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THE USE OF IDENTITY AS A FORM OF PROTEST

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ABSTRACT

The migration crisis to and in Europe had more characteristics but there was one above others – the struggle for a unified reaction of the European Union. The situation was also complicated by the fact that opinions on the response often differed at the internal level of the member states, as in the Czech Republic, a birthplace of the voluntary movement called the Czech Team. In this study, one aspect of the team members' motivation was analysed – the declaration of the “European identity” as a form of their protest against the state immigration policy, considered to be anti-European. The occurrence of this incentive element had been investigated by the participant observation, unstructured interviewing of volunteers in Serbia and compared to the related researches on motivation. The results showed the protest against the state policy was often combined with other protests (for example against media or extremist groups) and was the most apparent during the peak of the crisis in 2015. Later, following the stabilisation of mass migration in the Balkans, the strong declaration of the European identity lost its relevance. The volunteers and their open critique of the policy gain the attention at the state and international levels. However, the real impact on the Czech immigration policy remains questionable and rather insignificant.

Key words: migration, volunteers, identity, Czech Republic

Introduction

The last year's mass migration to and in Europe is usually defined as one of the worst crisis. The different views on migration are more obvious even in the sole specification of the issue, as the only common part is highlighting of the crisis. The problem is that there is no European accord on the type of this crisis, since researchers, scholars, politicians or journalists generally talk about the migration crisis, refugee crisis, humanitarian crisis, or the various combinations of those expressions. Furthermore, in certain conditions, it is also possible to name the identity crisis caused by mass migration.

The arising identity crisis did not directly include migrants as such, but rather the general public which was, more or less, forced to choose among the

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presented views on the crisis. The situation was especially interesting in the Visegrad Group where an internal struggle between the so-called traditional national identity and the European identity emerged as a response to the divided public. The subjective majority of the traditional identity's supporters has been reflected in the official migration policy of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Poland, and led to the partial blockade of the migration policy of the European Union.

For purpose of this analysis, the Czech Republic has been chosen as the country with a considerable ideological conflict between two main contradictory groups. The Czech Republic is, on the one hand, a part of V4 countries opposing the EU policy, however, on the other hand, it is a birthplace of the so-called Czech Team (official name of a group is "Helping People on the Run" or in Czech "Pomahame lidem na uteku") – one of the most active volunteers' grassroots groups dealing with mass migration and operating in Europe. Naturally, the formation and expansion of the Czech Team was influenced by several reasons of different importance, but the very specific motivation was also noticed – the protest against the state migration policy which was, according to some volunteers, considered to be non-European. The contribution tries to describe the role and development of declared identity in the perception of people active in the voluntary movement.

1 Theoretical and methodological aspects

Identity, in its original meaning sameness or uniformity of either people or things, is nowadays considered as something determining who a person or a group of persons is. (Výrost – Slamenik, 2008) The efforts for detailed explanation of the identity led to the creation of many different, sometimes contradictory, definitions and critiques. Additionally, **Bhabha** (1994, p. 51) emphasizes the dynamics of the identity formation, saying the identity is "the problematic process of access to an image of totality". Taking into account the difficult determination of the individual's or group's identity, **Yazdiha** (2010) proposes a concept of hybridity and, moreover, points out the importance of the contextual analysis of identity. According to **Eriksen** (2007) the contextualization of identity identification is needed by its essence, as identification can only be done by the relation to the other.

Another important characteristic is the collective aspect of identity. The collective identity does not have a single explanation. According to **Taylor** and

Whittier (1992, p. 104-29), the collective identity is “the shared definition of a group that derives from members’ common interests, experiences and solidarity” and may motivate a group action. Based on the **Epstein’s** study of gay and lesbian activism, **Howard** (2000) names the parameters for taking action by a group as follows: the combination of affective ties to a group with the pursuit of socio-political goals, direct activity towards the terrain of the country, progressive character, attempts to advance the group position, lack of structural power, pressing of demands by appealing to and manipulating hegemonic ideologies, tendency towards local character organised around a specific geographic space or community. Moreover, **Eriksen** (2007) emphasizes the importance of Simmel’s contention that intragroup cohesion directly depends on external conflict.

The identities connect people, although by the different intensity and strategic interests. Based on this fact, **Jaspers** introduces three types of the collective identity – activist, organisational and tactical. The activist identity is related to the “political activity that is usually broader than a specific movement”, the organisational identity is based on loyalty to an organisation, and the tactical identity connects people based on their lifestyle. (Polleta – Jaspers, 2001, p. 283-305) The members of a group with the tactical identity prefer the “particular styles of action such as non-violence or civil disobedience”. (Idem) According to **Eriksen** (1995), shared common values and aim do not form the strongest intragroup ties. The most important aspect is to find the common enemy. The collective identity weakens in the moments of enemy’s unclear identification.

Another interesting approach towards the collective identities focuses on the fact that some identities may be understood as a form of protest. In their work, **Polleta** and **Jaspers** (2001, p. 283-305) say that the framing of the identity for the public affects the recruitment of members and supporters, gaining of a public hearing, formation of alliances and defusing of opposition. Additionally, they stress that the formulation of the group identity depends on “the setting and the audience to which it is speaking, the kind of opposition it confronts, and the organizational linkage it has to other groups and movements”. It is not accurate to define the European identity in the Czech Republic exclusively as the protest one. However, the protest was an important part of the volunteers’ motivation. **Krecek** (2016) held the research on the volunteers’ motivation by the analysis of their digital communication (posts, comments, status updates in the Facebook group(s) of the Czech Team) and presentation in other Internet media. In his study, he also used the information from **Havlickova’s**

unpublished survey about the motivation held in 2015. This qualitative research showed the importance of negativity in taking action when the migration crisis reached its peak. Moreover, he stressed the negativity as a unifying point of the engaged volunteers.

From the methodological point of view, the study was accomplished by the combination of qualitative methods. The data presented in the paper were collected, at first, by the participant observation in the field in combination with unstructured interviewing volunteers and their sympathizers in late 2015 and 2016. The repetitive form of the observation and interviewing has been chosen to emphasize the relational and situational basis of identity. (Eriksen, 2007) Interview questions were adapted to support respondents' narrative about her/his volunteering motivation, perception of European identity and opposing identity.

The respondents were recruited by the snowball sampling method. Acquired qualitative data, mainly in the form of interview transcription, were continually analysed on the basis of grounded theory approach and open coding. (Bernard, 2006, Strauss – Corbin, 1999)

Additionally, the documents and blogs written by the members of the Czech Team, the official summaries published at the official web site of the Team plnu.cz and at the Team's Facebook page were used as supportive sources of information. The official reports of the Czech Ministry of Interior, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), related researches and reports mainly served as the sources of quantitative data.

Limitations of study may include problematic generalisation of the results and shortcomings caused by the chosen methods of sampling and coding.

2 Contextualization - State migration policy

The Czech Republic is one the EU members that does not share a part of the Schengen border. Due to this fact, and also because of the migration route crossing mainly the Balkan states, Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia, Austria, Germany, or other countries, the Czech Republic has not been strongly affected by the rising number of refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants, or those heading to another EU member state. According to the report of the Ministry of the Interior (2016), the total number of asylum applications (new and repeated included) was 1,525 applications in 2015, in comparison to 1,156 in 2014. In 2013, 2012, and 2011, there were less than 1,000 applications per year

registered. However, similar numbers as in 2015 and 2014 were recorded in 2009 (1,258), 2008 (1,656) and 2007 (1,878). Furthermore, the average number of applications registered from 1993 to 2006 was considerably higher, specifically 6,131 application per year, with the minimum in 1994 (1,187) and the maximum in 2001 (18,094).

Although the direct impact of migrants on the Czech Republic has been rather marginal, the public attitudes to the then EU migration policy, immigration and foreigners were considerably negative. In April 2016, Czech sociologist **Hartl**, in the interview for the Czech Radio (*Český rozhlas*), explained that more than 70 percent of Czechs thought that “all foreigners living in the Czech Republic presented an enormous security threat to the country”. (Lazarova, 2016)

Such attitude was supported by the image of migrants or refugees in the media. **Tkaczyk, Pospech** and **Macek** (2015) analysed the news programmes of **the Czech Television (*Česká televize*) and NOVA TV station** (the most popular stations) during the peak of the crisis in 2015. The results of the research showed that the main topics of news dealing with migrants were as follows: the refugee quotas, political negotiations, events that happened in other EU countries, and police themes as detentions and security. The causes of the crisis or assistance provided to migrants were presented as marginal themes. Finally, in the majority of reports, refugees represented an administrative problem and an object of policing. The security threats covered the same percentage of the news as those presenting refugees as beneficiaries of aid.

The opinion of the public on the presentation of migrants or refugees in the main media goes hand in hand with the state migration policy. The mentioned study also stressed the fact that politicians were the main speakers on the crisis. The experts' views were presented only in less than 1% of the cases on both TV stations. (Tkaczyk, Pospech, Macek, 2015) The government continued to use this situation of the people's negative view on migration to promote its access to mass migration at the international level and, at the same time, influenced the public by adjusting and exaggerating the facts. (Lazarova, 2016) Such an attitude generated both the international and internal critique, too. **Krecek** (2016, p. 78) characterizes the Czech governmental approach as a “provisional rejection strategy” – the strategy when migrants are understood to be “essentially bad, until proven otherwise”. The opposite approach is the “provisional acceptance” of some Central and Northern European countries.

The Amnesty International (2016) summarized the critique of the Czech Republic, the actions and policy of the Czech government as follows: threatening refugees' supporters by far-right organisations, continual refusing of the relocations, treatment of refugees and migrants by officers, and bad living conditions in the detention centres. The Czech approach was also criticized by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and United Nations Human Rights Chief (2015). The detentions and strip-searching of refugees for money were considered to be violations of human rights and an integral part of a migration policy. Another part of the criticism was focused on the xenophobic and Islamophobic statements, especially those publicly presented by the President. The Czech Republic also failed in returning of migrants based on the Dublin Regulations, stopping of migrants heading for Germany or other EU member countries, and for lack of a token of solidarity to migrants. (Miles – Lopatka, 2015) Additionally, the European critique discussed the blockade of the quotas for redistributing refugees throughout the European Union by the Visegrad countries. (Gotev, 2015) The internal Czech critique, represented by Minister of Justice Robert Pelikan (Cerny, 2015) and ombudswoman Anna Sabatova (2015), focused rather on the maltreatment and poor facilities for migrants in the Czech Republic. The considerable critical opinions were evaluated as unjustified by the state representatives: President Milos Zeman, Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka, Minister of Interior Milan Chovanec, and also by Minister of Finance Andrej Babis. (Patak, 2016)

Apart from the responses to a crisis, the migration policy follows and meets all international obligations and EU regulations. The detailed description of the basic Czech legal framework, as it is stated at the official website of the Ministry of the Interior (2016), contains the Act on Asylum and the Act on the Police of the Czech Republic, the Code of Administrative Procedure, the Code of Administrative Justice, the Act on the Residence of Aliens in the Territory of the Czech Republic and the Act on Temporary Protection for Aliens.

The Department for Asylum and Migration Policy, the Refugee Facilities Administration and the Foreign Police Service are the units of The Ministry of the Interior that are in charge of the asylum and migration agenda. While there were only few problems before the crisis, the migration wave pointed out the practical operational issues. (Idem) The question of competences belonging to the units might be a good example. At the time of the biggest inflow of migrants to the Czech Republic, the prompt effective decisions were needed. The problematic division of powers, in combination with the activities of independent

lawyers and NGOs, resulted in a chaos. Delivering of the different, and sometimes contradictory orders of authorities, was characteristic in such a situation. Similar internal problems, together with populism, caused inability and reluctance of the Czech government to negotiate at the EU level in favour of migrants. The state crisis policy then appeared to follow the strategy of waiting and negating every proposition that was not in favour of the Czech Republic and that expected pro-active attitude in the reduction of impacts. (Lazarova, 2016) The direct involvement was practically manifested only in the border protection by sending the troops and officers to the countries of the Balkan route, and in the case of Greece, the Czech Republic also sent experts to facilitate the work of Greek administration related to the migration crisis. (Mucka, 2017)

3 Opposing identities

The migration wave going across Europe during the last year, which has not been completely stopped, caused the division of the Czech public based on the perception of it. The opinions differed mostly in the attitudes to: the migrants, foreigners already living in a country, the European Union and its role during the crisis, the EU migration policy, role of the member states, role of the Czech Republic and the government, state migration policy, role of the Church, role of the universities, role of media, and, finally, role of the public.

Taking into consideration the views on the above-mentioned issues, the Czech society was during the peak of the crisis divided into two main groups. The first one consists of the defenders of the traditional national identity whose opinions on migration are typically negative. Some of the characteristic arguments are cultural differences, complicated integration, religious differences, and increased criminality and security threats. Another specific argument is, in general, fear of aliens. Such an attitude is understandable from the certain point of view because especially older ones living in the small villages do not have much experience with foreigners, and sometimes they do not have any direct experience with migrants or refugees. (Willoughby, 2015) Based on the information provided by the Czech Statistical Office, there were 467,562 foreigners living in the Czech Republic in 2015. The population of the Republic is 10,558,524, from which 195,499 are immigrants from the EU countries and 272,063 from other countries. The highest number of migrants is traditionally related to Ukraine (106,019 persons), Slovakia (101,589 persons) and Vietnam (56,589 persons). (CZSO, 2016)

As for the criminality, the current statistics are not accessible because of the change in the system of the criminal statistics administration. However, the Czech Statistical Office (2016) states that the total number of criminal acts committed by foreigners has lightly increased, but the criminality in general has been declining since 2013.

An interesting argument is related to the religion, and thus the negative attitude towards Islam. According to **Patak** (2016), the Muslim community comprises 20,000 fully integrated members. On the one hand, Islam is a marginal religion in the Czech Republic and also foreigners living there came from the traditionally rather Christian than Islamic countries. On the other hand, the religious structure of the Czech Republic has considerably changed over the last 15 years. In 1991, the number of believers was 4,523,734 people, which is 43.9 percent of the then population. According to the last census, taken in 2011, there were 2,168,952 believers (with the majority of Roman Catholics and Protestants) in the Czech Republic, which represented only 20.8 percent of Czechs. (CZSO, 2016) Another important fact is that the religious structure of immigrants related to the migration wave is not homogenous and apart from Muslims or Christians, it comprises also Yazidis or Hindus.

From the practical point of view, the ways to solve or reduce the inflow of migrants proposed by this group were strongly motivated by the attitudes such as “we (Czechs) do not want them (migrants) here (in the Czech Republic)”; “Islam is a religion full of violence and it violates the human rights”; “they (migrants) do not want to live in the Czech Republic”, “even if they (migrants) receive an asylum in the Czech Republic, they will leave for another EU country”; “they (migrants) are all only economic migrants, not refugees”; “we (the Czech Republic) are not responsible for the problematic situation in their home countries”; “it (migration crisis) is only the problem of Germany”; or the radical ones as “they (migrants) are all terrorists”, and others. (Patak, 2016)

Naturally, the above-mentioned designation has its exceptions but the traditional identity approach towards migration is usually typical for the elderly, people without higher education, members of extremists' groups, journalists and politicians. While the elderly and lower educated people usually only adopt the attitudes presented by somebody else, the rest of the group form and introduce their opinion on purpose, and are also more active in their presentation. (Patak, 2016) Based on the information provided by the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic in its Report on the Extremism (2016), the calming of the mass migration in Europe (by the Balkan route closure in March 2016 and the EU-

Turkey Refugee Deal) and internal struggle have been reflected in the reduction of right-wing political extremism and the fragmentation of the anti-immigrant and anti-Islam groupings. Nevertheless, the alternative media still prefer the anti-migrant rhetoric.

The opposing second group connects people who based their attitudes towards migration issues on the European identity. There are more arguments of different style, as some of them directly oppose the ones of the traditional national identity group, other have more explanatory character of the issues, and other supports the specific goals of some members. In comparison with the first group, the reasoning of the second group is generally modest but for the left-wing extremists who still prefer the "Refugee(s) Welcome" ideology.

The basis of the European identity lies in the fact that the Czech Republic is a European country and it is also a member of the European Union, and so we (Czechs) share the European values. According to the Official Journal of the European Union (2004), the EU's founding values are respect for human dignity, freedom, equality, and they are based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law. Additionally, one of the most repeated arguments why to support the European identity has been the solidarity – the solidarity with migrants, with the home countries of immigrants, and, of course, the solidarity with the EU members affected by the mass migration. The European identity group shares an argument of Christianity with the first group, but its members understand the nature of being a Christian differently. On the one hand, Christianity inspires the public to be open towards migrants and to help them. On the other hand, non-Christian or atheist members use the religious arguments as a form of a reproach for the traditional national identity. The attitudes towards migrants must thus reflect the above-mentioned arguments in the practice. Such an opinion was also shared and presented on the Facebook account of **Petra Quirke** (2016), one of the then coordinators of volunteers.

In comparison to conservative and negative supporters of the traditional identity, the European identity has been promoted mainly by rather young people, people with higher education, those who fit the designation of the first group but do not agree with their attitudes, foreigners living in the Czech Republic, and left-wing extremists. The specific feature of the European identity group is the formation of the Czech Team. The team membership may be widely understood, but the core connects the Czech volunteers at the first place. (Krecek, 2016) Slovak volunteers form a small part, and in few isolated cases, there are also people from other countries (U.S., Denmark, Switzerland, Italy

etc.) willing to volunteer under the Czech Team. Members of the team may be divided into two cooperating groups – those who directly participate in the activities at the borders or the centres for migrants, and those who ensure the work of volunteers from the Czech Republic, or prefer to organise supporting events in their home countries.

A question of motivation of the Team members is an interesting one and is partly related to the gradual formation and broadening of the activities. The authors of the *Volunteer Motivation Inventory* distinguish three approaches to volunteerism – altruistic, egoistic and fatalistic. (Esmond – Dunlop, 2004) As **Krecek** (2016) pointed in his paper, the altruism might be granted for the volunteers involved in the Czech Team. The core motivation that has been shared by almost all volunteers is to help. Primarily, volunteers wanted to help migrants, then other volunteers by the relief works and, at last, to help the countries on the way to handle the crisis. Furthermore, their motivation covers curiosity about the crisis and migrants. Volunteers had decided to join the team because they wanted to experience the “reality of mass migration”, form their own opinion, or “to do something”, not just wait for others to start some activity. The last part of the motivation is based on the European identity as volunteers wanted to practically demonstrate the values of their identity and, by this, also to protest against the Czech government and the “state anti-immigrant policy”, but not exclusively. Additionally, **Krecek** (2016) defines other objects of the protest or negativity. The first one concerns the mainstream media that were often blamed for the negative public perception of migrants. The second object of negativity includes the large humanitarian organizations (UNHCR, Red Cross). Such an attitude changed over time and was not permanent as in the case of the media. Interestingly, the last objects of the protest were volunteers themselves. As the Czech Team was a rather inhomogeneous group at the very beginning, several opposing groups of volunteers were formed within the Czech Team differing in the motivation, but also approaches towards presentation of the work and crisis. Nowadays, the number of volunteers is considerably lower in comparison to 2015, the conditions for migrants and volunteers have changed, and also the character of the volunteer work is different. Due to this, it is possible to assume that the motivation of volunteers has changed too. However, this hypothesis requires further qualitative research.

According to the information published on the official website of the Czech Team plnu.cz (2016), the Team is an association that coordinates the work of volunteers helping people on the run. Nevertheless, the Team is rather a non-

profit and unprofessional fellowship than an association in a traditional meaning. The origins of the group reached back to the end of August 2015 when the members of the autonomous social centre Klinika decided to organise a collection of clothing for the migrants and refugees detained in the Bela-Jezova detention centre. Later on, they were able to collect an impressive amount of the material aid and money, and identify the most problematic places. (Krecek, 2016) Then they decided to travel to the spots with higher concentration of migrants, specifically Budapest train station Keleti, later the villages Horgos and Roszke, the border towns between Serbia and Hungary. Afterwards, they continued their way to one of the most crowded places on the Balkan migration route – the border crossing Berkasovo/Bapska between Croatia and Serbia, close to the city of Tovarnik. The Team stayed at the place until the official closure of the border in November 2015 and then continued to work in a stop centre near Adasevci (Serbia) that was later (after the closure of the Balkan route) transformed to the centre for migrants. (Patak, 2016)

The members of the Czech Team have always monitored the situation of the migration wave in different countries. Their monitoring has been reflected in the location of other operations. Up to now, volunteers have been active mainly in Serbia – Berkasovo/Bapska, Sid/Adasevci, and Greece – Lesbos and Idomeni, and on the rather individual basis in France, Slovenia, or Macedonia. The Team has also joined the international volunteers in Horgos at the Hungarian-Serbian border and nowadays, it has the permanent mission in the centre for migrants in Sid/Adasevci. (TZ., 2017) Apart from the direct help abroad, members and supporters organise a wide spectrum of public enlightenment in the Czech Republic.

The activities of the team started at the Serbian-Croatian border by, literally, organising the transit of migrants from Serbia to Croatia. Because of the traditional Serbian-Croatian diplomatic disputes, the Team members partly worked as negotiators between the police of both sides, and thus they secured crossing the border. Through cooperation with other international organisations as UNHCR, Red Cross, and Doctors without Borders, they were able to set an effective and safe system of guiding immigrants across the border. Additionally, the Czech Team provided the basic needs of migrants, the real information about current situation and the numbers of migrants. Naturally, due to the complicated character of the place and migration, it was not possible to avoid all troubles that were often caused by the problematic communication between Serbia and Croatia. Other activities comprised the cloth supplies from the Czech

collections, distribution of food and toiletries, and medical help. The part of the Team in the Czech Republic organised the collections, the public enlightenment and contributed to an open dialogue at Czech universities. Another important impact of volunteers, as the representative of the European identity, lies in the constructive critique of the European Union and some of its members. The Czech Team, along with other international volunteers, emphasized the dimension of the humanitarian crisis. The Team later continued with similar activities on the above-mentioned places.

Nowadays, the Czech Team is a rather organised group of people who are active in several fields, mainly volunteering, coordination of volunteers, providing information about the work of the Team and migration for volunteers and media, organisation of collections and others. Cooperating with the organisations on the spots (Serbian Commissariat For Migrants and Migration, UNHCR, SOS Decija Sela and others), volunteers are operating the permanent mission in the centres for migrants in Adasevci, which is, according to UNHCR (2017), the second largest centre in Serbia (990 persons), and Principovac (306 persons). At the time, the Team has an impressive organising structure and system of work, the solid membership, many Czech and international supporters and partner movements.

Conclusion

The identities of both competing groups are not based on a single aspect such as ethnicity, gender, age, class, and other. Each collective identity, either traditional, national, or European, is rather much more complex in the intersecting dimensions.

Naturally, the situation of a country where two competing identities have emerged because of the specific reason may result in some consequences. Both identities also arose gradually in the action-reaction manner and it is difficult to decide which group was formed first. Depending on the conditions, the effects of the identity struggle may be either negative or positive. The possible negative effect of the identity struggle may comprise an increase of aggression, the hateful actions on public accompanied by the verbal and personal attacks, the serious violent conflicts between the members of the groups, or the attacks on foreigners living in the country. Up to now, there were some demonstrations organised by right-wing extremists (Lane, 2015), and also

the attacks on the mosque and Muslims in the Czech Republic. (Peresta, 2015) However, the incidents that happened were worrying, but rather exceptional.

The second one is the possible positive approach towards the identity struggle. In his article, **Sedlacek** (2015) highlights that, in principle, the Czech society is not xenophobic. He claims that Czechs prefer the existence of hate and fear only at the rhetorical level since, for example, the Czech Republic is the only country from the Visegrad Group that has never had an extremist party within its government. Additionally, he says that it is not important who is a victim, because those who want to manipulate people by fear will always find an unwanted group. **Patak** (2016), on the other hand, points out the contrast of motivation. While the media, politicians and people with any kind of power follow their own profit, the Czech Team, as an association, works without any financial and profit demands, or own publicity. He also emphasizes the difference between the articles, pictures and videos posted by members of the Czech Team, and the information considered to be facts that are presented in the Czech media, or by the Czech representatives.

The positive effect of the identity struggle then lies, at first, in consciousness of existence of the opposite group, its ideology and arguments, and distinguishing the seriousness of a mutual conflict. Secondly, the establishment of a constructive dialogue may facilitate solving many problems in practice. During the existence of the Czech Team, it has been possible to notice various forms of communication between the opposing identities. Especially members of the traditional national identity group (but not exclusively, there were also registered cases when a member of the Czech Team assaulted the opposing individuals) often accept the use of the social networks with the purpose of threatening to and casting aspersion on the European identity group. On the other hand, Prime Minister of the Czech Republic Bohuslav Sobotka invited the most active members of the Czech Team for an official meeting where they discussed not only the practical problems of handling the mass migration, but also the possibilities of cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior. (*Zastupci ceskych dobrovolniku...*, 2015) The real impact of this meeting is questionable, as in February 2017, the coordinators of the Team prepared the petition for the refugees' reception and sent the open letter to the Prime Minister. (*Otevřený dopis...*, 2017)

Apart from the possible and real impacts of the struggle, both Czech identities were formed as a reaction to the mass migration to and mainly in Europe, and therefore it was possible to see the strongest discussion of the society from August 2015 to December 2015 (eventually to January), the months when inflow

of migrants reached its top. According to the above-mentioned report of the Ministry of the Interior, the activities of extremists from both blocks have calmed down along with the gradual blockade of the so called Balkan migration route and EU-Turkey Refugee Deal. The topic of migration is therefore less attractive and representatives of the extremist groups are forced to find new interesting issues. Nowadays, after the closure of the Balkan route and the EU-Turkey Refugee Deal, members of the traditional national identity dissect migration usually in connection to the terrorism and the terrorist attacks in Europe. The Czech Team stays, however, still active and its members observe the situation of immigrants coming to Europe. Such development, therefore, meets **Eriksen's** assumption that identification with identity changes in the moment of arising of new situation and is dependent on others. In addition, declaration of the European identity and connected activities fulfil Simmel's contention that stronger external conflict leads to stronger intragroup cohesion.

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