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Two Mobilization Waves of the Czech Anti-Islam Movement. Collective Actors and the Identity Change of the Movement 2015-2016

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Abstract[1]

In 2015 and 2016, the Czech Republic experienced a massive mobilization of a new anti-Islam and anti-immigration movement. Drawing on the concepts of the post-foundational discourse theory of the Essex School, the theory of populism of Ernesto Laclau and the model analysis of the EuroMayDay Movement provided by the German philosopher Oliver Marchart, this paper engages with the question of how the identity of this movement changed during the initial and later phases of the mobilization. The author distinguishes between two waves of mobilization, which differ regarding the construction of the identity of the movement as well as the number and variety of the collective actors, who succeeded in mobilizing. Whereas at the beginning of the year 2015 the identity of the movement was constructed against Islam as an antagonistic Other, in the middle of the same year a deep chasm between the movement (representing the 'people') and the 'powerful' emerged. At this point, following Ernesto Laclau's definition of populism, the movement transformed into a populist movement. Moreover, this transformation was accompanied by the mobilization success of new organizations participating in the movement, including the exponents of the extreme right.

Keywords: *Islamophobia, Czech Republic, Discourse theory, Right-wing extremism, Populism.*

1. Introduction

At the turn of 2014/2015, Europe faced the rise in a new anti-Islam movement. Ensuing the success of the German Pegida, many European cities witnessed massive mobilizations against so-called Islamization and immigration. In this respect, the Czech Republic formed no exception. Anti-Islam organizations already existed in the Czech Republic before 2014/2015, but their activities were mostly restricted to the virtual domain, and their impact and their numbers of supporters were of even less importance. This changed with the turn of the year 2014/2015 when the anti-Islam movement in the Czech Republic grew at an unprecedented rate. One of the flagships of this success was the anti-Islam organization *Islám v České republice nechceme* (IvČRN, 'We Don't Want Islam in the Czech Republic'), which originally emerged as a relatively unknown Facebook group in 2009. In January 2015, though, IvČRN reported 100,000 supporters on its Facebook profile and managed to mobilize thousands of people in the streets. During the following months, a growing number of new anti-Islam virtual platforms appeared on the social network Facebook, and the issue was also adopted by several political parties, including the traditional exponents of the extreme right. The entry of new actors into the movement as well as its reflections on the progressing migration crisis brought a significant change of the movement's demands and the construction of the opponents whom the movement was defined against changed. In the early months of 2015 (for the purposes of this text defined as the 'first wave of mobilization'), the central demands of the anti-Islam movement were focused on banning or restricting Islam as a religion; since the middle of the same year (in this text referred to as the beginning of the 'second wave of mobilization'), the anti-Islam agenda was already inseparably mixed with anti-immigrant topics. Besides this, the requests for the resignation of the government and an EU membership referendum started to resonate. The mobilization success of the Czech anti-Islam and anti-immigration movement persisted until winter/spring 2016. From this point onward, it gradually abated.

Despite the number of recent publications concerning the topic of Islamophobia (e.g. Černý, 2015; Mareš et al., 2015; Beránek and Ostřanský, 2016; Dizdarevič, 2016; Topinka, 2016; Dizdarevič, 2017; Rosůlek et al., 2017), only few studies engage with the 2015-2016 mobilization of the Czech anti-Islam and anti-immigration movement in a mere detail. One of the first publications was the collective monograph by Miroslav Mareš et al. (2015), which elaborates the basic political and legal aspects of the existence of the Czech anti-Islam groups and provides a very detailed descriptive account of the history of the Czech anti-Islam movement until 2015. The study by Přemysl Rosůlek (2017; 2018) focuses on the activities of Czech singers critical of Islam and refugees on the Facebook social network in the period 2015-2017 and in her study Vendula Prokůpková (2018) investigates the cooperation between the Czech anti-Islam movement and Pegida of Dresden in the 2015-2016 period.

Although some of these publications (Dizdarevič, 2016; Prokůpková, 2018) mention the movement's shift from the originally anti-Islam agenda toward anti-immigration, anti-EU and anti-Government issues, none of these texts explains this transformation in detail. Drawing on the concepts of the post-foundational discourse

theory of the Essex School (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Torfing, 1999; Howarth, 2000; Laclau, 2005), the theory of populism of Ernesto Laclau (2005; 2015) and the model analysis of the EuroMayDay Movement provided by the German philosopher Oliver Marchart (2017), this paper engages with the question of how the identity of the movement was constructed by activists from the main organizations participating in the movement during the initial and later phases of the mobilization.

The structure of the text proceeds as follows: first, the construction of identities of social movements will be explained on the grounds of the post-foundational theory of discourse of the Essex School. Second, the data on participation and organizers of the rallies collected during participant observations of 19 rallies conducted by the author will be introduced as well as the analyzed corpus and the methods of analysis. Third, the contextual information containing a description of the outset of the Czech anti-Islam movement before the mass mobilization in 2015 will be provided. Following that, the context and actors of the 'first wave of mobilization' of the Czech anti-Islam movement will be introduced, and the discourse of the IvČRN analyzed. Finally, after the introduction of the triggers and actors of the 'second wave of mobilization,' the protest discourse will be analyzed and the major changes in the movement discourse discussed.

2. The construction of the identity of the social movement

Each social movement shares a distinct collective identity (Della Porta and Diani, 2006: 21-22), which is always of a discursive nature (Laclau, 2005: 80). The post-foundational theory of discourse understands social identities as contingent constructs and as products of articulatory practices. Identities are products of identification with the subject's positions, which are constructed within historically produced discourses (Howarth, 2000). The discursive construction of identities is based on a twofold logic complex: the logic of difference and the logic of equivalence. Identities are always doubly differentiated, which means that they are at the same time internally related to a different subject position within a discourse and defined against other identities, against the Others, who are not them (Howarth, 2013: 250). Within a discourse, the identities are constituted through chains of equivalence, where signs are sorted and linked together in opposition to other chains, defining 'how the subject is, and how it is not' (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 43). To put it simply, the collective 'We' of the protesters may comprise a variety of subject positions (the Czechs, the Christians, the Patriots etc.), which are linked together in opposition to the Other (those adhering to the Islam faith).

Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 122-127) came with a radical thesis that social identity can never be fully attained by the subject because the presence of the antagonistic Other constitutes the limits of its full constitution. With reference to the theory of Jacques Lacan, they understand the subject as fundamentally split, as never becoming 'itself' (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 42-43). In other words, the subject (i.e.: the anti-Islam activist) cannot exist without referring to the Other (those adhering to the Islam faith). The subject's experience of absence caused by the presence of the Other forms the very precondition for the emergence of social identity. The construction of identity via the creation of boundaries involves the production of

empty signifiers, which represent this lack of fullness and at the same time express and constitute the totality of the equivalential chain (Laclau, 2005: 129).

As each identity is a product of an articulatory practice, the identity of the social movement is constructed through the discursive articulation of the protest (Marchart, 2017: 60). According to Laclau, at the primary level, the unity of the protest group arises from the articulation of demands, which may acquire two basic forms: (weak) requests and (strong) claims (Laclau, 2005: 73-74; Laclau, 2015: 154). The demand emerges as the result of a three-stage process that begins with the moment of dislocation, the experience of absence or lack, a situation when the harmonious continuity of the social is disrupted. During the second stage, a request to fill this lack is addressed to those in charge. When the demand is not fulfilled, it may, under specific conditions, be articulated into a chain of equivalence with other unfulfilled (and possibly unrelated) demands. At this moment, the original request transforms into a political claim. The equivalential articulation of the demands constitutes a broader social subjectivity, the identity of the protest group. The emerging totality of the chain is represented by a particular demand, which as an empty signifier represents the unity of the protesting group against the antagonistic outside (Laclau, 2005: 73-74; Laclau 2015: 154-155).

Building on Ernesto Laclau's assertions, Oliver Marchart (2017) understands the process of identity building in social movements in a more complex way, where the articulation of demands forms only one part of a greater process. According to Marchart (2017: 70), the subjects position themselves by raising their demands, and simultaneously by their delimitation against other demands and subject positions. The identity of the social movement is then to be understood as the intersection of three structures: 1) a constellation of multiplicity of contesting demands, which stand to each other in a hierarchical relation and which are represented by an empty demand, 2) a constellation of contesting subject positions of the protagonist chain, where imaginary unity is created by various forms of invocation of the 'Us', and by the addressing of 'Them' and, 3) the structure of contrariety, the constellation of signifiers which are antagonistic to the protagonists' demands, subject names, subject positions, etcetera. This constellation of signifiers creates the barrier to the fulfillment of the substantial lack experienced by proponents of the movement (Marchart, 2017: 64-69).

3. Data and methods

The first source of data used is composed of selected records on public protest, including estimated numbers of participants and organizers of rallies, which were collected by the author during participant observations. In 2015 and 2016, the author observed 19 demonstrations (see: Table 1 below), which were invoked under the motto 'against Islam', 'against Islamization' or 'against immigration'. During these demonstrations, the author took on the role of the observer as a participant (Hendl, 2005: 191). The identity of the author was generally hidden from the participants, and only revealed when approached by other participants at the rally.

To provide an account of the movement's mobilization and the main collective actors involved, collected documents (webpages, press releases, news articles, reports) are used. The author has drawn from the database of the Czech Press Agency and websites operated by the respective political parties or social movement organizations.

The corpus for the discursive analysis consists of transcripts of speeches held on the 15 biggest protest events, which took place during the first and second wave of mobilization, between January 2015 and February 2016, when the mobilization success of the movement reached its peak. In 12 cases, audio-recordings were made by the author and complemented with transcripts of speeches from YouTube video reports of three large demonstrations.[2]

Following the above-depicted theoretical framework, the discourse analysis focuses on the interrelated structures of demands, subjectivization, and contrariety within the protest discourse. As many demands placed by the movement were directed toward the protection of fundamental values and ideals articulated by the movement, the structure of 'paramount values' constitutes a further, interrelated dimension of analysis. The corpus was analyzed using the method of theoretical coding, proposed by the German sociologist Thomas Marttila (2015) and interpreted using concepts of the post-foundational discourse theory of the Essex School.

Table 1. List of the demonstrations observed by the author.

Date	Place	Organized by	Estimated number of participants	Transcript of speeches analyzed
16.01.2015	Prague	IvČRN	2000	Yes
31.01.2015	Prague	coorganized by IvČRN	500	Yes
21.02.2015	Prague	DSSS	50	No
26.06.2015	Brno	DSSS	>500	No
18.07.2015	Prague	ND+SPD	>1000	Yes
08.08.2015	Prague	DSSS+ND	200	Yes
15.08.2015	Prague	ND	500	Yes
12.09.2015	Prague	ZNKaBZ+BPI+SPD	>3000	Yes
28.10.2015	Prague	BPI+ÚSVIT+ guest Pegida Dresden	>500	Yes
17.11.2015	Prague	DSSS	200	Yes

[2] 14.02.2015 (IvČRN, Brno), 30.06.2015 (BPI+ÚSVIT, Prague), 01.07.2015 (ND+SPD, Prague)

Date	Place	Organized by	Estimated number of participants	Transcript of speeches analyzed
17.11.2015	Prague	ZNKaBZ+SPD	5000	Yes
17.11.2015	Prague	ND	1000	Yes
06.02.2016	Prague	BPI+ÚSVIT+Fortress Europe	>3000	Yes
06.02.2016	Prague	ND+ZNKaBZ	500	Yes
26.03.2016	Prague	ND+ZNKaBZ	200	No
01.05.2016	Prague	ex-BPI	200	No
01.05.2016	Prague	ND	150	No
14.05.2016	Prague	SPD	600	No
28.09.2016	Most	Blok proti islamizaci	100	No

4. The outsets of the anti-Islam movement in the Czech Republic

The first organizations promoting an anti-Islam ideology and engaging in activities directed against Muslims or Islam as a religion in general, emerged in the Czech Republic in the 1990s. However, anti-Islam ideology was not yet the main source of the political profile of these organizations (Mareš, 2015: 84-85) and it is not possible to speak about the existence of an anti-Islam movement in general at that time.

In 1998, the first Czech Mosque was opened in Brno. The plans for its construction raised a public discussion and disagreement among some of the citizens of Brno. However, the negative stance against the mosque did not result in any mass mobilization. The agitation against the mosque was foremost pursued by extreme-right organizations.

After 11 September 2001, the increasing media coverage and following public thematization of Islamic terrorism contributed to the expansion of Islamophobic discourses in the Czech Republic (e.g.: Křížková, 2006). First of all, the adoption of new discourses about Islam and migration by the conservative spectrum was significant for this period (Mochťak, 2015). The extreme right reacted to the events of 11 September 2001 in various ways. The dominant part of the extreme right held a radical anti-American and anti-Israel position. The terrorist attacks were interpreted as the 'weakening of a traditional enemy' (Mareš and Vejvodová, 2015: 108) and celebrated or at least not condemned by the majority of the exponents of the extreme right. The only extreme-right subject at that time that started a systematic campaign

against Islam and Muslims was the Národní strana ('National Party', hereafter: NS). However, NS was a party with minor electoral success and the impact of its campaign was minimal (Smolík, 2013).

One of the most important milestones for the development of the Czech anti-Islam movement was the launch of the server *Eurabia.cz* in 2005, which was the first Czech website devoted exclusively to critical themes connected with Muslims and Islam. In 2009, the Facebook group *Islám v České republice nechceme* (IvČRN, in English: 'We don't want Islam in the Czech Republic') was founded. Inspired by the *English Defence League*, the core activists of IvČRN founded the *Czech Defense League* (CZDL) in 2011 (Mrva, 2014). The activities of the CZDL comprised the campaign directed to ban halal food in the Czech Republic, campaigns against the construction of new mosques or the monitoring of new Muslim prayer rooms. In 2014, the CZDL launched a campaign, which was directed against the approval of special religious rights to the biggest Czech Muslim organization *Center of Muslim Religious Communities* (CMRC). CMRC was established in 1991 and in 2004 obtained as the only Czech Islam organization the status of a registered religious organization from the Ministry of Culture. In 2014, 10 years after the registration, the CMRC acquired the right to apply for a second stage registration, by which it could obtain special religious rights, like the participation in religious education in public schools, the solemnization of marriages, etcetera.[3] The campaigns of the CZDL, however, were mostly restricted to the virtual realm and remained almost unreported by the public media.

In the middle of 2014, the activity of CZDL declined, while IvČRN began to grow. IvČRN already operated its own webpage, and its Facebook profile gathered almost 70,000 likes by July 2014 (Havlíček, 2015: 483). The university teacher Martin Konvička became the leading spokesperson of IvČRN; he was also one of the active members of CZDL (Mrva, 2014). In autumn 2014, IvČRN obtained public and media attention with a petition against the granting of special religious rights to Czech Muslims, the same topic CZDL had campaigned on before. IvČRN also elaborated a proposal for an amendment to the Czech Church Law intending that "special religious rights could only be granted to a registered church, which does not raise a concern that it threatens the foreign policy interest or national security of the Czech Republic" (IvČRN, 2015b). In April 2015, this proposed amendment was submitted for voting in the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Parliament by the opposition political movement *Úsvit přímé demokracie* (hereafter: Úsvit, 'Dawn of a direct democracy'). The proposal was rejected after the first reading.

Since 2014, migration- and Islam-related topics were adopted by the extreme-right *Dělnická strana sociální spravedlnosti* (hereafter: DSSS, 'Workers Party of Social Justice'), which, until then, had mostly focused on anti-Romani agitation. In September 2014, DSSS organized the first protest 'against Islamization' in Teplice, a small North-Bohemian spa town, which is much sought after by clientele from Arabic states. The rally attracted about 130 participants (Kramáreková et al., 2017: 11).

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[3] The CMRC has, however, not completed all administrative requirements for the application.

5. The first wave of mobilization (January - early Spring 2015)

5.1. The protest events and their participants

IvČRN already received media attention before 2015 with its campaigns as well as its growing popularity on social networks. However, any of its efforts to mobilize outside the virtual realm remained unsuccessful. This situation changed on 16 January 2015, a few days after the terrorist attacks on the editors' office of the French magazine *Charlie Hebdo* and the Porte de Vincennes kosher market, when up to 2,000 participants attended an IvČRN demonstration in the historical center of Prague. The progress of the so-called 'Islamic state', the geographical and cultural proximity of the terrorist target, together with the reflection of the growing German Pegida movement may have been the triggers for the mobilization. As in 2014 the discussion on granting new religious rights to the CMRC, the security threats connected with the so-called 'Islamic state' and Islam terrorism can be understood as a new moment of dislocation. Experience of crisis, when for many people their national, religious or other identity was put into question, led many to support IvČRN in the streets.

During winter and early spring, IvČRN (co-)organized three other demonstrations in Prague, Brno, and České Budějovice, each with more than 500 participants.[4] The protest events were attended by people of all ages, as well as by families with children. The demonstrations were also supported by several members of the Czech Parliament, some of whom also held speeches.

Besides IvČRN, the extreme right DSSS also strived to mobilize against the so-called 'Islamization'. Its mobilization success was low, however; their rally on 21 February 2015 in Prague attracted fewer than 50 participants.

5.2. Structures of contrariety within the IvČRN discourse

At the beginning of 2015, the IvČRN placed several demands, which included 1) the amendment of the Czech Church Law in order to restrict and complicate the operation of Islam in public spaces, 2) cancellation of the legislative exceptions, which permit halal slaughter as well as the import of halal food, 3) a ban on Islam's religious symbols, including wearing headscarves in public spaces (IvČRN, 2015a). During the first winter IvČRN rallies, further demands to enforce measures which prevent Muslim immigration and to decline the proposed amendment for expanding the power of the Czech ombudsman, who was regarded as an 'ally' of the Czech Muslim minority, were placed by the movement. The constellation of these demands can be represented by the empty demand 'we don't want Islam in the Czech Republic', which is also the name of the social movement organization. By articulation of the demands, the protest movement acquired a unity (Laclau, 2005). The 'unity' of the movement

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[4] The unprecedented scale of the mobilization of the anti-Islam movement can be demonstrated by the figures offered by Ondřej Císař's (2008: 47) study of political activism in the Czech Republic. According to this study based on data from 1993 to 2005, only 10.9 per cent of the protest events were attended by more than 500 participants.

was simultaneously delimitated against the antagonistic Other, those adhering to the Islam faith.

During the speeches, Islam was presented as violent, hateful, misogynic, and undemocratic in its nature:

> '*We protest against the zero tolerance, against the hatred that Islam is full of.*' (Hošek, an IvČRN supporter, 14.02.2015)

> '*We do not want to allow an ideology to enter this country, that hinders our children, our daughters, from dressing as they wish, from thinking freely or to be told that they have only half the brain of a man.*' (Vítek, an IvČRN supporter, 16.01.2015)

Islam was referred to as a 'bad religion', inextricably bound to the strict interpretation of Shari'a law and thus incompatible with the Western democracies of the 21st century. To support this argument of incompatibility, examples of Shari'a law or details from the prophet Muhammad's biography were quoted during the speeches. Islam (portrayed as identical to a literary reading of Shari'a law) was referred to as a political ideology, equivalent to both the ideologies of the Nazi and the communist regimes that the Czechs had survived:

> '*Islam does not mean peace, but subordination. Subordination of women to men, non-Muslims to Muslims, the subordination of Muslims to the crazy ideas of their prophet and clerics. I want to repeat here in Brno, the place of the first mosque and the first city of Czech-Moravian Islam, that this nation has neither survived the Nazis nor gotten rid of communists to submit to Islam.*' (Konvička, IvČRN, 14.02.2015)

The complex of enemy values and practices represented by the empty signifier 'Islam' was presented as an ultimate threat for attainment and sustainment of the paramount values of the movement, which are articulated as a chain of equivalence consisting of freedom, democracy, Czech cultural customs, and traditions. 'We don't want any Islam in the Czech Republic' thus stood for the constellation of demands, which were directed to preserve these paramount values of the movement.

The construction of the imaginary collective subject of the movement, of the 'We', proceeded by various articulatory practices like public speeches, writing of blogs, sharing invitations to demonstrations, setting up lists of speakers and a program for a demonstration, participation in demonstrations, etcetera. By involving speakers of various faiths and from different minorities (Catholic priests, Jews, Roma, representatives of the Kurdish minority, ex-Muslims) and by the content of the speeches, the inclusive nature of the movement was emphasized:

> '*IvČRN is supported by the faithful, the atheists, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Arabs, Kurds, Syrians, Indians, Czechs, Slovaks, Roma, Jews, Vietnamese, and others, regardless of their political opinions or views.*' (Kubík, an IvČRN supporter, 14.02.2015)

'We' as a collective subject stood in an antagonistic position against those who were through their adherence or protection of 'Islam' endangering the collective's paramount values. These opponents were Muslims and their organizations like the CMRC, but also the 2014-2016 Minister for Human Rights, Equal Opportunities and Legislation, Jiří Dienstbier, the Ombudsman Anna Šabatová (since 2014) and other so-called 'multiculturalists,' 'do-gooders' or 'naive humanists'. The position of immigrants and refugees was, however, articulated differently by individual speakers. Only a few of them presented their negative stance against any presence of immigrants on Czech territory:

> '*Let us be grateful for the fact that the Czech society is still national as well as culturally homogenous and let us preserve it so for the future. This is the only reason we don't have any ethnic conflicts here, while immigrants from the countries of different cultures and their descendants (elsewhere) are ravaging and burning whole city districts.*' (Okamura, Úsvit, 31.01.2016)

Some of the speakers (first of all, Martin Konvička and other IvČRN activists) held the position that the presence of immigrants on Czech territory was acceptable, if they were not Muslims and they were accepting 'our' values. Some of the IvČRN activists, for example, supported the admission of Syrian Christian refugees or cooperated with the Czech Kurdish minority. Furthermore, the Muslims' identity was presented as a 'matter of choice', rather than something one is born into by Konvička and other activists. In this sense, Muslims were not portrayed as primordial enemies, but rather as victims of a hateful ideology who still have a chance to 'wake up', abandon their faith and each become 'one of us':

> '*European Muslims, you are not out enemies, you are only victims of a nasty ideology, which makes you our enemies. Find the courage in yourself, stand up against the Islamic yoke, stop behaving like the slaves of the long dead sadistic crook!*' (Konvička, IvČRN, 16.01.2016)

Based on this analysis, the structures of contrariety within the IvČRN Discourse (the first wave of mobilization) can be depicted as follows (see: Figure 1). The first three rows depict the protagonist chains of equivalence (consisting of articulated chains of demands, paramount values and ethic ideals and subject positions) represented by the empty signifier 'We don't want any Islam in the Czech Republic'. The three rows below depict the antagonistic chains of equivalence (enemy subject positions, enemy values, and ethic ideals) represented by the empty signifier 'Islam'.

/'We don't want any Islam in Czech Republic' (Es.)/=/restrict the operation of Islam in a public space/=/stop halal/...
/II/
/democracy/=/freedom/=/Czech culture and traditions/=/tolerance/...
/II/
/Czechs/=/Roma/=/ex-Muslims/=/atheists/=/Jews/=/(immigrants accepting the rules)/...
—————————————vs—————————————
/CMC/=/multiculturalists/=/'pseudohumanists'/=/(Muslim) immigrants/=/'do-gooders'...
/II/
/Islam (Es.)/=/Sharia/=/terror/=/totalitarianism/...

Symbols:
Difference   /
Equivalence   =
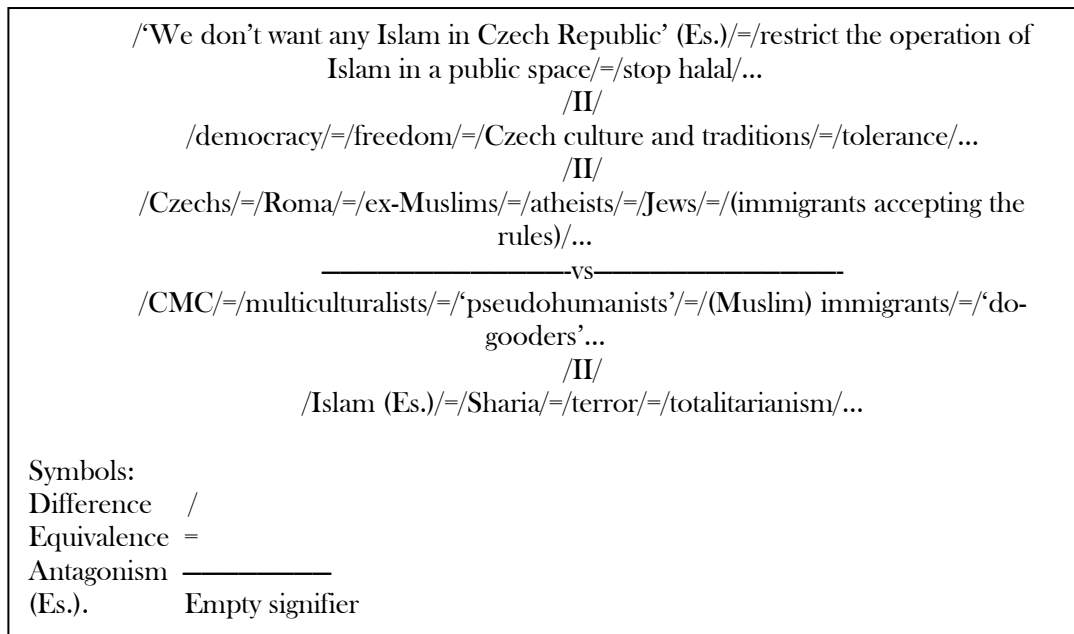Antagonism   ——————
(Es.).   Empty signifier

FIGURE 1. Structures of contrariety within the IvČRN discourse (the first wave of mobilization). Source: author.

6. The second wave of mobilization (June 2015 - Winter/Spring 2016)

6.1. The mobilization and its triggers

In May 2015, the European Commission introduced a proposal for a new EU migrant relocation and resettlement scheme as a part of the *First implementation package* (European Commission, 2015). The states of the Visegrád Group rejected the first proposal for mandatory quotas in June 2015. But later the Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka (Social Democratic Party) announced the decision of his government to accept 1,500 refugees in the years 2015-2017 (Vláda ČR, 2015).

According to the opinion polls carried out in June 2015, more than 70 per cent of Czech citizens above 15 years objected to the admission of refugees from Syria and North Africa. About 80 per cent of the citizens were at least roughly informed about the discussed quotas, but only 18 per cent of them expressed a positive stance toward their introduction (Buchtík, 2015). In May 2015, IvČRN organized a petition against the quotas, which was signed by 150,000 people within the first five weeks (IvČRN, 2015c). The refusal of the quotas as well as the disapproval of the government's decision to accept refugees can be regarded as the main triggers for the new mobilization wave of the movement. The fear of a coming influx of (Muslim) immigrants caused a new situation of dislocation, a new crisis of cultural and social identity connected with the expected arrival of the Others.

Starting in July 2015, many new subjects succeeded in mobilizing against Islam and immigration as well as the number of participants in the protest rapidly grew. The main organizers of the protests were *Blok proti islámu* (hereafter: BPI, 'Bloc against Islam'), the political movement *Úsvit - Národní koalice* (Úsvit, 'Dawn - National

Coalition')[5], *Svoboda a přímá demokracie* (SPD, 'Freedom and Direct Democracy')[6], the Facebook group *Za naši kulturu a bezpečnou zem* (ZNKaBZ, 'For our culture and a safe country') and the extreme right parties ND and DSSS. During the second wave of mobilization, ND and DSSS achieved a big mobilization success, when DSSS was able to mobilize around 500 people in Brno on 26 June 2015, and ND more than a thousand people to attend its first rallies in summer 2015.

In April 2015, the IvČRN was in its organizer's role replaced by a newly established BPI. BPI served as a new formal umbrella organization incorporating IvČRN activists and activists from other organizations and political parties. In August 2015, BPI signed a contract with Úsvit, in which both subjects agreed to set up a common candidate list for the 2016 Senate and regional elections (BPI, 2015). Until spring 2015, Úsvit was led by Tomio Okamura, who left the movement due to internal disputes and founded the SPD.

The engagement of the new organizations in the protest was accompanied by a growing disunity of the movement. Although sharing similar demands, some of the biggest organizations participating in the movement never cooperated in organizing the public protests. This disunity was partially caused by internal conflicts in Úsvit and the unwillingness of parts of its membership to further collaborate with Tomio Okamura. The second reason for the disunity was the refusal of BPI to cooperate with the extreme right (Prokůpková, 2018). As one of the results of this disunity and internal rivalries many protests were organized simultaneously on the same days. While Úsvit representatives (Marek Černoch, Olga Havlová, Karel Fiedler, etc.) attended BPI demonstrations exclusively, Tomio Okamura's SPD in summer 2015 initially cooperated with ND and, in autumn 2015 with the platform ZNKaBZ. ZNKaBZ, on the other hand, also cooperated intensively with ND. In October 2015, BPI also started to cooperate with *Pegida Dresden*, which led to the foundation of *Fortress Europe,* a platform associating organizations of the European anti-Islam movements (Prokůpková, 2018).

The organizational logic of the public rallies followed two basic patterns: they were called together in reaction to specific affairs (discussions about the quotas, terrorist attacks in France) or on days of remembrance and national holidays. The mobilization reached its peak on 17 November 2015, when, just in Prague, four anti-Islam demonstrations took place. The biggest of them was organized by ZNKaBZ and was attended by approximately five thousand participants. Thousands of people also attended a series of demonstrations against Islam and immigration, which were held in Prague on February 6, 2016. After this, the mobilization potential of the movement gradually decreased and further activities of the anti-Islam organizations shifted back to the virtual space. The reasons for the decline may include the criminal prosecution of ND leader Adam Bartoš for his racist statements, the break-up of BPI in April 2016 and the disappearance of the supposed urgency of the topics the movement mobilized against.

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[5] Before August 2015, it was called *Úsvit přímé demokracie* ('Dawn of the direct democracy').

[6] In March 2016, the movement was renamed to *Svoboda a přímá demokracie - Tomio Okamura (SPD).*

6.2. New demands and the emergence of the populist movement

Starting in June 2015, the movement expressed new grievances related to unfulfilled demands. Neither the demands for measures to stop or at least restrict Islam placed at the beginning of the year were met by the authorities, nor was the following petition against the quotas acted upon. Additionally, the government did something the activists regarded as quite the opposite; it accepted 1,500 refugees within the next two years:

> 'We appealed to the government to start to handle the immigration wave that is rushing to us. We asked them how they are going to control the borders, which measures will be undertaken to protect our citizens.' (Borkovcová, BPI, 30.06. 2015)

While at the beginning of 2015 parts of the IvČRN activists welcomed the idea to accept non-Muslim refugees, by mid-2015 this radically changed with the (re)articulation of refugees, illegal immigrants and Muslims into an equivalential chain. Thus, each refugee was newly seen as a potential Muslim, a potential soldier or terrorist and as a threat to the security of the country and its citizens. Besides that, openly racist nominalizations like 'colonizers' (Konvička) or 'aliens' (Okamura, Bartoš) appeared more and more frequently during the speeches. The involvement of Kurds or ex-Muslim Syrians in the rallies was no longer possible and the movement got a more exclusive character.

The migration crisis feared to hit the Czech Republic if no measures to stop the immigrants were to be taken, was interpreted by the leaders of the movement as an accelerator of the already ongoing process of 'Islamization'. The movement called for the closure and protection of the Czech borders as well as the general tightening of refugee and immigration policy.

The categorical refusal to accept any refugees or immigrants was already expressed by a few of the speakers at IvČRN winter rallies, but since mid-2015 the admission of all refugees was rejected uniformly across the movement:

> 'How long will we commemorate the day of the (Czech) statehood, when we don't stop the influx of immigrants from the countries of different cultures, different ways of life?' (Doubrava, BPI, 28.10.2015)

> 'We meet to make it clear that we say no to the immigrants, no to the trampling on and destruction of our culture, the plundering of our achievements and the parasitism in our social and healthcare systems!' (Drvotová, ND, 15.08.2015)

Since the authorities did not meet the demands placed by the movement to stop the alleged 'influx' of the refugees and to undertake measures against the so-called 'Islamization', the movement reacted with grievances and the articulation of new so far unrelated and unsatisfied demands into an equivalential chain. These included, for example, the resignation of the government, the abolition of the compulsory fees for the public television or the right to decide on important issues through direct democratic means, including a referendum on leaving the European Union, which

was perceived as either unable to handle the current migration crisis or was even thought to be responsible for it.

The extension of the logic of equivalence in a movement discourse was accompanied by the identity change of the movement. Standing in opposition against those who were considered to hinder the fulfillment of the demanded claims, the constitution of a broader subjectivity, the 'people' was initiated (Laclau, 2005: 162). The 'people' became an empty signifier representing fullness of community, which is actually missing due to the presence of a substantial lack, linked to the demands, which were not met. Since mid-2015 a new, deep chasm between the movement (representing the 'people' deprived of power), the Czech government and the leadership of the European Union seen as 'treacherous' and 'irresponsible' holders of power emerged:

> '*We are the people of this country. We are the people of this republic. We have the power to create an atmosphere that will make the three (leaders of the governing parties) require tranquilizers, whenever they remember the years 2015 and 2016.*' (Hampl, BPI, 30.06.2015)

> '*We will fight to bring back our republic, which was sold by our politicians to Brussels and Washington. We will build a democracy where the thieves will not become ministers or prime ministers and will be punished hard for their crimes.*' (Okamura, SPD, 17.11.2015)

According to the exponents of the movement, the country was governed by elites, who were misusing their power and did not listen to the people's will. The people were deprived of democracy and robbed through taxes, which were not relocated to those in need, but to non-governmental organizations or immigrants and refugees. Alongside the public media, non-governmental organizations were perceived as protectors of the government's interests.

On rallies organized by BPI, ÚSVIT, ZNKaBZ or SPD, sympathy with the Czech president Miloš Zeman was expressed by chanting or banners. Miloš Zeman is known for his negative stance against immigration and for Islamophobic speeches (e.g. Ostřanský, 2016). The support for the president, who was regarded as the 'true' representative of the people's will, was heavily communicated by BPI, which, among others, participated in the demonstration for his support on 17 November 2015. Within the discourse of BPI, president Miloš Zeman functioned as an empty signifier.

Based on this analysis, the structures of contrariety within the BPI discourse (the second wave of mobilization) can be depicted as follows (see: Figure 2). The first three rows depict the protagonistic chains of equivalence (consisting of articulated chains of demands, paramount values, ethic ideals, and subject positions) represented by the empty signifier 'Miloš Zeman,' the name of the Czech president. The three rows below depict the antagonistic chains of equivalence (enemy subject positions, enemy values, and ethic ideals) represented by the empty signifier 'Islamization'.
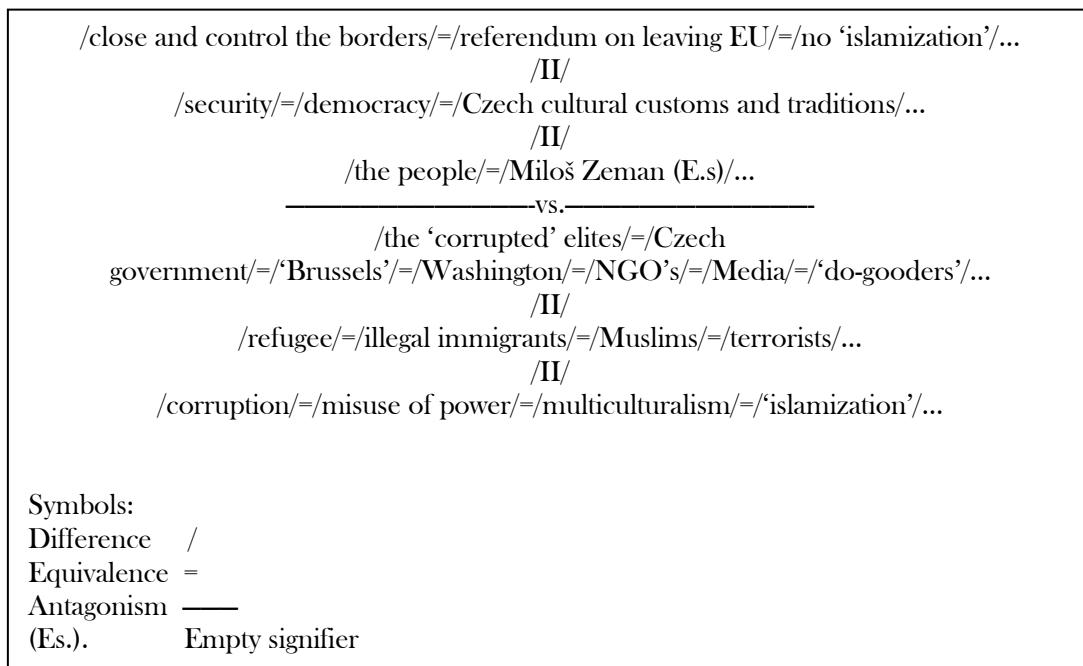
/close and control the borders/=/referendum on leaving EU/=/no 'islamization'/...
/II/
/security/=/democracy/=/Czech cultural customs and traditions/...
/II/
/the people/=/Miloš Zeman (E.s)/...
—————————————vs.—————————————
/the 'corrupted' elites/=/Czech
government/=/'Brussels'/=/Washington/=/NGO's/=/Media/=/'do-gooders'/...
/II/
/refugee/=/illegal immigrants/=/Muslims/=/terrorists/...
/II/
/corruption/=/misuse of power/=/multiculturalism/=/'islamization'/...

Symbols:
Difference   /
Equivalence =
Antagonism ——
(Es.).   Empty signifier

FIGURE 2. Structures of contrariety within the BPI discourse (the second wave of mobilization). Source: author.

As already mentioned above, during the second wave of mobilization the traditional exponents of the extreme-right DSSS and ND also succeeded in mobilizing. Moreover, ND was able to establish temporary cooperation with the populist SPD and thus to address a broader spectrum of the public. The reasons for the mobilization success of these two parties can be explained through the radicalization of the movement, which no longer only fought against Islam (an ideology, articulated as equal to Nazism and thus the opposite of democracy), but rejected anyone of different origin and culture. Besides that, the emergence of the fundamental split between the powerless 'people' and 'elites' in the movement discourse opened a space for the promotion of anti-systemic solutions, the questioning of the legitimacy of the system as such.

7. Conclusion

For the period of 2015-2016, the author of this text identifies two waves of mobilization of the Czech anti-Islam and anti-immigration movement. Within each of these mobilization waves, the identity of the movement was constructed differently in the speeches of the activist participating in the protests.

The first wave of mobilization took place from January to early spring 2015. The main organizers of the protest were activists connected with the Internet platform IvČRN. In cooperation with IvČRN, members of the political movement Úsvit regularly and actively took part in the rallies. During the first wave of mobilization, the identity of the movement was constructed against 'Islam' as an antagonistic Other, representing a wide chain of enemy practices and values, which were articulated in direct opposition to democracy, freedom and Czech cultural customs and traditions,

which the movement strived to protect and preserve. The collective 'We', comprising a wide variety of subject positions, the movement values, and demands were represented by the empty signifier 'We don't want any Islam in the Czech Republic', the name of the mobilizing social movement organization.

The second wave of mobilization, which began in mid-2015, brought several changes. A new development of the migration crisis and the discussion on migration quotas brought a new moment of dislocation of the social and cultural identity. Furthermore, the demands placed by the movement to ban or restrict Islam and to introduce measures to restrict the influx of refugees were not met by the authorities. Because of this frustration, a plurality of new demands was articulated into an equivalential chain. By the articulation of a new extended chain of unfulfilled demands, standing in opposition against the government and others, who were considered to hinder their fulfillment, the constitution of a broader subjectivity - the 'people' was initiated. It was no longer just 'Islam' representing the antagonistic Other that the movement defined itself against, but rather the elites in power, whose legitimacy was put into question and who were blamed for the alleged 'Islamization'. The extension of the logic of equivalence in a movement discourse led to an emergence of what Ernesto Laclau (2005: 93) calls 'popular identity' and the transformation of the previously monothematic anti-Islam movement into a populist movement.

The second wave of mobilization also brought an emergence of new collective actors participating in the movement, including traditional exponents of the extreme right. The mobilizing success of the extreme right can be explained regarding the radicalization of the movement, which no longer fought only against Islam, but rejected anyone of different origin and culture. Further, the emergence of the fundamental split between the powerless 'people' and 'elites' in the movement discourse opened up a space for the promotion of anti-systemic solutions and employment of the nationalist discourses in the construction of 'the people.'

There are two important remarks to the presented results of the analysis. First, while the mode of articulation of the Czech anti-Islam and anti-immigration movement corresponds in its later phase (since July 2015) to what Ernesto Laclau calls 'populist movement', the question is how to categorize the movement during the first wave of mobilization. To what extent was the movement already populist (Laclau, 2015: 161)? The second problem emerged with the detection of the particular demand, which, according to Laclau (2015: 157), starts to function as an empty signifier representing the equivalential chain as a totality. While in the IvČRN discourse the name of the organization 'We don't want any Islam in the Czech Republic' can be regarded as representing the chain of demands and subject positions, none of such empty demands was clearly identified by the author during the analysis of the speeches taken by the activists during the second wave of mobilization.

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