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The securitization of immigration in Poland. Social and political contexts

Sekurytyzacja imigracji w Polsce. Kontekst społeczny i polityczny

Abstract: Currently, immigration issues occupy an important place in the debate on the future of Europe. One of the central themes of this debate is the issue of security. In spite of the functioning of supranational integration structures, individual states still remain a fundamental factor in shaping migration. In many cases, the issue of immigration is subjected to the process of securitization, framing immigration as a threat. It is the speech act that is important in this respect, being a kind of securitizing tool. Since 2015, one can notice elements indicating that the process of securitization of immigration has been present in Poland, too, which, among other things, is a consequence of the change of the ruling party, the immigration crisis that has taken place in Europe, and the migration situation on Poland's eastern border. The article presents the factors that influence the process of immigration securitization. Additionally, it includes numerous statements from Polish politicians securitizing the problem of immigrants as well as the results of social surveys on attitudes towards immigration. The analysis of the collected material leads to the conclusion that the securitisation of immigration in Poland is not a completed process and that this process concerns a geographically defined group of immigrants.
Keywords: immigration, securitization, immigration policy, security
Streszczenie: Współcześnie problematyka imigracyjna zajmuje istotne miejsce w debacie nad przyszłością Europy. Jednym z zasadniczych tematów wspomnianej debaty jest zagadnienie bezpieczeństwa. Pomimo funkcjonowania ponadnarodowych struktur integracyjnych państwa pozostają nadal zasadniczym podmiotem kształtowania migracji. W wielu przypadkach kwestia imigracji zostaje poddana procesowi sekurytyzacji, ujmującej imigrację jako zagrożenie. Istotny w tym zakresie jest akt mowy jako swoiste narzędzie sekurytyzujące. Również w Polsce od 2015 roku można zauważyć elementy świadczące o procesie sekurytyzacji imigracji, który jest następstwem m.in. zmiany partii rządzącej, kryzysu imigracyjnego, jaki miał miejsce w Europie, oraz sytuacji migracyjnej na wschodniej granicy Polski. W artykule przedstawiono czynniki

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mające wpływ na proces sekurytyzacji imigracji. Przedstawiono liczne wypowiedzi polskich polityków, którzy poddają sekurytyzacji problem imigrantów. Przedstawiono także wyniki badań opinii społecznej w zakresie postaw wobec imigracji. Analiza zebranego materiału prowadzi do wniosku, że sekurytyzacja imigracji w Polsce nie jest procesem zakończonym, a proces ten dotyczy określonej geograficznie grupy imigrantów.

Słowa kluczowe: imigracja, sekurytyzacja, polityka imigracyjna, bezpieczeństwo

Introduction

Poland was a country of emigration for a long time. Several reasons had an impact on this, one of which was the fact that after World War II, Poland remained a communist country for several decades. It was difficult for many citizens to go abroad, for others, it was completely impossible. The obstacles were often economic and even more often political. Belonging to the Eastern Bloc, Poland was also not a direction of migration for citizens of Western European countries and this only began to change in Poland after 1989, when the borders began to be reopened, thus making it possible for all those who wanted to migrate to do so.

For decades, a negative migration balance was a feature of population movements in Poland. In practice, this meant that more people left than entered the country. Importantly, Poland has been characterised by a positive migration balance since 2016.

Poland has not experienced mass immigration so far. It is only the events on the Polish-Belarusian border initiated in 2021 and the Russian aggression in Ukraine in 2022 that have resulted in migration pressure into Poland. Nevertheless, Poland is naturally becoming a more attractive destination for migrants.

The aim of this study is to identify factors relevant to the securitisation of immigration issues in Poland. Although, as noted earlier, changes in migration flows in Poland began after 1989, the particular area of interest for consideration will be the years following 2015. During this time, Europe experienced an immigration crisis. Moreover, the issue of immigration and its significance for security was widely discussed in Europe and Poland. This was also the year when the political party in power changed, with the Law and Justice Party winning the parliamentary elections, a party that links the issue of immigration with security threats. Furthermore, since 2021, Poland's eastern border has been characterised by immigration pressure linked to the

Polish-Belarusian border and hybrid actions as well as pressure caused by the war in Ukraine.

This article addresses the issue of the securitisation of immigration in Poland in social and political terms. Therefore, the authors will refer to the polls published by the Centre for Public Opinion Research (CBOS) in their considerations to show the attitude of Poles towards the issue of immigration and link it with security, to present the changes in attitudes towards immigrants and the factors influencing these attitudes. The second, political aspect of the deliberations will be devoted to the political discourse influencing the shape of Poland's immigration policy, as a form of state concept towards the issue in question.

1. Immigration versus state security

Security as both a status and a process occupies an important place in the functioning of states. It influences political decisions and repeatedly constitutes the point of reference. It might serve as an excuse for taking actions or it might be a cause of the actions. Paul D. Williams claimed that the concept of security is present in contemporary social communication around the world. It is used in the speeches of politicians and authorities on the television and radio news. Further, he points out that the images broadcast on television or radio show either the presence of security or its absence[1]. As a sign of human activity, transnational immigration carries a lot of positive and negative effects; on account of the complexity, dispersed nature, and inner contradiction, transnational migrations affect a nation's security in different ways than just threats[2]. What is more, we consider immigration either as a threat or an opportunity according to our individual beliefs. It is worth emphasising that perceiving immigration through the prism of security has a political, social, and demographic character and is subjective to a large degree. Furthermore, it depends on the perspective of specific kinds of concerns and the location of

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1   *Badania bezpieczeństwa. Wprowadzenie*, [in:] P.D. Williams (ed.), *Studia bezpieczeństwa*, translated by W. Janicki, Cracow 2012, p. 1.
2   F.B. Adamson, *Crossing borders: International migration and national security*, "International Security" 2006, vol. 31, no. 1, p. 197.

countries which can be in the role of sender, transmitter, or receiver. Lastly, it can be perceived through the prism of social, demographic, and economic consequences[3].

As James F. Hollifield indicates, modern states face the dilemma of a "liberal paradox". The paradox here is that, on the one hand, international economic involvement pushes states towards greater openness of borders, while the international state system and political forces call for greater closure of borders[4]. The importance of immigration for security stems from the fact that this phenomenon afflicts the existential issue of the state; security, as the primary value, should be provided by the state to every citizen. In this context, resulting from the processes of the globalization of migration, fears of immigration stem from fears of state sovereignty, citizenship, and national identity. The state's ability or inability to control its borders, and thus shape its population in a specific way, is a sine qua non for sovereignty[5]. A similar opinion is expressed by Gary Freeman, who claims that immigration causes a change in the traditional concept of sovereignty, nationalism, and citizenship, and the current understanding of these concepts is unsustainable[6]. The issue of combining immigration with security is the result of a number of factors and events that directly affected the countries of immigration or are shaped by media messages. It is worth emphasising that these fears also result from a sense of uncertainty over the unknown. These relationships gained importance after 11 September 2001, when there were terrorist attacks in the United States of America. Also in Europe, acts of terror committed by foreigners occurred including the attacks in Madrid on 11 March 2004, the attacks in London on 22 May 2013, and finally, the acts of terrorism in Paris on 13 November 2015. Marta Jaroszewicz rightly notes that social concerns about security do not automatically make them

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3   M. Szulecka, *Migracje jako źródło wybranych zagrożeń porządku prawnego i publicznego. Wnioski z badań jakościowych*, [in:] W. Klaus, K. Laskowska, I. Rzeplińska (eds.), *Przestępczość cudzoziemców – aspekty prawne, kryminologiczne i praktyczne*, Warsaw 2017, pp. 427-428.

4   J.F. Hollifield, *The emerging migration state*, "The International Migration Review" 2004, vol. 38, no. 3, p. 886; idem, *Immigrants, markets and states. The political economy in post-war Europe*, Cambridge 1992, pp. 5-19.

5   J.F. Hollifield, D. Jacobson, *Migration and the state*, [in:] G. Ritzer (ed.), *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Globalization*, Chichester, West Sussex, Malden 2012, pp. 1-2.

6   G.P. Freeman, *Immigration as a source of political discontent and frustration in Western democracies*, "Studies in Comparative International Development" 1997, no. 3, p. 48.

empirically proven, further noting that the links between migration and terrorism are the least proven; it is difficult to prove that the fact of origin was the decisive factor in committing an act of terrorism[7]. Despite this, these attacks showed the scale and potential of threats related to the movement of people and significantly influenced the nature of the public and political debate on migration[8].

Nowadays, combining immigration with security can be reduced to three basic groups of threats of varying nature: cultural, socio-economic, and political. Often, in the public discourse, arguments are raised that indicate a threat to security in many aspects of the functioning of the state. These include the following arguments[9]:

- Immigrants as a threat to the social welfare system, an excessive burden and cost for the host country;
- Immigrants as a threat to increasing unemployment among native workers;
- The consequence of immigration is the segmentation of the labour market, as individual occupations are attributed to immigrants;
- Growth of the "grey zone of employment";
- A threat to national identity and cohesion;
- Development of racist, xenophobic, and nationalist attitudes leading to tensions between immigrants and the host society;
- A threat to the family traditions of the host society;
- Epidemiological threats, development of diseases not yet present in a given country;
- The growth of immigrant clusters, the formation of "ghettos", the transfer of problems from places of origin to the current place of stay;
- Social polarization, antagonism of social groups;
- Increase in crime and pathological phenomena.

7   M. Jaroszewicz, *Migracje i bezpieczeństwo*, [in:] M. Lesińska, M. Okólski (eds.), *25 wykładów o migracjach*, Warsaw 2018, p. 282.
8   R. Raczyński, *Wpływ migracji międzynarodowych na bezpieczeństwo wewnętrzne państwa*, "Bezpieczeństwo. Teoria i Praktyka" 2015, no. 2, p. 14.
9   See S. Castles, M.J. Miller, *Migracje we współczesnym świecie*, Warsaw 2011, pp. 256-271; P. Lubiewski, *Nielegalna imigracja. Zagrożenia bezpieczeństwa*, Szczytno 2016, pp. 80-93; E. Guild, J. van Selm (eds.), *International migration and security. Opportunities and challenges*, New York 2005, p. 31.

The above-mentioned situations indicate that in many cases the presence of immigrants is a threat, in other words, there is an increased probability of negative consequences caused by the presence of foreigners. As a consequence, there is a decrease in security, which may be caused by the deliberate action of the indicated group or by the increasing population of immigrants affecting changes in the social structure of the host country.

2. The process of securitization

As already mentioned, the objective scope of the concept of security has been significantly expanded and today covers virtually every area of the functioning of the state and society. Today, many phenomena are analysed in terms of potential threats and undermining the state of security. One such tool is the securitization theory, which originated in the so-called Copenhagen School. It is one of the most widespread theories of security studies and, because of it, various phenomena and processes began to be considered in terms of security, including the issue of immigration. Securitization theory is used in two main areas – the debate on security and the analysis of the international environment. In other words, this theory can be analysed from two perspectives. The first – theoretical, as a concept of security research, and the second – practical, as a political tool[10].

According to Rita Tuareck, securitization is a process in which the act of speech plays an important role, where defining a given problem as a threat to security implies taking extraordinary measures. The justification for such actions is precisely indicating a given problem as a threat. An important field of such activity is the political ground in which political decisions are made. The process of securitization, therefore, refers to the political ground in which a specific vision of politics is created, previously shaped by mutual relations between the state and society in the context of security[11]. In their book, *Security: A new framework for analysis*, securitization theorists Barry Buzan,

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10   Ł. Fijałkowski, *Teoria sekurytyzacji i konstruowanie bezpieczeństwa*, "Przegląd Strategiczny" 2012, no. 1, p. 150.
11   R. Taureck, *Securitization theory and securitization studies*, "Journal of International Relations and Development" 2006, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 54-55.

Ole Wæver, and Jaap De Wilde state that considering an issue as an existential threat provides the opportunity to make further decisions in terms of counteracting the problem. Moreover, they believe that security is a specific practice, which is formed by presenting an issue as a threat, and not necessarily by a real threat[12]. The securitization process assumes that there are at least two sides. The first is the entity responsible for presenting the issue as an existential threat, and the second is the side at risk[13].

The securitization process itself consists of three elements: a reference object, a securitization entity, and functional objects that are important for the perception of security[14]. The object of securitization can be sovereignty, territory, or identity. A given entity presents the issue as an existential threat, and the recipient of, for example, a group of interests or society, reacts to it in a positive or negative way.

Firstly, securitization pervades policy development and implementation. Secondly, it is mobilised through political discourse that exaggerates the risks of migration and asylum and, moreover, increases or decreases loyalty to political parties. Thirdly, securitization constructs migration as a security problem and proposes security-based solutions as the only viable remedy[15].

It is worth noting that the definition of threats by the state and society does not have to be the same. However, it is the state and political elites that make a significant contribution to formulating the topic in terms of security[16]. The state remains the most important securitizer; it has the legitimacy to act when a given issue is considered a threat. Non-state actors are also gaining importance as securitizing entities, among whom we can point out all kinds of media – radio, press, television, and social media. This group also includes non-governmental organisations and social and occupational groups. The success of the securitization process depends to a large extent on the possibilities and means at the disposal of the securitizing entity. An impor-

12 B. Buzan, O. Wæver, J. De Wilde, *Security: A new framework for analysis*, Boulder 1998, p. 24.
13 W. Kostecki, *Europe after the Cold War. The security complex theory*, Warsaw 1996, p. 48.
14 B. Buzan, O. Wæver, J. De Wilde, op. cit., p. 36.
15 A. Gerard, *The securitization of migration and refugee women*, London–New York 2014, p. 39.
16 A.W. Ziętek, *Sekurytyzacja migracji w bezpieczeństwie kulturowym Europy*, "Teka Komisji Politologii i Stosunków Międzynarodowych" 2017, vol. 12, no. 3, p. 34.

tant element is also the issue, problem, or phenomenon that is being securitized and the context in which it arises. Appropriate justification for the securitization of a given phenomenon makes it possible to undertake extraordinary actions that would not be possible under normal circumstances. It is worth noting that the fact that the securitizing entity takes up the issue does not mean that the said problem is automatically included in the security context. The success of the discussed process depends on the recipients' acceptance, in other words, on adopting an attitude and belief that a given phenomenon poses a threat to security.

3. The securitization of immigration in Poland

As already indicated, Poland is increasingly becoming a destination for immigration. Along with the increased population movements, the issue of immigration has become an element of the public debate. Therefore, the question arises – since when have we been talking about the securitization of immigration in Poland? According to the authors, the first event that caused a stir in Poland and Europe was the immigration crisis that began in 2015. The second, in turn, was the change of the ruling party, which resulted in the creation of a new government that refers in its activities to multidimensional security issues. The third factor was the events on the Polish-Belarusian border, which are essentially hybrid activities of the Russian Federation with the support of the Belarusian regime of Alyaksandr Lukashenko. These factors have created a previously absent opportunity to shape the image of immigration through the prism of a threat to state security.

In 2015, the debate in Europe, especially in the European Union, focused on the problem of illegal immigration. More than a million immigrants, most of them from the Middle East, arrived at the borders of Europe at that time. Mass immigration forced extraordinary steps to be taken to eliminate the negative consequences of illegal immigration. Despite the development of the EU's common immigration policy, the crisis affecting the Member States revealed systemic inef-

ficiency and a crisis of the values of the Community itself[17]. At that time, the aforementioned differences specified the migration "fronts" of the Member States. On the one hand, there were the members of the so-called old Union calling for the admission of immigrants, while on the other hand, some countries remained opposed to mass immigration and community mechanisms to solve the problem at the time[18]. Poland should be included in the second category of countries opposing the retreat. Initially, the Polish government agreed to accept a specific group of immigrants, however, after the parliamentary elections, right-wing parties won the majority of parliamentary seats, which changed the approach to this issue. Already during the election campaigns, the issue of immigration was being widely commented on. The consequence of this change was a change in the perception of the immigration issue, and thus the relocation of immigrants, and the approach to providing assistance in this regard.

The victory of the Law and Justice party can be regarded as a symbolic beginning of the immigration securitization process. This party, together with members of the United Right, created a government whose rhetoric around the issue of immigration focused on security threats resulting from immigration movements. The new Prime Minister, Beata Szydło, initially announced that the Polish government would honour the EU's decisions on immigrants, but that the safety of Poles would be the most important aspect. Despite the above-mentioned assurances, this did not happen and ultimately Poland was one of the few Member States that did not accept immigrants under the forced relocation system. Factors of an internal and external nature had an impact on the change in attitude. An example is the terrorist attacks in January 2016 in Paris, and in Brussels in March of the same year. At that time, Prime Minister Szydło stated that Poland would not accept immigrants because there was a fear that terrorists and supporters of the Islamic State would end up in Poland among them[19]. Then, the

17 G. Tutak, *Polityka migracyjna Polski wobec europejskiego kryzysu migracyjnego*, "Świat Idei i Polityki" 2017, no. 17, p. 461.

18 Ibid., p. 462.

19 *Szydło usztywnia stanowisko. Miało być 100 uchodźców, nie będzie żadnego*, 24 March 2016, https://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/polityka/artykuly/516410,beata-szydlo-rzad-pis-uchodzcy-imigranci-stanowisko-zamachy-bruksela-belgia.html [2.10.2022].

head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration, Mariusz Błaszczak, spoke in a similar tone. On the issue of forced relocation, he stated: "We will not accept anyone who would pose a threat to security. There are no people at the moment that we can say do not threaten security (…) about whom we would be 100 per cent sure that they do not threaten security. Unfortunately, many of these people used false documents, so we will not do anything that would threaten the security of Poland and Poles"[20].

Another threat from immigrants was pointed out by Jarosław Kaczyński, the president of the Law and Justice party. During one of the election meetings, he pointed to the threat of the emergence of new, so far absent diseases and parasites carried by immigrants[21]. In turn, in 2017, during a parliamentary debate, Prime Minister Beata Szydło, referring to the attacks in Manchester, pointed to attempts to "assault civilization" and its consequences for future generations. As Agata Ziętek notes, this was an indirect indication and a combination of the issues of immigration, culture, and security[22]. Further, in 2019, Zbigniew Ziobro, Minister of Justice and Prosecutor General, opening the conference "Migration and integration. The problem of the impact of migration on the increase in crime" at the Institute of Justice, stated that there are many negative consequences of opening the state to immigration. In his speech, he cited the example of the events of New Year's Eve in Cologne, where there were numerous rapes of women by immigrants[23].

From the perspective of securitization, an important factor that strengthened the narrative of the threat from immigrants was the events on the Polish-Belarusian border at the end of 2021. The migration pressure at the border was considered a hybrid activity, inspired and fuelled by the Russian Federation.

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20 *Szef MSWiA o uchodźcach: nie przyjmiemy nikogo, kto zagrażałby bezpieczeństwu*, 9 May 2016, https://polskieradio24.pl/5/3/Artykul/1617294,Szef-MSWiA-o-uchodzcach-nie-przyjmiemy-nikogo-kto-zagrazalby-bezpieczenstwu [2.10.2022].
21 *Kaczyński: Pasożyty i pierwotniaki w organizmach uchodźców groźne dla Polaków*, 13 October 2015, https://www.newsweek.pl/polska/jaroslaw-kaczynski-o-uchodzcach/89mwbx3 [2.10.2022].
22 A.W. Ziętek, op. cit., p. 34.
23 M. Nałęcz, *Zbigniew Ziobro o imigrantach: nie możemy do tego podchodzić na hurra, jak PO*, 9 October 2019, https://www.o2.pl/informacje/zbigniew-ziobro-o-imigrantach-nie-mozemy-do-tego-podchodzic-na-hurra-jak-po-6433233533953665a [4.10.2022].

In the context of the migration crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki pointed out that the Polish government would do everything to prevent mass immigration, focusing on the threat posed by illegal immigration not only for Poland but also for the entire European Union. Elsewhere, in the context of the described situation, he indicated that the government's priority would be the security of Polish citizens while claiming that "The border of the Polish state is not just a line on the map. Generations of Poles shed their blood abroad. This border is sacred. In the face of a threat, guarding the borders should be something absolutely obvious and based on the consensus of all political forces"[24]. The quoted statement not only points to the threat of illegal immigration but also refers to historically important values for Poles such as the inviolability of borders. It is a kind of reference to a sense of national identity.

In the debate on immigration, there are many other statements suggesting that immigration is a multidimensional threat. According to politicians who stigmatize immigration, it has a negative impact on national identity, poses a threat to native culture, values, the traditional family model, and the development of crime. The rhetoric conducted, therefore, refers to the most important values professed by Poles. It is worth noting that the issue of immigration after 2015 is present in the public debate with varying intensity. This is usually the result of the current domestic and international situation. Immigration has become more than just a social issue, it is also now a political issue and has become an element of electoral strategy, not only during the election campaign but also in everyday rhetoric

As mentioned, the securitization process can be initiated by various entities. In the case of Poland, the entities that reinforce the negative image of immigration include the right-wing media. Media that, by means of audio-visual messages, intensify the sense of fear and threat in society. Stereotypes and prejudices are other factors conducive to considering immigration from the perspective of a threat.

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24 *Morawiecki: Granica państwa jest świętością, za którą przelewały krew pokolenia Polaków*, 8 November 2021, https://www.gazetaprawna.pl/wiadomosci/kraj/artykuly/8287642, morawiecki-polska-granica-imigranci.html [4.10.2022].

The success of the securitization process depends on the acceptance, i.e., the analysis of a given phenomenon through the prism of a threat. In the process understood in this way, when the securitizing entity is the state, society plays an important role. Society as the sovereign of power, the electorate, and the potential beneficiary of securitization messages. The example of the immigration crisis in Europe in 2015 showed that the protection of human life in the humanitarian aspect and the securitization logic of deterring immigrants are mutually reinforcing in the political and social discourse. The consequence of such a relationship is the humane securitization of borders, where protection of human rights is granted only to a selected category of immigrants, while the others are "animalized" in the whole process[25].

Poland is an ethnically homogeneous country that is only now facing large-scale immigration. Previous attitudes towards immigrants and refugees have developed on the basis of limited contact with these groups[26]. Social attitudes were shaped mainly by media messages, often only on the occasion of terrorist attacks or emergency situations. Moreover, they were formed by political statements, interest groups, and non-governmental organisations. It is worth mentioning that often the messages coming from the various entities differed dramatically. The fear of strangers increased the fear of immigration. After 2015, especially in the context of the migration crisis in Europe, the ruling party in Poland created the image of a refugee as a total threat, with multidimensional negative consequences[27].

In Poland, the preferences of Poles in terms of immigration and refugees are examined by the Centre for Public Opinion Research. This part of the article will present changes in the attitudes of Polish citizens towards immigration and exile.

Poles' views on the attitude towards refugees have been studied since 2004. As the results of the research show, until 2015 there were no significant changes in the analysed issue. Over the period of 11 years,

25 N. Vaughan-Williams, *We are not animals! Humanitarian border security and zoopolitical spaces in Europe*, "Political Geography" 2015, vol. 45, p. 4.
26 K. Pędziwiatr, *Islamophobia in Poland. National Report 2016*, [in:] E. Bayrakli, F. Hafeza (eds.), *European Islamophobia Report 2016*, Istanbul 2017, p. 418.
27 A. Legut, K. Pędziwiatr, *Sekurytyzacja migracji w polityce polskiej a zmiana postaw Polaków wobec muzułmanów*, [in:] R. Jończy (ed.), *Sami swoi? Wielokulturowość we współczesnej Europie*, Gliwice–Opole 2018, p. 46.

almost 75% of Poles believed that Poland should accept refugees[28]. In one survey conducted in 2015, respondents indicated the need to help refugees, but only 14% agreed to their settlement in Poland. It is worth mentioning that Poles were much more favourable towards helping Ukrainians as refugees than the citizens of Middle Eastern and African countries[29]. In addition to the above-mentioned survey, in 2015, CBOS conducted another survey – Newcomers from near and far, about immigrants in Poland. According to the majority of respondents (66%), the presence of foreigners has a positive impact on culture and the level of tolerance. This opinion is expressed more often by the better-educated of the respondents[30]. Also indicated by the study, the percentage of people opposed to foreign neighbours has decreased by almost half since the end of the 1990s. It is worth noting that Poles' attitudes towards immigration are geographical in nature, i.e., attitudes towards immigrants depend on their place of origin.

Also in 2016, during the ongoing immigration crisis in Europe, research was conducted on the attitude towards accepting refugees in Poland. In September 2016, 53% of respondents were opposed to accepting people from conflict-affected areas, while 43% were of the opinion that help should be provided in places where refugees come from. It is worth noting that some Poles from this group believe that help should be provided until the situation forcing them to flee ceases to exist – 38%[31]. In 2017, there were 63% of opponents, which is 11 percentage points more than in December 2016. However, 33% were in favour of accepting refugees.

For example, Poles are much more willing to help foreigners who are culturally close. In 2017, as many as 75% opposed the relocation of refugees to Poland from the Middle East and Africa who arrived in the European Union. On the other hand, the attitude towards immigrants from eastern Ukraine, migrating from areas affected by military operations, was generally favourable. Granting them asylum in

28   K. Kowalczuk, *Polacy wobec problemu uchodźstwa*, CBOS, komunikat z badań nr 81/2015, Warsaw 2015, https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2015/K_081_15.PDF [4.10.2022].
29   Ibid.
30   K. Kowalczuk, *Przybysze z bliska i daleka, czyli o imigrantach w Polsce*, CBOS, komunikat z badan nr 93/2015, Warsaw 2015, https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2015/K_093_15.PDF [4.10.2022].
31   B. Badora, *Stosunek do przyjmowania uchodźców*, CBOS, komunikat z badań nr 169/2016, Warsaw 2016, https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2016/K_169_16.PDF [5.10.2022].

Poland was approved by six out of ten respondents – 61%, while almost a third (32%) were against it[32].

The aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, which began on 24 February 2022, has caused changes in the space of interstate relations. The conflict in the immediate vicinity of Poland resulted in taking extraordinary measures to help Ukrainian citizens. In connection with the conflict, 91% of Poles believe that refugees from Ukraine should be accepted, and only 4% are against it[33].

The presented research leads to the conclusion that Poles are much more able to accept immigrants as refugees from areas affected by conflicts and who are culturally close than from distant geographical areas. This relationship translates to immigrants in general. Poles feel much greater reluctance towards immigration from the Middle East and Africa than from Eastern Europe. According to the authors, such a state of affairs may result from stereotypes that have been reinforced and perpetuated by the mass media in the context of the aforementioned immigration from the Middle East. This image is often negative, presented in the context of the Islamization of native culture and values, the feeling of being threatened, and the increased danger of terrorism. The aforementioned reluctance and argumentation of the threat, and thus the acceptance of the securitization process, is characteristic of people with right-wing views.

Conclusions

Although the issue of immigration has become more visible in public discourse in Poland, especially after 2015, it has had varied intensity. The topic usually returns on the occasion of events involving immigrants. It is worth noting that these are often merely negative messages. Terrorist attacks, threats to native culture and values, the immigration policies of Western countries and their negative effects are the most common arguments used to reinforce the securitising message. It is important to note that the process of securitising im-

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32 M. Feliksiak, *Stosunek do przyjmowania uchodźców*, CBOS, komunikat z badań nr 163/2017, Warsaw 2017, https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2017/K_163_17.PDF [5.10.2022].
33 M. Feliksiak, *Polacy wobec uchodźców z Ukrainy*, CBOS, komunikat z badań nr 62/2022, Warsaw 2022, https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2022/K_062_22.PDF [5.10.2022].

migration is also based on emotions to some extent, especially those related to fear. A kind of "playing on emotions" may foster the acceptance of arguments of the securitising entity that would not normally be accepted by the recipient.

In Poland, we can currently speak of a certain group of immigrants that are most-criticised, these are the immigrants from Africa and the Middle East. This group will not include immigration from Eastern Europe, e.g., Ukraine. The securitisation of immigration from the Eastern European area would contradict the Eastern dimension of Poland's post-1989 foreign policy. It is much easier for Poles to accept immigrants from close cultural circles than those from remote latitudes. This is why the authors of this article claim that despite the fact that a securitisation process has begun, it is unfinished. Paradoxically, it must be admitted that the process has been slowed down by the assistance given to refugees from Ukraine, and the rhetorical arguments securitising immigration have been excluded from the official political narrative. Consequently, the securitisation of immigration is only at the initial stage of acceptance primarily by the electorate of the current ruling party.

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