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### Essay:

## Muslims and Refugees in the Media in Poland

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**Abstract:** The aim of this essay is to review the status quo of multiculturalism with regard to Muslims and new refugees in Poland. We will point to the critical stance of Poles toward refugees in a situation where there is little experience with them. We will focus on the significant role played by the media and public discussion in shaping an attitude that can be described as outright hostility towards refugees. The perception of immigrants, refugees and ethnic minorities largely depends on the image of them in the media because media has become the main source of information about the 'others'. The essay draws from first results of research conducted in 2015. It contains an exploratory content analysis of Polish media on immigrants and refugees.

**Keywords:** migration, refugees, multiculturalism, Muslims, Poland

### Preface

One of the characteristics of contemporary societies is their heterogeneous, multi-ethnic and multicultural nature. This is particularly noticeable in the countries that are the destination of large numbers of immigrants. One of the features of European culture is the maximization of diversity in a relatively small space, arising from mass migrations to and from Europe over the last few centuries. These processes have been intensified by a number of low-intensity conflicts, sometimes described as the forgotten conflicts, and the existence of the so-called failed states (Kłosowicz 2013: 113; Messner, Haken, Taft, Blyth, Lawrence, Graham, Umaña 2015). Moreover, demographic pressure and disproportionately lower levels of development and higher levels of poverty in the Southern hemisphere have also contributed to the processes of transnational movement.

Recently multiculturalism became a contested idea due to an increase in terrorism fears, immigration problems and an increasing number of people recognizing that many contemporary countries have failed in their projects of creating multicultural communities. Therefore, the label of multiculturalism gained negative connotations.

Multiculturalism is usually applied to descriptions of communities that group

people based on various national or ethnic backgrounds (mainly immigrants; Kymlicka 1995, 1998, 2002; Smolicz 1998; Siapera 2010).

The way we perceive this reality is, to a large extent, shaped by how the media portray it. The perception of immigrants, refugees and a particular ethnic group largely depends on the image of it in the media. The media become the main source of information about the 'others'.

The perception of multiculturalism and the role of the current influx of migrants differ between the EU states. The aim of this essay is to shed light on the status quo of multiculturalism and its portrayal in the media with regard to Muslims and new refugees in Poland.

Poland is one of the largest EU states. It is in the course of democratic change and is seen as an informal leader of the newest EU member states. In this article we would like to point to the critical stance of Poles towards refugees in a situation in which there is little experience with them. We would also like to point to the significant role played by the media and public discussion in shaping an attitude that is reluctant or even outright hostile to refugees.

The authors have decided to point to wider aspects of Poles attitudes to 'others' and 'outsiders'. Poland belongs to one of the most homogeneous societies in Europe. Nevertheless, at the same time the tradition of a centuries-old pluralistic society that is open to otherness and foreignness is strongly emphasized in public discourse, especially during official events, such as national holidays, for example when the President of the Republic of Poland publicly emphasized the merits of national and ethnic minorities in creating contemporary Poland (PAP 2016). Such an attitude should be defined as imagined heterogeneity because due to media transmission which creates the appearance of multiculturalism, Poles believe that they live in a society of great tolerance with multicultural and multiethnic heritage.

Polish perception of multiculturalism relies on historical memory, and it is significantly different from that in other European countries. The emphasis of cultural diversity in contemporary Polish society is based mainly on folkloric events, such as festivals of ethnic music, culinary degustation and other cultural attractions. Such an attitude confines the discussion to 'folk' perception, which is not conducive to serious debates, on the real participation of ethnic and religious minorities in the public space (Buchowski, Chlewińska 2010: 14). The view of minorities could be changed in the face of the situation called the "immigration crisis," when the wave of unknown strangers from non-European countries would decide to stay in Poland.

### **Europe, Poland and the "immigration crisis"**

The catalyst for the events currently described as the "immigration crisis" was the so-called Arab Spring which started in 2011. It led to the breakdown of the political

and social order that had hitherto prevailed in the Near East region. A common denominator in the opposition movement to the authorities in the MENA countries (Middle East and North Africa) was a mix arising from demographic factors (about 70% of the population are people below the age of 35), social change (growing literacy and access to education), economic factors (difficulties faced by young men and women in finding work), political factors (an awareness of violations of human rights by authoritarian regimes, absence of free speech and lack of political pluralism) and structural factors (the collapse of clientelistic systems) (Górak-Sosnowska, Pachniak 2012: 7). A wave of protests rolled across the region, taking a violent form in Libya and Syria.

These rapid changes have caused waves of migration compared by the UN to those at the time of the Second World War. According to the UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees) in 2015 around 46.3 million people left their homes, thus becoming refugees. The bulk of those people who have reached Europe are from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Nigeria (UNHCR 2015). The main routes lead across the Mediterranean Sea to Italy and Greece, and on land via Turkey and the Balkan Trail. The destinations are often Germany, Sweden and Norway, perceived as being wealthy countries that offer a generous package of welfare help for the new arrivals.

That is where the largest groups of refugees have concentrated, causing political tensions not just between parties but also across political and social groups. What has become significant are questions of tolerance towards the newly arrived refugees, models of coexistence and attitudes towards Islam since this is supposedly the religion of the largest group of people at Europe's doorstep. Media reports from Greece, France and Germany but also Poland point to the growth of anti-immigrant movements such as PEGIDA, increasing incidents of acts of violence against people with different-colored skin or seemingly non-European origins (Kern 2014). Discrimination of Muslims has also started to affect not only the newly arrived immigrants but also indigenous Europeans who happen to be Muslims. A negative stereotype of a Muslim as being a backward, primitive person and a terrorist has been in large part disseminated by the media.

### **Poland between the Myth of Multiculturalism and Othering**

In September 2015 covers of right-wing weekly magazines *W Sieci* and *Do Rzeczy*, along with the daily tabloid *Super Express* describe the “immigration crisis.” The cover of the issue nr. 35/2015 *W Sieci* presents three Muslims standing at the border crossing with one of them holding the Polish emblem. The first page carries the slogan “September 2015 they are coming!” The photo reminds the reader of 1939, when Nazi soldiers started the Second World War and invaded Poland while destroying checkpoints. On the front cover of *Do Rzeczy* (nr. 38/2015), one can find the subtitle: “They are not refugees, they are invaders. Let’s shut Polish borders before them.” *Super Express* (nr. 211/2015) alarms the readers that

90,000 Arabs will overwhelm Poland. Another cover from *W Sieci* (nr. 7/2016) shows a blonde woman draped in the flag of the European Union being assaulted by a group of dark-skinned men, and the headline reads 'Islamic Rape of Europe'.



Source: Wirtualne media: <http://www.wirtualnemedi.pl/arttykul/okladki-w-sieci-do-rzeczy-i-super-expressu-przeciw-uchodzcom-karnowski-po-prostu-nazywamy-problem#>



Source: <http://wiadomosci.radiozet.pl/Wiadomosci/Swiat/Okladka-W-Sieci.-Swiatowe-media-o-okladce-polskiego-tygodnika-00018855> (18.02.2016).



There is a process of societies becoming polarized. Voices have been raised suggesting that immigration should be curtailed. In particular, the late 1980s – characterized by high rates of unemployment and growing numbers of immigrants with a 'non-Western' appearance – saw a shift towards more anti-immigrant attitudes (Kulińska 2001: 27). Moreover, Europeans' self-doubts about their own identity, social identity and tradition have given rise to fears about 'outsiders' and 'outside' influences resulting from a dislike of everything that appears strange and foreign (EUMC 2002). The effect is that a number of Europeans fear the mass invasion of 'outsiders' who speak different languages, worship differently and have different traditions, more than they fear a military invasion (Zick, Küpper, Hövermann 2011).

However, apart from immigrants from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Syria, Iraq or Tunisia who have to grapple with these European self-doubts, there are large groups of indigenous Muslims that have lived in Europe for hundreds of years. New fears also have repercussions on them. Excellent examples of these are the Muslim communities in the Balkans or Tatars who had lived on the Eastern territories of Pre-World-War II-Poland since the 13<sup>th</sup> century. These former Polish territories were a cultural mosaic. They were inhabited by Poles, Lithuanians, Belarusians, Ukrainians, Jews, Greeks, Armenians, Germans and Karaims as well as Tatars (Borkowski, Dubiński 1986: 5-23). Through reference to Poland as a refuge for people facing religious persecution during the upheavals of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, the myth of fascination with cultural pluralism and openness to people of different faiths was created in Poland. Poles were generally proud of this tradition although there had been incidents of persecution of the Jewish, German and Romany populations in the past (Tazbir 2009).

In the domain of symbolic culture the times of the First and Second Republic of Poland are seen as a golden era and element of the power of Poland at that time. The contemporary ethnic make-up of the country is radically different from that in the inter-war period, when almost one third of the population were members of ethnic and national minorities. As a result of expulsions and a territorial shift with the borders shifting to the West, the number of people belonging to minority groups fell sharply. Also life in the Communist Bloc was not conducive to maintaining multicultural traditions from before the war. A change took place in 1989 when attention was newly focused on the historical ethnic groups as well as refugees, immigrants and Poles returning from exile. Nowadays, partly as a result of its geopolitical position as well as its membership in the Schengen agreement, Poland is at the crossroads of migrants travelling in many directions. It is also increasingly becoming a destination and not only a transit point.

This does not alter the fact that Poland is religiously and ethnically homogeneous when compared to other European countries. The law on national and ethnic minorities and regional languages recognizes nine national minorities – German, Russian, Belarusian, Lithuanian, Czech, Slovak, Ukrainian, Jewish, Armenian – and four ethnic minorities, Roma, Karaims, Lemko and Tatars, as well as one

language minority, Kashubian. Many other ethnic communities do not have the status of an official minority. Examples of such groups are the Asian communities or the Greek minority in Poland.

## **Muslims in Poland**

The 2011 census in Poland showed that there are 1828 people who define themselves as Tatars. It is a much higher number than in the 2002 census. In 2002, only 447 people declared themselves as Tatars. Islam is an officially recognized religion in Poland. The document which forms the legal basis for this is the Act of 21 April 1936 that outlines the basis of the relationship between the state and the Muslim Religious Union in Poland. Article 1 of this Act states that “Muslims on the territory of Poland, who are in contact with other such organizations abroad, are establishing the Muslim Religious Union in Poland that is autonomous of any foreign authorities, be it religious or non-religious.” (MZR 2016, own translation)

In fact, Poland stands out in Europe in the context of many centuries of peaceful coexistence between Muslim Tatars and the Catholic majority. These are Polish Muslims with a long tradition in Polish history. The Tatar phenomenon results from an awareness of their own origins and a knowledge of their own identity. The identity of Polish Tatars rests on three intertwining elements. These are, according to Katarzyna Warmińska, their religion (the religious aspect of identity), their Tatar ethnicity, and Polishness (the national aspect). Of the three components of identity, religion appears to be the strongest building block that allows Tatars to maintain their identity and not completely assimilate (Warmińska 1999). Most see themselves as Poles but define themselves as Polish Tatar Muslims (Warmińska 2006: 210-215).

Polish Tatars are followers of Sunni Islam, the largest denomination of Islam, but their religion is an individualized and often distinct from Muslim orthodoxy. For over six hundred years they have spent on the Polish and Lithuanian lands, the Tatars have shaped and developed an image of Islam that is non-doctrinaire and is shaped by European influences. In the 1970s and 1980s the Tatar community in Poland that had lived there for centuries began to be joined by people arriving from Muslim countries, thereby increasing the Muslim population in Poland. These were mostly Arab students taking up studies in Poland. Most of them returned to their homes after graduation but some stayed in Poland for good. The next wave was comprised of businessmen and experts who came in the 1990s and also Muslims from former Soviet Republics. Citizens of the Russian Federation who are of Chechen nationality constitute the biggest national group claiming refugee status in Poland. By the end of August 2015 their number had reached 80,000. After the annexation of Crimea, Crimean Tatars also made an appeal for solidarity with Polish Tatars; however, the complex geopolitical situation means

that they do not meet the formal criteria to be classified as refugees. The influx of Arabs, Turks and Muslims from other countries has significantly reduced the uniqueness of Tatars.

### **Polish attitudes towards Muslims**

Poles falsely believe that many more Muslims and representatives of other cultures live here than is actually the case. According to research carried out by the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation, whereas the French believed that there were four times more Muslims in their country, Poles exaggerated this fifty-fold (Zick, Küpper, Hövermann 2011). Muslims in Poland actually account for only 0.1 percent of the population, while Poles put the figure at 5 percent. Moreover, Muslims are seen as predominantly Arab. In fact, Arabs account for only around a quarter of all the world's Muslims. This perceived Arabization of Islam translates to a negative attitude towards a religion as being identified with a particular national/ethnic group (Górak-Sosnowska 2006: 239).

Poles are afraid of Muslims as they connect them with terrorism, the Middle East conflict, bloodshed and violence (Stefaniak 2015). The most common stereotypes that influence Polish attitudes towards Muslims are listed in Table 1. Moreover, in common perception there is equivalence between being a Muslim and an Arab (Table 2.). The crimes committed by the so-called Islamic State confirm the popular belief that moderate Islam does not exist and that the religion itself propagates violence and discrimination. Few Poles know a Muslim personally and their contacts are of an incidental nature, most frequently from a holiday abroad. The danger stemming from Muslims in Poland potentially committing a terrorist act is indeed relatively low, which, when juxtaposed with the dislike of them, can lead to the thesis of so-called "Platonic Islamophobia" (Stefaniak 2015). This term is used to describe a feeling of anxiety toward an only imagined mass of Muslims (Górak-Sosnowska 2014: 13; Pędziwiatr 2015).

According to a CBOS study of 2015 Poles have mostly negative views of Muslims; seldom accepting Muslims in their closest circle as neighbors, colleagues or family members. The respondents declared a sense of feeling threatened by Muslims. Two thirds said they would feel strong discomfort in the company of Muslims. Over half claimed that Muslims posed a threat to the material well-being of Poland and Poles and to traditional Polish values embodied in Catholicism, and respondents also feared terrorist attacks (Stefaniak 2015). Research on the views of members of other religions and non-believers among Poles confirmed that Muslims are the most disliked among the eight groups that were researched. A negative attitude to Muslims was indicated by 44% of Poles with only 25% indicating positive feelings towards them (CBOS, Public Opinion Research Center 2015).

**Table 1: The most common associations with the word Islam**

Associations	Number of responses	Percent of all indications
Religion (faith)	498	22,8 %
Terrorism (terrorist)	230	10,5%
Arab	100	4,6%
Quran	72	3,3%
Muslims (Muslim)	68	3,1%
Fanaticism (fanatic)	68	3,1%
Allah	60	2,7%
War	60	2,7%
Muhammad	54	2,5%
Mosque	41	1,9%
Hooded cloak (hijab)	40	1,8%
Jihad	38	1,7%
Attack	37	1,7%
Violence	23	1,1%

Source: Stefaniak 2015.

In this context, Ziad Abou Saleh, an SWPS University Social Sciences and Humanities lecturer who is Syrian by descent, carried out research on students in Wroclaw, Poland. He interviewed over two thousand students. Only four said that they knew an Arab living in Poland whereas eleven claimed they had a deeper knowledge of the Arab world. According to Ziad Abu Saleh,

“The lack of knowledge results in a negative attitude of the students to Arabs and Islam. The cause lies in poor education but also extremely one-sided media messages and statements by politicians which exacerbate the stereotypes and prejudices” (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, 02.02.2016, own translation).

The research illustrates how strongly young people are influenced by media messages rather than by direct personal contact when it comes to Islam. This influence was accelerated to a significant extent by new media. The web shapes negative attitudes to 'strangers' and 'others'; this is exactly how Arabs come to be perceived negatively. Below are responses that the students gave Abou Saleh in interviews made face-to-face in contrast to those being done anonymously. The degree of positive connotations of Arabs is much higher among face-to-face respondents.

There is a certain paradox in the views held by Poles. On the one hand, the tradition of multiculturalism is glorified with references to a common history and traditions, and on the other hand, there is evidence of a transplanted discourse, which is built on the image of Islam in its global context without reaching for knowledge about Polish Muslims.



**Table 2: With what do you associate Arabs?**

Face-to-face response	Anonymous response
Garrulousness 11,5%	Lack of respect for women 19,7 %
Natural merchant 11,3%	Terrorism 16,1%
Wealth 10,4%	Jihad 13,4%
Sexually temperamental 9,7%	Aggression 11,4%
Dark complexion 9,3%	Blood 11%
Beard 8,8%	War 7,3%
Lack of respect for women 8,5%	Beard 6,17%
Horse 7,1%	Kebab 5,6%
Kebab 5,7%	Hijab 5,2%
Different style of dress 5,1%	Camel 2,5%
Desert, camel 4,7%	
Religious fanaticism 4,5%	

Source: *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 02.02.2016.

## Migrants and Refugees in the Polish Media

We will now turn to an exploratory analysis of Polish media discourse in order to see how the attitudes talked about above might have been influenced by the media. In the second part of August and in September 2015 the question of refugees became the subject of public discussion. The strong interest was the result of a long-awaited declaration by the Polish government. Poland supported the European Commission's decision on the relocation of refugees in the countries of the European Union. It worth noting that the declaration came at a time of a very intensive election campaign coming to a close (the parliamentary election took place on October 10) and at a time when the newly elected President of Poland Andrzej Duda had just begun his term of office with his inauguration (on August 6). The subject of the refugees became part of the political discussion. Then prime minister Ewa Kopacz from the liberal-conservative party Civic Platform (Polish: Platforma Obywatelska, PO) declared that Poland would accept 7,000 refugees at a time when her party or coalition was facing an electoral defeat according to all the election polls. At the same time, the conservative-populist Law and Justice Party (Polish: Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS) appeared to be heading for an election victory (which did happen as the party won with an overall majority). PiS made strong references in their campaign to patriotism, national security, national identity and thus opposed the acceptance of refugees.

In the following section we will analyze articles of that period from three weekly publications: *Newsweek Polska* (owned by Ringier Axel Springer – published since 2001), *Wprost* (published since 1982), and *Polityka* (published since 1957). They represent different political orientations, from left-wing *Polityka*, to center *Newsweek Polska*, to center-right *Wprost*. In a ranking of the influential publications (weekly papers) *Newsweek* takes the first, *Wprost* the second, and

*Polityka* the fourth place. The material selected comprised articles in which the following words were used: refugee, migration, migrants, ethnic groups, Islam, Muslims.

Among the three issues of *Polityka* (nr. 36 from 02.09.2015, nr. 37 from 09.09.2015 and nr. 38 from 16.09.2015), we selected six articles for analysis. In one issue (nr. 38) the subject of refugees appeared on the front cover. In the first of the issues in question there was only a short note about problems at the borders in the Balkans with no reference to the situation in Poland. In the next issue the subject of refugees was taken up twice.

The first of the texts titled “These outsiders” puts forward the idea that immigrants are, in reality, necessary because Europeans are ageing. The author stresses that as a result of the ongoing election campaign the stance of the politicians is the result of opinion polls. His research indicates that Poles have a negative attitude towards immigrants. The author analyzes the discourse in the media on the subject and relates it to the two political parties PO and PiS. In the second text “Difficult hospitality” the author focuses on the refugee problem in Germany and the attitudes of Germans towards these groups. He suggests that it is the most difficult problem German Chancellor Angela Merkel has faced in a decade. The last of the texts under investigation from *Polityka* is entitled “New Poles” and includes a photograph of a smiling refugee family with a child. *Polityka*, similarly to other publications, introduced a special report on refugees. One of the best-known Polish journalists, Marek Ostrowski, wrote a commentary using a pun “There is no refuge from helping them,” in which he referred to the passive attitude of the Polish elites or even declarations of refusal to accept refugees in their country. In the article entitled “Ticket without a reservation”, its author deals with the situation of immigrants in Poland and the law on (political) asylum. He writes,

“We are bargaining but we could take even 100,000 immigrants. We know that they would escape to Germany or Scandinavia at the first opportunity. If they were to stay and we really wanted them, we would still have to make a lot of changes here.” (*Polityka*, nr 38, 2015: 16, own translation).

The edition ended with a report entitled “I saw it with my own eyes – people are knocking at the gates”. It is a story written by a journalist on the island of Kos. Accompanying the articles there were photos and stories related by people who escaped from their own countries. He also wrote about the atmosphere on the island and the refugees’ relations with the islanders.

From the two issues of *Newsweek Polska* (nr. 36 from 31.08.2015 and nr. 38 from 14.09.2015) we selected five articles for analysis. In the first issue there is an article entitled “Human Tsunami” in which the author treats the unsolved refugee problem as the biggest threat to Europe and the cohesion of the EU. The author suggests that the absence of a cohesive European policy led to a crisis on such a scale. He reminds the readers that experts had for some time warned of the impending crisis but that politicians failed to react. He also quotes a Polish

politician, then Deputy Foreign Minister Rafal Trzaskowski (PO party), who speaks of the imperative of separating the questions of refugees and economic migrants. At the same time actions should be taken to support democratic change in the countries the refugees originated from. The politician is also quoted saying that,

“We should send a clear signal that you cannot expect that if you make it to Europe then in every case the EU will look after you. We simply cannot afford that” (*Newsweek Polska*, nr. 36/2015: 57, own translation).

The next edition of *Newsweek Polska* devoted much more column space to the question of refugees. An 18-page “Report on refugees” was published, with photographs of children in several articles. The report starts with a text “In our home” in which three Syrian families tell their stories. They had been brought to Poland by the Estera Foundation. In 2015 fifty such families were brought by the Foundation but not all of them stayed in the country. The author paints a picture of a quite difficult process of integration. However, the families’ opinions about the Poles were portrayed as positive with comments on the Poles’ openness and warmth. The author of the article stressed that they,

“Can't understand why Poles ask them which church they go to. To Protestant, Catholic or some other? It is important to believe in God. And in Syria they also had Muslims as the neighbors, their children went to the same school and played together” (*Newsweek Polska*, nr. 38/2015: 33, own translation).

Another article “Escaping elite” is an interview by Jacek Pawlicki with Francesca Borri, an Italian war correspondent, author of books about Kosovo, Israel, Palestine and Syria. She argues that Syrians and Iraqis would like to stay in their homes but are forced to flee by the war. She adds that often people from the local elites are forced to escape and are well educated. She adds further,

“There has never been such a wave of migration. Doctors and engineers from Syria won't want to work in tomato fields like slaves” (*Newsweek Polska*, nr. 38/2015: 36).

Borri thus points to the challenges facing Europe: On the one hand, they are desperate people displaced by war. On the other hand, these people are expecting support in Europe and are

“Coming to Europe convinced they are entitled to Europe” (*Newsweek Polska*, nr. 38/2015: 36, own translation ).

The third text deals directly with the attitude of Poles towards the refugees. In the article entitled “Anti-Muslim is becoming trendy” the author stresses that,

“Poles from right and left are united in their opposition to Muslims who still haven't arrived falling into one another's virtual arms. A lot of platonic Islamophobes have appeared” (*Newsweek Polska*, nr. 38/2015: 41, own translation).

The author meets Poles who are convinced that the refugees will take their jobs,

medical care – in short, everything. They are convinced that refugees will be treated differently. They fear that Poland, France and Germany will become part of the Islamic State. Many say that Poland can only take in as refugees mothers with children who will agree to convert to Christianity. The author refers to the discussion on social networks where the refugees are called invaders, terrorists, a wild mob, lazy, dirty etc. According to him a large proportion of the posts is vulgar, racist and can be regarded as an incitement to racial hatred. Many papers and websites have therefore removed or curtailed the possibility of commenting texts on refugees. The author also points to the stance of those who oppose such public discussion. She also relies on research carried out by a Polish Islam researcher and economist, K. Górak-Sosnowska, who says that in the absence of contacts with Muslims the Poles created a false image of them, practically fantasies. Polish sociologist J. Czapinski is quoted that even if

“The Prime Minister accepted 20,000 refugees, on the scale of the whole country of 37 million they would be invisible. Poles will not prepare for a religious war but will see it as a criterion to assess politicians” (*Newsweek Polska*, nr. 38/2015: 43, own translation).

The report ends with a conversation called “A question of conscience” with Szymon Holownia, journalist, writer and founder of the Good Factory Foundation. Holownia argues that, as Catholics, Poles have a duty to help refugees. He also points to the wave of negative messages on the internet, such as racist comments. He says,

“The pinnacle of multi-racialism in many towns is still the kebab stand. Information about other races, religions and cultures is taken from the Internet and television. And the media, including the Internet, select what is shocking” (*Newsweek Polska*, nr. 38/2015: 45, own translation).

Holownia also paints a certain psychological portrait of Poles pointing to the causes of negative opinions about the refugees.

**Wprost**, the last of the periodicals being analyzed, published three issues in our study period (nr. 36 from 31.08.2015, nr. 37 from 07.09.2015 and nr. 38 from 14.09.2015), from which we have selected ten articles. In two of them the cover was directly linked with the subject of refugees. In the first of them, the cover consists of a picture of a woman with a child, surrounded by the stars of the EU flag, and a telling title, “Immigrants or invaders”. In this issue there are a number of texts on the subject. In the first one, “Siege of Europe”, the author says that Europe cannot absorb such a wave of refugees. He points at matters neglected over many years by European politicians and at a lack of a cohesive EU policy in this respect. The author also says that Poles’ reluctance toward the refugees is justified. The Poles’ have been observing misdemeanors by refugees in countries much more culturally varied than Poland. At the same time, a signal for Poland is the rise of anti-immigrant sentiment and xenophobic parties in other European countries. The article includes a map with data about asylum applications processed in Europe. In the second article “Poland's leap forward” the author argues that,

“Poland's answer to the immigration problems in Europe should be to articulate its own, realistic policy on immigration” (*Wprost*, nr. 36/2015: 67, own translation).

He quotes data which points to the fact that Poland is one of the most immigrant-unfriendly countries in the EU. He also says that immigrants from Ukraine could be opportune for Poland as they could improve the poor demographic situation.

“We should therefore be taking those who are most talented and people from a world with values close to ours” (*Wprost*, nr. 36/2015: 68, own translation).

This is an idea that has often floated in the Polish media, i.e. that of segregating incomers on the basis of religion and country of origin. The last of the texts is connected to migration but touches primarily on international terrorism and the safety of tourists during holidays abroad. Its title reads “Tourist hunting”.

In the second issue on the cover was the picture of a 3-year old boy who died on his way to Europe. There was a large heading on the cover reading “The high price of hypocrisy.”

That issue also contained a text entitled “Immigration Drama Report” concerning the refugees. A cycle of articles was started with an article entitled “The Visegrad Wall.” which showed that the crisis proved the weakness of the EU and its borders. The author strongly emphasizes that the countries of the Visegrad Group<sup>1</sup> were being pressurized by Western politicians demanding greater concessions to the refugees. One more subject raised was that not all immigrants were refugees entitled to help. From the text the anti-quota attitude is very clear, an attitude against a system designed to force countries to take a particular number of refugees.

In the issue there was also an interview with Krystyna Iglicka, rector of Łazarski University. She argues that the public opinion on migrants changes and it is getting a more negative attitude. She found three main reasons: the negative influence of mass migration, the defeat of integration policy and the defeat of the welfare state. Iglicka argued that accepting immigrants is a wasted effort because the policy of multiculturalism has failed.

The next article is a feuilleton entitled “Illusory Assimilation” that is very critical of migration and refugee reception. The author criticizes the policy of assimilation pursued by Paris, London and Brussels. He also suggests that the political correctness has contributed to the creation of ethnic enclaves and attacks by immigrants. “Who helps refugees” – the fourth article of the issue – presents pictures of the 3-year old boy who died on his way to Europe. The text presents several responses from Polish politicians. They were asked if they would accept refugees in their homes. Most of them responded in the negative. The last of the texts entitled “Lebanese late spring” is connected with migration but touches more on the problem of political crisis in Lebanon. However, the author also describes

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<sup>1</sup> Visegrad Group, also known as the Visegrad Four or V4, was founded as a non-institutional organization of four (originally three before the dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1993) East European countries, The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia in 1991, for the purposes of furthering their NATO membership and European integration.



the situation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

In the third issue there was a huge picture with the caption “Instead of thousand words”, showing refugees asking a policeman to cross the border. In this issue we selected two more articles. The first one – “Global migration of people” – presents the flow of migration on a global scale. The author recalls different ethnic conflicts and describes their economic and political causes. He suggests that Europe is “an oasis of calm” in comparison to other continents.

The last article “Homeless Europe” is an interview by Jarosław Giziński with Gyorgy Nogradi, a Hungarian political scientist and security expert. He points out the greatest risks associated with migration by analyzing the refugee crisis from the Hungarian perspective.

### Closing Remarks

We have selected only three weekly papers to analyze articles published in September 2015. We know that, as in many other European countries including Poland, the right-wing papers use very radical rhetoric regarding the topic of refugees. That is why we have chosen to analyze articles from three of the most influential weekly papers. We could not observe huge differences between these three papers in presenting the problem of refugees and migration. Yet, the line of presenting the problem of refugees was different. *Wprost* was the most critical of refugees and migration. Some journalists tried to provide quality information about Muslims. Some of them, mostly in *Polityka* and *Newsweek* tried to constitute a counterbalance to the anti-Muslim discourse of extreme right papers and portals. We observed in all these papers that the mass migration in Europe in 2015 undoubtedly became a media event with the ‘us v them’ division becoming clearly visible. We can observe a phenomenon termed by T. Van Dijk (2000) as new(s) racism. The recipients cannot distinguish between immigrant, refugee or foreigner. The media discourse in Poland seems to convince the Polish public that there are only Muslim refugees. Thus, both the Polish Muslim minority as well as refugees appear in these papers as a social problem.

We have to remember that Poland as a state is quite homogenous in terms of ethnicity. National and ethnic minorities constitute about 3.5% of the population and that percentage is one of the lowest in Europe (National Census of Population and Housing 2011). Although Poland is Europe’s least multicultural society, this situation is only temporary because of the changing demographic situation and the new wave of immigrants. While Poland is at the same time very proud of its multicultural history, it is one of the less open countries to immigrants, especially Muslims.

The most pessimistic prediction about changing attitudes toward immigrants is connected with the statement that a new wave of immigration will lead to an increase in intolerance, racism and fear of ‘the others’. The symptoms of such a bad scenario could be seen in some statements of conservative politicians, such as

the leader of the ruling party Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PIS), Jarosław Kaczyński. On the subject of taking in refugees, he stated that refugees might bring to Poland “cholera in the Greek islands,” and that they are an epidemiological threat for Polish citizens (tvn.24.pl, 13.10.2015). The “migration crisis” had been a hot issue in the public sphere in 2015 due to both parliamentary and presidential elections. The fear-mongering rhetoric was an effective weapon used mainly by right-wing media. As a result, Polish society is divided into those who support resettling refugees and those who are against. The debate on this problem has already started in the media but it remains weak and does not take to the streets. At this moment some far right-wing quasi political groups, such as National Radical Camp, are being more vocal with their slogans such as “Poland for Poles”.

It can be said that ethnic communities have become more visible due to media exposure. Ethnicity and cultural differences arouse interest and are seen as a challenge and a litmus test of the values of modern society on the one hand, but are treated as a threat on the other. Today, however, partly due to events on the international stage, debate is largely limited to a discussion concerning the Muslim community. We are not questioning the importance of this problem, but such a limited choice destroys the notion of a discussion on cultural variety. At the same time the Poles are creating a strong polar opposition of ‘us’ vs. ‘the Islamic world’. There is not enough discussion on social minorities, indigenous populations, language communities. The media, by concentrating largely on the subject of Islamization of Europe, have decided on the prioritization of news according to this criterion.

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