sites: *iDnes* and *Novinky*, which are the two most common Czech online sources of news, and *ČT24.cz*, which is the only online news portal owned by the Czech public TV broadcaster.⁴⁰ We believe that this choice of news outlets allows us to access the dominant discourse on the issue and, as such, it seems to be the most relevant in terms of the agenda-setting theory. Relevant news items were searched for in the Anopress IT online database on the basis of keyword occurrence. Only news stories were included, which means that the analysis did not include editorials, opinion articles or interviews.

For 2015, we identified 716 news stories published by *ČT24.cz*, 723 by *iDnes*, and 1,025 by *Novinky*. All of the stories referred to the European migration crisis as their main topic.⁴¹ Due to the economic limits of this research, we decided to more closely analyse only the news items which were published in the purpose-built period between 26th June 2015 and 31st October 2015. The selected time period includes the cycle of media agenda initiation, its peak and its decline. The initial point of this period coincides with the first summit of the European Council, which focused on the migration crisis, but also with the advancing instrumentalization of the issue by Czech political actors. In order to further reduce the number of analysed news items, we additionally used systematic random sampling; more specifically, every third item published in the purpose-built period was included in the analysis. This constructed sample consisted of 153 news items published on *ČT24.cz*, 164 on *iDnes* and 241 on *Novinky*.

Table 1: News items that referred to the European migration crisis as their main topic

	<i>ČT24.cz</i>	<i>iDnes</i>	<i>Novinky</i>
in 2015	716	723	1025
studied period (26 th June 2015 – 31 st October 2015)	480	498	732
analysed sample	153	164	241

Source: own processing

The research unfolded in three steps. First, content categories were established on the basis of an initial study of the news items and the literature review. Second, a codebook was designed on the basis of the initial study and it was initially tested in a small pilot study involving 12 news stories. Third, the final version of the codebook consisted of nine nominal, four ordinal and 35 dichotomous variables. The coding team included six students who received instructions and intensive training. To ensure inter-coder reliability, members of the team separately coded a sample of 33 identical news items. To evaluate the results, we used Krippendorff coefficient;⁴² however, in the case of binary variables with the rare occurrence of a positive value, we used an additional measure of agreement expressed by percentage.⁴³ Except for three variables, coders achieved good (> 0,8; fm > 90%) or at least satisfactory (> 0,67; fm > 80%) agreement. In the case of the three variables, the level of agreement was close enough to be considered satisfactory (m > 70%).

39 McCOMBS, M. E.: *Agenda setting: nastolování agendy - masová média a veřejné mínění*. Praha: Portál, 2009, p. 132.

40 More information about the Czech news market in 2015 can be found in the following press release: MEDIARESEARCH: *Mezi zpravodajskými zdroji vedou Novinky.cz, zprávy v televizi sledují spíše starší lidé*. [online]. [2017-10-01]. Available at: <<http://www.nielsen-admosphere.cz/press/tz-mezi-zpravodajskymi-zdroji-vedou-novinky-cz-zpravy-v-televizi-sleduji-spise-starsi-lide/>>.

41 A reference to the migration crisis occurred in a headline or a lead. Stories, which referred to the crisis after the first sub-headline were not included in the analysis (remark by the author).

42 KRIPPENDORFF, K.: Reliability in Content Analysis: Some Common Misconceptions and Recommendations. In *Human Communication Research*, 2004, Vol. 30, No. 3, p. 429.

43 DESWERT, K.: *Calculating Inter-Coder Reliability in Media Content Analysis Using Krippendorff's Alpha*. [online]. [2017-10-01]. Available at: <<http://www.polcomm.org/wp-content/uploads/ICR01022012.pdf>>.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The analysis was supposed to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How was the salience of the European migration crisis constructed in the Czech online news media coverage of the events?

The salience of the reported events was constructed by quality and quantity of the reporting. In this analysis we assess the former by means of textual analysis of headlines and news values analysis and measure the latter by number of news stories per day compared to few relevant real-world indicators. In relation to the **RQ1** we set two hypotheses:

H1a: The (quantitative) salience of the migration crisis was related to the number of irregular migrants heading to Europe and the Czech Republic.

H1b: Among the three portals it was *Novinky* that covered the crisis with the biggest number of news stories.

The latter hypothesis stems from the assumption that *Novinky* demonstrates stronger tendencies towards tabloidization than the other two news portals, hence the tendency to publish more controversial news.

RQ2: Which attributes or qualities of the reported events were given the most prominence in the news media coverage of the crisis?

In relation to the **RQ2** we set the general hypothesis:

H2: There were no substantial differences in salience of attributes between the three analysed portals.

H2 stems from the assumption that in the case of foreign news and crisis reporting news media tend to provide rather homogeneous content. In such a case the homogeneity of content is given by limited sources abroad, dependence on news agencies and government sources, but also by tendencies to follow government agenda and seek national interest.⁴⁴

RQ2a: Which news values were most frequent in the news coverage of the crisis?

One way to pursue the attributes stressed in coverage is to look at the news values. In this study we decided to use a set of news values proposed by Harcup and O'Neill, though with some minor modifications.⁴⁵ After conducting a pilot study we decided to leave out the news values that turned out either irrelevant with respect to the nature of the reported events (e.g. celebrity, entertainment, surprise, good news) or difficult to track (e.g. newspaper agenda, follow up). The other modification lies in the fact that, while Harcup and O'Neill understand personalization as a dimension of entertainment,⁴⁶ we decided to treat it as a separate news value because it can either say something about the salience that is given to political actors and their voices or indicate a human interest story if it is a migrant who is personalized in a news item. Bad news stands for the news value negativity. Finally, we adopted the news value of proximity from Westerstaahl and Johansson because, in the case of a crisis or a threat, event proximity is an important factor in developing the sense of urgency that is attributed to the issue.⁴⁷

44 See: McNAIR, B.: *Sociologie žurnalistiky*. Praha: Portál, 2004, p. 56-60, 133; POWELL, L., SELF, W. R.: Government Sources Dominate Business Crisis Reporting. In *Newspaper Research Journal*, 2003, Vol. 24, No. 2, p. 101-104.

45 HARCUP, T., O'NEILL, D.: What Is News? Galtung and Ruge Revisited. In *Journalism Studies*, 2001, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 279.

46 HARCUP, T., O'NEILL, D.: What Is News? Galtung and Ruge Revisited. In *Journalism Studies*, 2001, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 279.

47 WESTERSTAHL, J., JOHANSSON, F.: Foreign News: News Values and Ideologies. In *European Journal of Communication*, 1994, Vol. 9, No. 1, p. 73.

In relation to **RQ2a** we set two hypotheses:

H2a1: The most frequent news value in the news coverage of the crisis was power elite, then bad news.

H2a2: The biggest share of bad news was published on *Novinky*.

In relation to the news value power elite **H2a1** results from the aforementioned observation that in times of crisis news organizations manifest higher dependence on governmental sources and privilege accounts made by members of political elites.⁴⁸ However, it could be also derived from the theory of securitization according to which political elites will endeavour to influence news organization with a political agenda of their own.⁴⁹ In reference to the news value bad news **H2a1** results from the observation that “*events that are violent or that can be defined as negative will get better coverage*”.⁵⁰ **H2a2** stems from the above-mentioned assumption that *Novinky* demonstrates stronger tendencies towards tabloidization than the other two news portals.

RQ2b: Which issue-specific media frames prevailed in the news coverage of the crisis?

RQ2c: To what extent were reported events presented as a threat?

In this study, we understand the second-level agenda building, i.e. the process of attributing salience to particular qualities of reported events as analogous to the process of media framing.⁵¹ “Framing” is a process that results in selecting and silencing some aspects of perceived reality.⁵² At the level of a news item, we can conceive of a frame as a set of heuristic devices, e.g. “*metaphors, catchphrases, visual images, lexical choices, selection of sources, graphics, stereotypes, dramatic characters, etc.*”⁵³ The coherence of each set of devices is given by their role, which is “*to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation*”.⁵⁴ In other words, heuristic devices are tied to reasoning devices. In this study we do not understand media frames as mutually exclusive generalizations of media content, but rather as a set of cues in media content that makes a particular interpretation more valid than the others. Since content analysis comes with substantial limitations regarding its ability to pursue latent meanings, we decided to explore only two of the reasoning devices proposed by Entman: problem definition and recommended solutions, which we believe to be easier to trace by the means of content analysis of news stories. It seems that, at least as far as Czech media are concerned, moral evaluations and causal interpretations are more common and tangible in editorials and opinion articles, which were not included in the analysis.

Since, in the case of the analysed agenda, the threat credibility depends on the audience perceptions of migrants, we subsequently decided to pursue two additional heuristic devices related to the representations of migrants which we believe substantiate the problem definitions and recommended solutions: stereotypes in visual images and the level of personalization in news story narratives. By the former, along with Walter Lippmann, we mean culturally determined, thus distorted preconceptions about an object of reference. In the case of our analysis these preconceptions, except from textual content, are present also in the visual content

of a news story.⁵⁵ Particular stereotypes about migrants and categories of visual content referring to these stereotypes are derived from existing research.⁵⁶ However, content categories for this variable were limited to those instances of migrants’ visual presentation that underscored the security dimension of reported events. The latter device, i.e. the level of personalization in news story narratives, stands for the ontological status of migrants, hence it reflects on the distinction between migrants as individual human beings, migrants as citizens of particular state and migrants as an abstract, impersonal and quantifiable referent in the political discourse on the issue. While a high level of migrants’ personalization increases the chance of understanding (or identifying with) their life stories, a low level strengthens the validity of the generalizations that are the basis for alienating and stigmatizing the modes of migrants’ representations and thus strengthens the credibility of a threat. Thus, while the former could underline the humanitarian perspective, the latter could reinforce threat construction. In relation to the **RQ2b** we set the following hypothesis:

H2b1: Reported events were framed prevalently as a burden to the state administration, a security issue or a threat.

The hypothesis stems from existing body of research.⁵⁷

RQ3: What was the structure of news sources in the news coverage of the crisis?

Selecting news sources is an important editorial practice which shapes the message of news content.⁵⁸ As far as the process of securitization is concerned, being a news source enables securitization actors to influence the media with a political agenda of their own. In relation to the **RQ3** we set three hypotheses:

H3a: All three portals relied mainly on official sources, especially on government officials and law-enforcement agencies.

H3b: In the coverage of all three portals, voices of migrants and experts were marginalized.

H3c: The biggest space to government officials was given on *ČT24.cz*.

H3a and H3b result from existing research.⁵⁹ H3c stems from affiliation of the *ČT24.cz* with the public broadcaster, i.e. with the institution, which role lies in presenting public policies, legislation process, but also attitudes of the whole political spectrum to a wider public.

RQ4: How active were news rooms in the process of gathering information?

Online news media differ from the traditional press in many ways. As an emerging type of news organizations, they very often exist as a supplement to print medium. It is not always the case that they establish an autonomous news room. Nevertheless, activity of a news room is important factor, which can influence the

48 LEE, S. H., WANG, Q.: A Comparative Investigation into Press-State Relations: Comparing Source Structures in Three News Agencies Coverage of the North Korea Missile Crisis. In *International Journal of Communication*, 2016, Vol. 10, p. 1909.

49 BIGO, D.: Security and Immigration: Toward a Critique of the Governmentality of Unease. In *Alternatives*, 2002, Vol. 27 (supplement), p. 68, 69, 76.

50 TERZIS, G.: *Mapping Foreign Correspondence in Europe*. New York, London : Routledge, 2015, p. 1.

51 See also: McCOMBS, M. E.: *Agenda setting: nastolování agendy - masová média a veřejné mínění*. Praha : Portál, 2009, p. 132-133; SCHEUFELE, D. A.: Framing as a Theory of Media Effects. In *Journal of Communication*, 1999, Vol. 49, No. 1, p. 116.

52 ENTMAN, R. M.: Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm. In *Journal of Communication*, 1993, Vol. 43, No. 4, p. 51-52.

53 For more information, see: GAMSON, W. A., LASH, K. E.: The Political Culture of Social Welfare Policy. In SPIRO, S. E., YUCHTMAN-YAAR, E. (eds.): *Evaluating the Welfare State: Social and Political Perspectives*. New York : Academic Press, 1983, p. 397-415; VAN GORP, B.: Where is the Frame? Victims and Intruders in the Belgian Press Coverage of the Asylum Issue. In *European Journal of Communication*, 2005, Vol. 20, No. 4, p. 486.

54 ENTMAN, R. M.: Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm. In *Journal of Communication*, 1993, Vol. 43, No. 4, p. 51-52.

55 For more information, see: LIPPMANN, W.: *Public opinion*. New York : Macmillan Company, 1960.

56 HORSTL, K.: Asylum Seekers in the News: Frames of Illegality and Control. In *Observatorio (OBS*) Journal*, 2007, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 148.

57 See: BROUWER, J., WOUDE, M., LEUN, J.: Framing Migration and the Process of Crimmigration: A Systematic Analysis of the Media Representation of Unauthorized Immigrants in the Netherlands. In *European Journal of Criminology*, 2017, Vol. 14, No. 3, p. 113; ZURAI DAH, M. D., LEE, CH.: Representing Immigrants as Illegals, Threats and Victims in Malaysia: Elite Voices in the Media. In *Discourse & Society*, 2014, Vol. 25, No. 6, p. 689, 701-703; THREADGOLD, T.: *The Media and Migration in the United Kingdom, 1999 to 2009*. Washington, D.C. : Migration Policy Institute, 2009. [online]. [2017-04-28]. Available at: <www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/TCM-UKMedia.pdf>; TKACZYK, M., MACEK, J., POSPÉCH, P.: *Analýza mediálního pokrytí uprchlické krize*. [online]. [2017-10-01]. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/286454922_Analyza_medialniho_pokryti_uprchlicke_krize_vyzkumna_zprava>

58 LEE, S. H., WANG, Q.: A Comparative Investigation into Press-State Relations: Comparing Source Structures in Three News Agencies Coverage of the North Korea Missile Crisis. In *International Journal of Communication*, 2016, Vol. 10, p. 1910.

59 See also: BENSON, R., WOOD, T.: Who Says What or Nothing at All? Speakers, Frames, and Frame-less Quotes in Unauthorized Immigration News in the United States, Norway, and France. In *American Behavioral Scientist*, 2015, Vol. 59, No. 7, p. 810-811; LEE, S. H., WANG, Q.: A Comparative Investigation into Press-State Relations: Comparing Source Structures in Three News Agencies Coverage of the North Korea Missile Crisis. In *International Journal of Communication*, 2016, Vol. 10, p. 1908.

resultant image of reported events. In order to pursue the news rooms' activity in relation to the three portals, we checked for authorship of news stories and news genres. We considered activity high, if the authorship was assigned to an editorial board and when genre was different than a news story (e.g. reportage, feature). In relation to **RQ4** we set hypothesis **H4**:

H4: Among the three portals, it was *iDnes*, which produced the highest activity in the process of gathering information.

The hypothesis stems from the fact that among all portals it is *iDnes*, which editorial board has the biggest organizational autonomy.⁶⁰

Research Findings

The salience of the issue

Events were reported with a sense of criticality and urgency that was attributed to an increase in the number of migrants heading to Europe. The term "crisis" started to appear in the analysed news headlines as early as in April 2015, predominantly in the context of numerous casualties in the Mediterranean Sea and as part of the phrase 'migration crisis'. Eventually, 'refugee crisis' became the catchphrase for all events related to the growing number of migrants from Africa, the Middle East, but also from Albania and Kosovo. The sense of criticality and urgency was even strengthened by hysterical headlines. To give some examples: *Babis: Refugees are the biggest threat to Europe, bigger than conflict with Russia* (*iDnes*, 1st July 2015);⁶¹ *In the case of migrants' onslaught, army will send to the borders up to 2,600 soldiers* (*iDnes*, 12th August 2015);⁶² *Near the Czech border, there was a battle at a facility for refugees* (*ČT24.cz*, 22nd August 2015);⁶³ *Like a snowball, migrants in Europe inspire others, from Iraq to Nigeria* (*Novinky*, 8th September 2015);⁶⁴ *Record-breaking migration wave in Hungary – the military trains border defence* (*ČT24.cz*, 10th September 2015);⁶⁵ *Bavaria collapses under migrants' onslaught* (*Novinky*, 29th September 2015).⁶⁶ Finally, to mention other editorial practices that could increase the sense of the criticality of the reported events, two of the three studied portals, *ČT24.cz* and *Novinky*, dedicated a special editorial section to the issue.

According to McCombs, if an issue appears in the news day after day, it creates a foundation for how its salience is constructed.⁶⁷ The media agenda of the crisis was gaining momentum from August, with at least three news items per day published by each of the three analysed news outlets. It should be noted that the increase in the number of published news items mirrored the growing number of asylum applications in the EU countries at that time. However, starting from that month, we can observe a significant difference between *Novinky* and the other two news portals, because salience attributed to the issue on *Novinky* increased more rapidly. In the case of all three portals, the agenda reached its peak in September 2015, with at least six news articles published per day (11 in the case of *Novinky*).

60 *Novinky* are strongly affiliated with the daily newspaper *Právo* and *ČT24.cz* is owned by the public TV broadcaster (remark by the author).

61 *Uprchlíci jsou největší ohrožení Evropy, větší než konflikt s Ruskem*. [online]. [2017-10-02]. Available at: <http://zpravy.idnes.cz/babis-uprchlici-jsou-nejvetsi-ohrozeni-evropy-vetsi-nez-konflikt-s-ruskem-1u9-/domaci.aspx?c=A150701_152946_domaci_kop>.

62 *Armáda v případě náporu uprchlíků pošle na hranice až 2 600 vojáků*. [online]. [2017-10-02]. Available at: <http://zpravy.idnes.cz/armada-v-pripade-naporu-uprchlicku-posle-na-hranice-muze-jit-az-2600-vojaku-pyn-/domaci.aspx?c=A150812_123843_domaci_fer>.

63 *Poblíž hranic s Českem proběhla „bitva“ o uprchlické centrum*. [online]. [2017-10-02]. Available at: <<http://www.ceskatelive.cz/ct24/svet/1571756-pobliz-hranic-s-ceskem-probehla-bitva-o-uprchlicke-centrum>>.

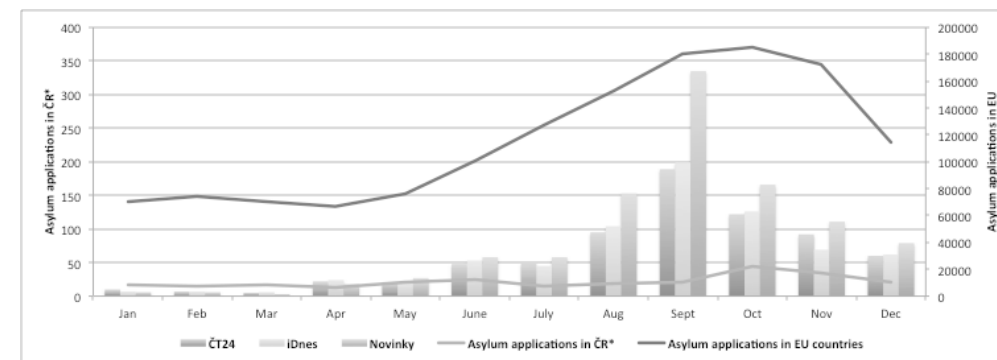
64 *Jako sněhová koule. Běženci v Evropě inspirojí další od Iráku po Nigérii*. [online]. [2017-10-02]. Available at: <<http://www.novinky.cz/zahranicni/blizky-a-stredni-vychod/379979-jako-snehova-koule-bezenci-v-evrope-inspiruji-dalsi-od-iraku-po-nigerii.html>>.

65 *Rekordní uprchlická vlna v Maďarsku – vojáci trénují ochranu hranic*. [online]. [2017-10-02]. Available at: <<http://www.ceskatelive.cz/ct24/svet/1582022-rekordni-uprchlicka-vlna-v-madarsku-vojaci-trenuji-ochranu-hranic>>.

66 *Bavorsko kolabuje pod náporem běženců*. [online]. [2017-10-02]. Available at: <<http://www.novinky.cz/zahranicni/evropa/381911-bavorsko-kolabuje-pod-naporem-bezencu.html>>.

67 McCOMBS, M. E.: *Agenda setting: Nastolování agendy - masová média a veřejné mínění*. Praha: Portál, 2009, p. 26.

The dramatic increase coincided with the highest number of migrants arriving in neighbouring countries – Hungary, Austria and Germany. Numerous headlines from that month speak about records in the number of migrants at European borders. Moreover, on 21st September 2015, a vote on relocation quotas was held in the European Commission, which meant a peak for the prominent sub-agenda related to relocation quotas. From October 2015 we observe a decrease in the number of news items related to the issue, which seems to mirror the decreasing number of asylum applications in the EU countries.



**From North Africa and the Middle East countries only*

Chart 1: News items concerned with the migration crisis in 2015

Source: own processing

As far as the course of agenda development is concerned, it can be said that, from the long-term perspective, the salience of the agenda unfolded from the changing number of asylum applications in the EU countries, which we can consider to be a real-world indicator; however, from the short-term perspective, it unfolded from the occurrence of tragic and spectacular events that involved a huge number of casualties, including the sinking of boats with migrants and the discovery of 71 dead migrants in a smugglers' truck left on an Austrian highway. Depending on the particular outlet, 32 to 40% of the news items were published in the domestic news section;⁶⁸ the sub-agenda, which was most frequently presented in the news coverage, was concerned with the handling of the crisis in the Czech Republic.

Concerning our first research question, it shall be stated that in terms of the volume of the published news items and the observed editorial practices, all three analysed news outlets attributed enormous salience to the media agenda of the migration crisis and that salience was accompanied by an emphasis on the urgency of the reported events. Among the three news portals, *Novinky* attributed the biggest salience to the issue. Hypotheses **H1a** and **H1b** were confirmed.

The salience of attributes: News values

In the case of all three news portals, the power elite was the most frequent news value (present in 58 to 63% of the analysed news items, depending on the news portal).⁶⁹ The magnitude and the relevance, both referring to the sense of criticality and urgency, but also to the salience of the reported events, were the second most frequent news values (the former was present in 46 to 50% and the latter in 46 to 52% of the analysed news stories).⁷⁰ Negativity (in our research bad news), which proved to be the most frequent news value in

68 *ČT24.cz* – 40%, *iDnes* – 37%, *Novinky* – 32% (remark by the author).

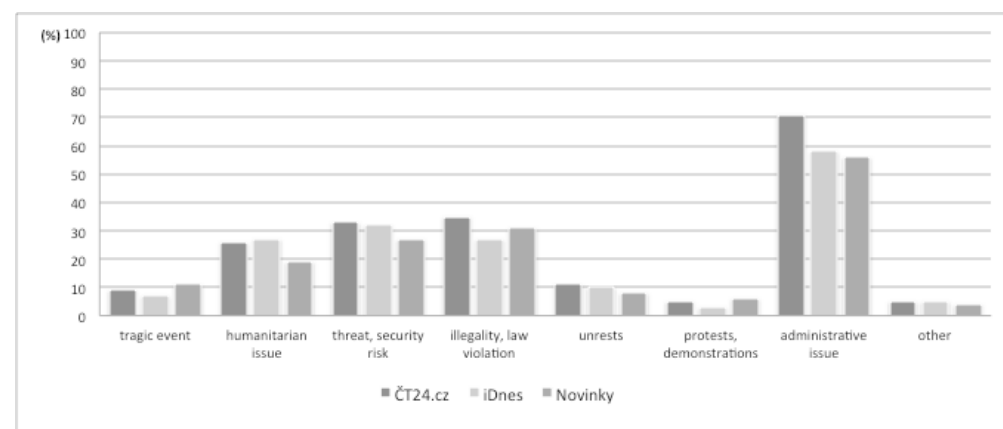
69 *ČT24.cz* – 63%, *iDnes* – 58%, *Novinky* – 62% (remark by the author).

70 Magnitude: *ČT24.cz* – 48%, *iDnes* – 46%, *Novinky* – 50%; relevance: *ČT24.cz* – 46%, *iDnes* – 52%, *Novinky* – 48% (remark by the author).

general,⁷¹ turned out to be less frequent than the above-mentioned values.⁷² This finding somehow substantiates the claim about the prominence that was given to power elites. We observe a relatively high occurrence of news values geographical and cultural proximity.⁷³ This not only adds to the sense of proximity, but also increases the relevance of the reported events.

The salience of attributes: Media frames

The majority of the analysed news items from all three news portals defined the reported events in terms of governance, i.e. as an administrative issue.⁷⁴ Such a definition stems from the fact that content of such news items dealt primarily with policies (like relocation quotas), procedures and resources. Likewise, in all three news portals, approximately every third news story defined reported events as a security threat, which means that their content was concerned with risks, negative predictions and security procedures.⁷⁵ The same ratio of stories depicted events as criminal acts.⁷⁶ These findings are consistent with those of Horsti, who, in relation to Finnish news, identifies illegality and control as the two most common media frames in the media coverage of irregular migration.⁷⁷ According to her research, the two frames are complementary in the sense that illegality justifies control. The second, competing perspective on irregular migration, the one which depicts irregular migration in terms of a humanitarian problem, was present in every fourth analysed news story, in the case of *Novinky* it was each fifth story.⁷⁸



*More than one problem definition could be present in a single news item

Chart 2: Problem definitions in the analysed news items

Source: own processing

Since measures that are put forward say something about the character of the situation to which they are applied, we pursued the discussed solutions to the crisis. From the presented or discussed measures, defensive ones prevailed, such as border controls, the construction of a border wall, the detention of migrants,

71 LENGAUER, G., ESSER, F., BERGANZA, R.: Negativity in Political News: A Review of Concepts, Operationalizations and Key Findings. In *Journalism*, 2011, Vol. 13, No. 2, p. 181-182.

72 ČT24.cz – 40%, iDnes – 41%, Novinky – 51% (remark by the author).

73 Geographical proximity: ČT24.cz – 30%, iDnes – 28%, Novinky – 33%; cultural proximity: ČT24.cz – 33%, iDnes – 30%, Novinky – 29% (remark by the author).

74 ČT24.cz – 71%, iDnes – 58%, Novinky – 56% (remark by the author).

75 ČT24.cz – 33%, iDnes – 32%, Novinky – 27% (remark by the author).

76 ČT24.cz – 35%, iDnes – 27%, Novinky – 31% (remark by the author).

77 HORSTI, K.: Asylum Seekers in the News: Frames of Illegality and Control. In *Observatorio (OBS*) Journal*, 2007, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 157-158.

78 ČT24.cz – 26%, iDnes – 27%, Novinky – 19% (remark by the author).

the deployment of military forces. These are measures that lie in the engagement of law-enforcement agencies: police, border police, and the army. As far as political solutions are concerned, so-called relocation quotas were discussed most frequently, then changes in migration policies, integration programmes, and, marginally, aid to the Middle East. A considerable number of news stories referred to acute help for migrants. As far as solutions to the crisis were considered, it should be noted that the common feature of the majority of the presented measures was their short-term character.

Table 2: Measures that were presented or discussed in the analysed news items (% of news items)

	ČT24.cz	iDnes	Novinky
border wall	24	19	17
border controls	37	32	34
the deployment of military	18	21	15
the detention of migrants	30	23	22
the deployment of force	7	13	6
war on smugglers	12	12	10
relocation quotas	34	24	24
other changes in asylum politics	26	16	15
emergent help to migrants	23	21	14
humanitarian aid to the Middle East	7	9	8
integration programmes	12	10	5

*More than one measure could be presented or discussed in a single news item

Source: own processing

Among the photos that displayed migrants,⁷⁹ approximately every second photo depicted migrants being escorted by law-enforcement operatives,⁸⁰ and every third portrayed them in the proximity of fences or barriers.⁸¹

Finally, we examined the level of personalization in the news stories in relation to the migrants. Depending on the news portal, approximately every second analysed news story referred to migrants in terms of big numbers and without information about their country of origin.⁸² When this was the case, migrants were referred to as 'migrants', 'refugees', a 'wave of migration', or in apposition with numbers. The voices of migrants or stories related to a specific person or family turned out to be equally marginal for all three news portals. Each of these two categories was represented in less than 10% of all of the analysed news stories.

Concerning our second research question, the analysis shows that, with small variation in extent, all three portals stressed similar qualities of the reported events. The observed distribution of news values indicates the strong salience that political agenda gained in the online news coverage of the European migration crisis. Also sense of criticality and urgency of reported events was reflected by news values. Both mentioned qualities, i.e. politicization and sense of urgency are essential if the issue is going to be securitized. Despite a few point differences in the news-value distribution, all three outlets showed similar tendencies in the application of their news values in their editorial practices. However, *Novinky* published a substantially higher rate of bad news and personalized news stories, which indicates a stronger tendency towards tabloidization.

79 It should be noted that not all photos displayed migrants, since a considerable number that were attached to the analysed news stories displayed political actors (remark by the author).

80 ČT24.cz – 55%, iDnes – 59%, Novinky – 45% (remark by the author).

81 ČT24.cz – 41%, iDnes – 34%, Novinky – 31% (remark by the author).

82 ČT24.cz – 58%, iDnes – 48%, Novinky – 52% (remark by the author).

The biggest salience was given to the political aspects of the crisis, i.e. to the decision-making process, policies, overload of state institutions. Within this perspective, the crisis was framed as “a part of public policy, requiring government decision and resource allocation”, which is an issue of normal politics.⁸³ Considerable salience was given to qualities that could be summed up as threat, illegality and control, and that could legitimize the use of exceptional measures, which are “outside of normal bounds of political procedure”.⁸⁴ Substantially less attention in the coverage was given to the humanitarian dimension of the reported events. If this was the case, such news stories referred mainly to tragic and spectacular events that included numerous human casualties. The lack of humanitarian perspective can be linked to the fact that space given to the voices and stories of migrants or NGOs was rather marginal. Hypotheses **H2**, **H2a2**, **H2b** were confirmed. **H2a1** was confirmed only in relation to news value power elite.⁸⁵

Table 3: Frames pursued by the most frequent reasoning/heuristic devices

	Humanitarian frame (non-politicized)	Politicization frame	Security frame
Problem definition	- tragedy - humanitarian problem or crisis - individual misfortune	- administrative issue - protests and demonstrations	- security risk or threat - criminality or illegality - unrest
Recommended solutions	- immediate help to migrants - aid to the Middle East	- relocation quotas - policy changes - integration programmes	- border controls - construction of a border wall - detention of migrants - deployment of military forces - fight against migrant smugglers
Visual presentation	NOT PURSUED	- images of politicians	- migrants in custody of uniformed officials - images of uniformed officials or military technique - migrants in proximity of barriers and fences
Level of personalization	diverse	low	low

Source: own processing

Editorial practices: Use of sources, dependence on news agencies

In relation to dependence on institutional sources, it was observed that the statement of a government, parliamentary opposition or administration official was the main topic in 25 to 35% of analysed news stories⁸⁶ and a political meeting⁸⁷ in 9 to 13% – together providing 35 to 48% of the news items triggered by political actors.⁸⁸ As aforementioned, the news value of power elite was present in slightly more than every second analysed news story (with small differences between the three analysed news portals). The structure and hierarchy of institutional and accessed voices confirm this observation. Not only was the largest space given to the institutional voices, mostly government officials and police officials, but it was also the politicians who turned out to be predominant sources for the primary definitions.⁸⁹ In the case of all three news portals, with some differences in turn, the busiest institutional voices were the Minister of Interior, Milan Chovanec, and the Prime Minister, Bohuslav Sobotka.

83 BUZAN, B., WAEVER, O., DE WILDE, J.: *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. Boulder : Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998, p. 24.

84 BUZAN, B., WAEVER, O., DE WILDE, J.: *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. Boulder : Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998, p. 24.

85 However due to the fact that we cannot assume the normal distribution of values in the sample, we cannot determine probability that it happened by chance (remark by the author).

86 *ČT24.cz* – 26%, *iDnes* – 25%, *Novinky* – 35% (remark by the author).

87 *ČT24.cz* – 9%, *iDnes* – 13%, *Novinky* – 10% (remark by the author).

88 *ČT24.cz* – 35%, *iDnes* – 48%, *Novinky* – 45% (remark by the author).

89 *ČT24.cz* – 41%, *iDnes* – 35%, *Novinky* – 39% (remark by the author).

Indeed, when we look at how often the ongoing crisis was evaluated as a threat in the primary definition given by a political actor, it turns out that this was the case in every resultant news story on *ČT24.cz* and *iDnes*, and in every fifth in *Novinky*. If we consider these statements as truth-claims, the majority of the cases have a form of (value) judgment – not a statement of a verifiable fact – and one could expect that “an objective report would quote another source contesting this position”.⁹⁰ Even though our analytic tool enables such a measurement only in terms of rough approximation, it was *ČT24.cz* that most often confronted this kind of crisis evaluation with some alternative evaluations (in 30% of the cases). Experts and migrants were provided with much less opportunity to speak. The biggest space for the former group was given on *iDnes* (in 5% of the analysed news stories). With respect to the latter group, it can be noted that, in comparison to the actual representation of males and females in the migrating population, males were over-represented in the coverage (85 to 90% in the news coverage, 66% according to existing data on actual migration to Europe).⁹¹

Concerning our third research question, all three portals gave prominence to official sources, mainly governmental officials and law-enforcement agencies. It was political sources who triggered more than 35% of news stories. Hypothesis **H3a** was confirmed. The biggest space to government officials was given on *Novinky*, thus hypothesis **H3c** was not confirmed. Voices of migrants and experts were marginalized, hence **H3b** was confirmed.

As far as dependence on news agencies is concerned, we have observed that, depending on the news portal, the authorship of every second analysed news story, in the case of *ČT24.cz* even more often, was assigned to the Czech Press Agency.⁹² Despite some differences between the portals, this observation can be interpreted as evidence of a relatively low level of editorial activity and could explain why all three news portals generally used short or average-length news stories, while news genres like reportage or news feature were represented only marginally. The strong dependence on the Czech Press Agency could also explain why the content published on all three news portals differed only slightly and only in terms of the extent to which particular content categories were represented. Since *Novinky* published numerous stories which authorship was assigned to other medium (*Právo*), it was *iDnes* which showed highest activity in information gathering.

Concerning our fourth research question, it can be stated that all three portals showed relatively low activity in news gathering and relied heavily on the aforementioned press agency’s content. Among the analysed portals it was *iDnes* which demonstrated the highest activity in news gathering. **H4** was therefore confirmed.

Discussion

If we consider the real-world indicators which relate specifically to the Czech reality, like the number of asylum applications in the Czech Republic or the number of migrants detained in the territory of the Czech Republic,⁹³ there is a striking disproportion between these numbers and the salience and kind of critical relevance which the analysed news media attributed to the reported events. Thus, regarding the impact that the

90 RICHARDSON, J. E.: *Analyzing Newspapers. An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis*. New York : Palgrave, Macmillan, 2007, p. 87.

91 *Často kladené dotazy*. [online]. [2017-01-15]. Available at: <<https://www.clovekvtisni.cz/cs/migrace/info/casto-kladene-dotazy>>.

92 *ČT24.cz* – 68%, *iDnes* – 55%, *Novinky* – 44% (remark by the author).

93 According to the data provided by the Czech Ministry of Interior, in 2015 there were 257 asylum applications (22 per month on average, with a peak of 45 in October) from North Africa and the Middle East countries. For more information, see: *Statistické zprávy o mezinárodní ochraně za jednotlivé měsíce v roce 2015*. [online]. [2016-01-14]. Available at: <<http://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/statisticke-zpravy-o-mezinarodni-ochrane-za-jednotlive-mesice-v-roce-2015.aspx>>. As far as illegal stay is concerned, 3.278 citizens of Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan were reported in 2015. The biggest numbers were reported between July and September. Thus, we would argue that while the term ‘crisis’ seems to be plausible in relation to European countries like Hungary, Germany, Greece and Italy, and eventually the EU as a whole, especially in terms of public spending and the workload of respective institutions, it is not in the case of countries like Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. That is why it does not seem plausible to generalize the crisis condition for a European country without any well-marked reservation. See: *Deník veřejné správy. Nelegální migrace v roce 2015*. [online]. [2016-06-16]. Available at: <<http://denik.obce.cz/clanek.asp?id=6717010>>.

crisis had or could have had on the Czech Republic, such intensive coverage of the issue could be perceived as an unreasonable amplification of the problematic social issue.⁹⁴ On the other hand, it is very difficult to point out any universal norm that could ground such a claim. The observed preference to cover mostly public bodies and the pronouncements of politicians could be among the main reasons that reported events were defined mainly in terms of governance, public resource distribution and security risks. Basically, these aspects of the ongoing crisis unfold from (or correspond with) the agenda of the most frequent and significant institutional voices that were part of the coverage.

Even though we are fully aware of the fact that dependency on official sources is a common practice for the media both in times of crisis and when irregular migration is a topic of news coverage, we could still refer to work by Yilmaz, who found a Danish case from the mid-1980s when media coverage was shaped to a large extent by information provided by a conservative justice minister and police officials and was, therefore, indeed characterized by a predominance of threat frames that painted a picture of an uncontrollable flood of immigrants burdening Danish society.⁹⁵

This observation inevitably questions the notion of journalistic objectivity – the one which is limited to an emphasis on the elimination of journalists' personal prejudices and on the separation of opinions from facts. As Donald McDonald puts it, “when journalists confined their coverage of the late Senator Joseph McCarthy simply to what the senator said and did, far from producing objective journalism they were producing the big lie”.⁹⁶ In relation to Czech news professionals, Moravec et al. speak about a similar trend and describe it as the prevalence of “a professional model of algorithm-based achieving of objectivity resembling the nature of a web browser programmed to mechanically perform certain applied rules”.⁹⁷ This consideration validates the sociological approach to securitization theory, according to which securitization always consists of practices which are framed by tools and habitus inherited from different social fields, in this case by professional routines and professional ideology that are characteristic for the Czech journalistic culture.⁹⁸ However, the recognition that political actors could push through their own political agenda because of the poor autonomy of journalists rooted in a specific journalistic culture needs to be elaborated further. The results of this study confirm that, except for political interest, media performance is conditioned by the economic structure of the media industry and its organizational aspects.⁹⁹

Thus, we could not agree with O'Reilly, who claims that the news media become “a temporary government mouthpiece in times of perceived existential threat”, because of their “professional laziness, naivety or conscious action”.¹⁰⁰ Our findings suggest that it was rather the low activity of newsrooms and their passivity in acquiring information from sources that manifests itself in dependency on press agencies, which led to the situation in which politicians were enabled to easily set the agenda for news coverage. Instead of interpreting the low activity of newsrooms as ‘laziness’, we would claim that it is rather a consequence of the pressure to use the cheapest raw material because, as Iggers puts it, “the relative balance of locally produced material versus syndicated material is partly a function of cost, as is the quantity of material included in the product”.¹⁰¹ The research results show that even public broadcasters are not immune to these pressures. Such a situation could have significant political consequences – as Boumans et al. notice, “the central role of news agencies in

94 McNAIR, B.: *Sociologie žurnalistiky*. Praha: Portál, 2004, p. 56-60.

95 For more information, see: YILMAZ, F.: *Ethnicized Ontologies: From Foreign Worker to Muslim Immigrant*. [Dissertation Thesis]. San Diego: University of California, 2006; YILMAZ, F.: Right-Wing Hegemony and Immigration: How the Populist Far-Right Achieved Hegemony Through the Immigration Debate in Europe. In *Current Sociology*, 2012, Vol. 60, No. 3, p. 368-381; HALLIN, D. C.: The Dynamics of Immigration Coverage in Comparative Perspective. In *American Behavioral Scientist*, 2015, Vol. 59, No. 7, p. 876-885.

96 Cited in: IGGERS, J.: *Good News, Bad News: Journalism Ethics and the Public Interest*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1999, p. 95.

97 MORAVEC, V., URBÁNIKOVÁ, M., VOLEK, J.: Homogenous, or Heterogeneous? A Comparative Analysis of Three Czech Journalists Generations. In *Communication Today*, 2015, Vol. 6, No. 2, p. 47.

98 BALZACQ, T.: A Theory of Securitization: Origins, Core Assumptions, and Variants. In BALZACQ, T. (ed.): *Securitization Theory How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve*. New York: Routledge, 2011, p. 15-18.

99 See also: FOWLER, R.: *Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press*. London: Routledge, 1991, p. 222; HARTLEY, J.: *Understanding News*. London: Routledge, 2001, p. 55-58; McNAIR, B.: *Sociologie žurnalistiky*. Praha: Portál, 2004, p. 64-83, 103-126.

100 O'REILLY, C.: Primetime Patriotism: News Media and the Securitization of Iraq. In *Journal of Politics and Law*, 2008, Vol. 1, No. 3, p. 66, 71.

101 IGGERS, J.: *Good News, Bad News: Journalism Ethics and the Public Interest*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1999, p. 101.

the world of the news” could lead to “a homogeneous and uncritical news landscape”.¹⁰² Although we cannot formulate it in terms of a causal relation, this observation partly explains both the observed distribution of attributes in the news media agenda of the European migration crisis and the subtle differences between all three portals.

Conclusions

The findings of this study show that, when reporting on the European migration crisis, all three online news portals gave prominence to qualities like urgency, extraordinariness, overload and insecurity, and attributed these qualities to the figure of an indefinite wave of migrants heading to Europe. If it is true that “the news gives preferential treatment to some ways of seeing in the world”,¹⁰³ then the analysed news media saw the events as politicization and securitization. In the analysed news media coverage, migrants occurred mainly as general objects of reference in political speeches and policies rather than fully-fledged actors in news stories. The notions of multitude and unclear identity, when understood as heuristic devices, strengthened threat construction; especially when threats of so-called ‘islamisation’ and terrorism were referred to.

If we consider the editorial practices that contribute to the building of the analysed agenda, we observe a striking dependence on institutional sources, mainly on government officials, and an even more striking dependence on content from news agencies. As far as the limitations of this study are concerned, the method of content analysis comes with substantial limitations regarding its utility in measuring securitization and its effect on media content. While content analysis enables us to track the securitization effect in a large volume of media content, i.e. track the occurrences of relevant content categories, it is not sensitive enough to assess the speech acts of securitization in their full context of occurrence and it does not provide findings in terms of causality.

Nevertheless, we believe that the contribution of this study lies in the fact that it identifies the specific editorial practices and heuristic devices that constitute the securitization effect in media content. It seems that comparison with other countries that were affected by the crisis could provide meaningful context for interpretation.

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102 BOUMANS, J. W., Vliegenthart, R., Boomgaard, H. G.: Nuclear Voices in the News: A Comparison of Source, News Agency and Newspaper Content about Nuclear Energy Over Time. In *European Journal of Communication*, 2016, Vol. 31, No. 3, p. 274.

103 PHILLO, G. et al.: Really Bad News. In BERTRAND, I., HUGHES, P.: *Media Research Methods: Audiences, Institutions, Texts*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, p. 181.

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