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Czech Cultural Identity: Incompatible with Mass Muslim Immigration and Contributes to Rising European Populism

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**CZECH CULTURAL IDENTITY: INCOMPATIBLE WITH MASS MUSLIM
IMMIGRATION AND CONTRIBUTES TO
RISING EUROPEAN POPULISM**

A Master's Thesis

Presented to

The Graduate College of

Missouri State University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science, Defense and Strategic Studies

By

Alana Vorda

December 2017

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Defense and Strategic Studies

Missouri State University, December 2017

Master of Science

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the respective successes and failures of the Czech experience with integrating Roma and Vietnamese immigrants, and asserts that, given deeply established historical and cultural narratives, and contemporary domestic political considerations as shown in these two previous cases, the Czech Republic is unlikely to effectively assimilate any new surge in Muslim immigration. Developments in the Czech Republic are likely, therefore, to reflect the accelerating populist momentum that is currently sweeping Central and Eastern European states.

KEYWORDS: Czech Republic, Roma population, European Agenda on Migration, European Migrant Crisis, immigration, Islamophobia, nationalism, populism, xenophobia

This abstract is approved as to form and content

Andrei Shoumikhin
Chairperson, Advisory Committee
Missouri State University

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In the interest of academic freedom and the principle of free speech, approval of this thesis indicates the format is acceptable and meets the academic criteria for the discipline as determined by the faculty that constitute the thesis committee. The content and views expressed in this thesis are those of the student-scholar and are not endorsed by Missouri State University, its Graduate College, or its employees.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The Czech narrative consists of a centuries-long struggle for sovereignty that created sentiments and perceptions so deep-rooted they continue to influence Czech political policy. The correlation is purported by associate professor at the College of Wooster, Jeffrey S. Lantis: “Both history and experience are important considerations in the birth and evolution of states, and the strategic cultural identities that comprise them.”¹ Therefore, examining Czech’s historical and cultural experience is pertinent to establishing a foundational understanding of current Czech identity and subsequent domestic political policy.

While Czech culture dates back to 6th Century BC, Czech nationalism and the desire for sovereignty are considered to have fomented during the 15th Century. Throughout its struggle towards sovereignty, Czech efforts were repeatedly crushed by “outside” powers who often attempted to suppress Czech culture. Albeit the Czechs achieved independence a few times throughout history, each glimpse was short-lived due to invasions by one oppressor after the other. The Czechs faced subjugation under the Roman Catholic Church, the Hapsburgs, the Germans, and finally the Soviets—all stronger, outside powers who were intent on eliminating Czech nationalism. However, none were able to fully curb the nationalist sentiment and determination of the Czech people. As they seemingly witnessed defeat after defeat, Czech nationalism grew stronger

¹ Jeannie L. Johnson, Kerry M. Kartchner, and Jeffrey Arthur Larsen, *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Culturally Based Insights into Comparative National Security Policymaking*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, 40. The authors’ definition of “strategic culture” is *that set of shared beliefs, assumptions, and modes of behavior, derived from common experiences and accepted narratives (both oral and written), that shape collective identity and relationships to other groups, and which determine appropriate ends and means for achieving security objectives,*” 9.

until finally realizing a lasting, independent Czech nation in the late 20th century. The Czech's relentless fight for independence (that spanned centuries) demonstrates the tenacity of Czech nationalism which still pervades both the Czech ethos and political policy today. This marked nationalism, oppressive past, and reverence for its former leaders, contributed to the development of Czech's strategic culture and xenophobia. An analysis of Czech history—its experience with oppressors, foreigners, and with the West—offers insight into how Czech nationalism and xenophobia influence Czech's past, current, and potential future policy on immigration.

To further understand the impact of Czech history on its current immigration policy, a comparison between Czech's (like that of its neighbors within the Visegrád Four) historical experience with immigration with Western Europe's, demonstrates both contrasting historical experiences and contemporary immigration policies. Following the Second World War and the division of Europe into Western and Eastern blocs, the Czech Republic and other states within the Eastern bloc experienced limited non-white immigration compared with the West. Possibly due to a combination of a lack of exposure to mass non-white immigrants and historic xenophobia, Czech attitudes toward its own immigrant populations and potential immigrant populations remain poor.

Czech's current largest, non-white immigrant populations—the Roma and Vietnamese—remain small and have arguably failed to assimilate into Czech society. While Czech Roma immigrated to the Czech lands centuries ago, and the Vietnamese arrived within the past few decades, the two ethnic groups continue to be perceived as “outsiders.” A study of the two groups' assimilation progress suggests that the Czech's discriminatory behavior is an offshoot of the Czech struggle for nationalism and

consequent xenophobia. The study also helps to predict the prospect that another non-white immigrant population—specifically Muslim immigrants—may successfully assimilate into Czech society.

Since 2015, the topic of Muslim immigration became increasingly pertinent as Europe faced the largest wave of immigration since post-WWII. The controversial issue has sparked numerous debates among EU member states—one of which was the distribution of millions of refugees. The EU Council determined that the overwhelming numbers of refugees arriving primarily in Italy and Greece would be redistributed among EU states per the *European Agenda on Migration*. The quota plan tested Czech's xenophobic perception that permeates its strategic approach to Muslim refugees. Possibly due to the rise of Islamist terrorism throughout Western Europe and the onset of the migrant crisis in 2015, xenophobic sentiments have morphed into Islamophobia, causing Czech and its regional allies in the V4 to resist and denounce the EU's redistribution plan. Czech officials unsurprisingly denounced the plan, cited their "Islamophobic" sentiments, and accused the plan of impeding Czech sovereignty. Although only Slovakia and Hungary challenged the plan in the EU court, the V4 collectively expressed their distaste for Muslim immigrants. Their leaders referenced the increased frequency of Islamist terror attacks throughout Western Europe and were unconvinced that Muslims can successfully assimilate. This expressed hostility towards Muslim immigrants is propagated by the Czech Republic—further supporting the notion that the same discrimination that plagues its current non-white groups is likely to similarly affect any relocated Muslim immigrants into the Czech Republic—or perhaps worse. Ultimately suggesting that holding the Czech Republic and the remaining V4 countries accountable

to the quota plan would offer Muslim refugees little opportunity for successful assimilation. As the September 2017 deadline for relocations passed, the V4 countries collectively accepted only 28 of the mandated 11,069 despite EU threats of fines against the dissenting countries. In addition, there is a growing aversion to the quota plan by other member states (e.g., Austria, Estonia, Latvia, Romania). While the EU still lacks an agreeable solution to the future of immigration, the quota plan remains a contentious topic within the continued discussion.

Even in the historically diverse populations of Western Europe, the Czech sentiment is becoming increasingly popular. Whether due to terror attacks or economic anxieties, the deeply-divisive topic of immigration is witnessing various political consequences as governments throughout Europe (especially Central and Eastern Europe) are becoming increasingly populist.² The adamant devotion to anti-immigration policies has fueled a call for less EU integration and underlines growing Eurosceptic sentiments. Politicians have successfully gained popularity by campaigning on nativist, xenophobic, and “Eurosceptic” platforms.

In the Czech Republic, the populist party ANO—led by Andrej Babiš—won three times the number of votes of its nearest rival in Czech’s October elections, further echoing the recent shift in Europe in favor of anti-establishment groups.³ Babiš successfully campaigned primarily on an agenda of anti-Muslim immigration and on

² Matthew Goodwin, "European Populism Is Here to Stay," *The New York Times*, 20 October 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/20/opinion/european-populism-is-here-to-stay.html>. “In 2000, 10 of the 15 national governments within the European Union had left-wing parties in power. Today, only six of the 28 national governments do.”

³ Robert Muller, "Czech Election Winner Babis Meets Anti-EU Party in Hunt for Viable Government," *Business Insider*, 26 October 2017, <http://www.businessinsider.com/r-czech-election-winner-babis-meets-anti-eu-party-in-hunt-for-viable-government-2017-10>.

limiting Czech's integration into the EU, demonstrating the degree to which both nationalism and xenophobia motivate the Czech people. This platform is likely to also be utilized by current Czech President Miloš Zeman during his campaign for the upcoming January 2018 presidential election. If Zeman is reelected, the Czech Republic will witness the furthest shift right in politics in decades, further aligning it with the V4, and in-tandem with the rise of populism through Central and Eastern Europe—and possibly in Western Europe. While neither Czech politician advocates a “Czexit” from the EU or NATO, a coalition of the two has the potential to impact its neighbors within the region and even Western Europe. With officials in the V4—and now both Austria and Germany—advocating anti-immigration and anti-Muslim stances, the new Czech administration is likely to continue to ally with the V4 and exploit the growing Islamophobia pervading Western Europe to influence EU policy.

This thesis will examine the roots of Czech's cultural identity, the events that shape it, and its current impact on Czech policy. The thesis begins with an understanding of the Czech historical experience which demonstrates an entrenched sense of nationalism and xenophobia. The effects of which are detailed in a study of the assimilation progress of its two largest non-white minority populations (the Czech Roma and Vietnamese) that not only suggests a low probability for Czech's future immigrant populations to integrate, but emphasizes the depths of Czech xenophobia. The thesis then considers the controversy following the European Agenda on Migration where EU populists began capitalizing on Islamophobic and Eurosceptic sentiments to garner popularity among their populations. In October, the Czech Republic reflected this trend by electing Andrej Babiš' party to majority in Czech's Parliament. As current President

Miloš Zeman is popularly considered for reelection, the thesis ultimately predicts that a government led by both Babiš and Zeman will accelerate the populist momentum that is currently sweeping Central and Eastern European states.

The chapters are organized chronologically, beginning with an historical background of the experiences shaping Czech's identity and perceptions, to the current influence of its cultural narrative within the context of the EU and the migrant crisis. Chapter Two examines the history of the formation of the Czech Republic to demonstrate the depths of Czech nationalism and xenophobia. Chapter Three analyzes the poor integration status of both the Czech Roma and Vietnamese to illustrate the negative effects of its xenophobia on its current immigrant populations and speculate that future non-white immigrants will suffer the same meager results. The previous two chapters serve as a prerequisite for Chapter Four and its discussion on the Czech Republic's perspectives on EU immigration following the European Migrant Crisis of 2015. The chapter considers the Czech stance within the scope of the Visegrád Four as well as in comparison with the liberal policies typical of Western Europe. It illustrates the historic dichotomy between the two perspectives, but addresses the rising popularity of Islamophobia and Euroscepticism across all of Europe. The fourth chapter concludes with an updated discussion of Czech Republic's recent Parliamentary elections—which effected a shift right in the government—that echoes the populist trend pervading Eastern and Central Europe. The confluence of all the previous chapters is recapitulated in the final chapter (Chapter Five) to support the thesis' assertion that the Czech Republic's deep-rooted historic and cultural narratives negatively affect Czech's non-white immigrant populations, will produce the same effects on future Muslim immigrants, and

will ultimately reflect the rising trend of populism throughout Central and Eastern Europe.

CHAPTER TWO: CZECH NATIONALISM

The history of the Czech Republic is filled with oppression, deception, and an overall struggle towards independence. Beginning in at least the 15th Century, the Czech people faced one of their first experiences with an outside power intent on suppressing Czech identity. While this was only the first of many struggles the Czech people would endure in the face of more powerful “outsiders,” it also marked the beginnings of Czech nationalism. Over the course of at least half of a millennium, Czech nationalism fueled the ambition for a sovereign Czech state. By the 20th Century, the Czech people were able to achieve independence on a few separate occasions—only to be overtaken soon after. Amid defeat after defeat, their determination for independence did not falter, but doggedly propelled them towards to finally realize their goal in 1989. The experiences of both oppression and brief successes largely shape Czech cultural identity and subsequent security strategies. While Czech history demonstrates the depths of Czech nationalism, it also explains the development of the Czech’s fear of foreign powers—or xenophobia. Within the aims of this thesis, examining the associated development of these two perceptions throughout Czech history creates a fundamental understanding of the deep-rooted narratives shaping its cultural identity which continue to pervade contemporary Czech policy.

Czech Late Middle Ages

During the 15th century, conflict in the Czech lands (the territories of Bohemia, Moravia, and Czech Silesia) took the form of a religious reform movement between

Catholics and Protestants. The rector of Charles University, a Czech realist, and ordained priest, Jan Hus, became both the new leader of the Bethlehem Chapel in Prague and of the reform movement. Hus' Protestant, reformist agenda condemned the wealth, corruption, and hierarchical tendencies of the Roman Catholic Church which attracted the following of many Czech scholars at the university and the Czech-speaking masses to whom he preached. Conversely, it angered the conservative Czech and Catholic German populations who remained loyal to the Pope. 6 July 1415, Hus was tried, convicted, and burned at the stake for his heresies against the Church, ultimately strengthening a movement for reform that took the shape of a massive protest. In 1419, a group of Hus' followers (Hussites) killed seven members of the city council by throwing them out of the window at Prague's New Town Hall (known as the First Defenestration), ultimately prompting the Hussite Wars (1420-1434).

Following the Hussites' withstanding five separate crusades launched against them by the Church, both sides compromised in the agreement known as the *Compacts of Basel*. The Compacts outlined non-interference of religious practice and equality for both the Hussites and Catholics (although not officially accepted by Czech Catholics until 1485). The significance of the Hussites' feat included not only religious freedom, but sparked the determination of the Czech people to establish their national identity and independence. Although it is uncertain if at the time of the Hussite Wars, Czech nationalism was an outright ambition or the stirrings of a latent desire, the centuries that followed decidedly witnessed Czech nationalism foment and ultimately triumph.

Czech Dark Ages

Less than a century later in 1526, the Czech lands fell under Habsburg rule, and

remained there for nearly four centuries. *The Peace of Augsburg* (1555) temporarily settled the conflicts within the Holy Roman Empire stemming from the Protestant Reformation, with the principle *cuius regio, eius religio* (whose realm, his religion), that permitted each ruler to determine the religion of those ruled. Subsequent Habsburg kings did not impose Catholicism on their majority-Protestant subjects—who were granted additional concessions and rights under Rudolf II (Holy Roman Emperor and King of Bohemia (1576-1612)). In 1609, three years before his death, Rudolf signed the *Letter of Majesty*, allowing Bohemia's largely Protestant estates the right to freely exercise their religion and set up a Protestant Bohemian state church controlled by the estates.

The improvements seen under previous Habsburg kings were soon overshadowed in 1617, when Ferdinand II was crowned King of Bohemia (Holy Roman Emperor 1619). Infamous for his Catholic fervor and support for the Catholic Counter-Reformation, Ferdinand demonstrated his religious intolerance of his Protestant subjects when he forcibly ended the construction of Protestant chapels on royal land in 1618. Later that year, an assembly of Protestants preempted the Bohemian Revolt by throwing two Catholic Lords Regent (Count Jaroslav Borzita of Martinice and Count Vilem Slavata of Chlum) out of the palace window (both survived the 70-foot/21-metre fall) in what is referred to as the (Second) Defenestration of Prague.

The defenestration ignited a larger Protestant rebellion against the Habsburgs in Bohemia in what grew to become the deadliest religious war in the history of Europe: The Thirty Years War (1618-1648).⁴ While the Protestant rebels deposed Ferdinand as

⁴ Matthew White, *Selected Death Tolls for Wars, Massacres and Atrocities Before the 20th Century*, January 2012, <http://necrometrics.com/pre1700a.htm#30YrW>.

emperor in 1619, any progress made proved exceedingly short-lived. Although the war lasted decades, Ferdinand II's absence from the Bohemian throne lasted one year—he famously retook the throne following the one-hour Battle of Bílá Hora (White Mountain 1620). After his reinstatement as King of Bohemia, progress toward Bohemian autonomy ended, and a century of *doba temna* (Dark Ages) began.⁵

Ferdinand swiftly imposed various programs and punishments for those who opposed him. In 1621, 27 of the rebellion's leaders (three lords, seven knights, and 17 burghers) were executed at the Old Town Square in Prague, the land belonging to anyone who participated in the rebellion was confiscated, and the upper estates and royal boroughs that functioned as centers of economic and cultural activities were ruined. Further, he declared the Bohemian crown as the hereditary property of the Habsburg family—decimating the last vestiges of Bohemian independence and influence in elections. Ferdinand selected German-speaking Habsburgs and foreigners to fill vacant seats in the upper social classes, eventually instilling German as the official language of public affairs. The increase of German population and decline of Czech population—primarily Czech nobility—both widened the disparity between upper and lower classes and marked the decline in the Czech language.

Ferdinand notoriously rescinded Rudolf's *Letter of Majesty* and officially declared Roman Catholicism as the sole Christian faith (the only non-Catholics permitted were Jews—although they faced discrimination), beginning the process of “re-Catholicization” of the Bohemian and Moravian people. The uncompromising decree

⁵ William P. Guthrie, *Battles of the Thirty Years War: From White Mountain to Nordlingen, 1618-1635*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002, 92.

demanded the population choose one of two options: convert or emigrate. The Czech population thus suffered the forced emigration of Protestant Czechs in addition to casualties from the Thirty-Years War, epidemics of disease, and famine; collectively these effected an extensive decline in the population Czech lands. Estimates suggest the Bohemian population was reduced by up to one-half, and the Moravian by up to one-fourth.⁶

Among the Protestant Czechs forced to leave were the nobility and the bourgeoisie who comprised most of the intelligentsia. Those that remained and converted to Roman Catholicism received education and guidance from Jesuit missionaries who returned after being banned in 1618 by Bohemian directors. In 1654, the Jesuits merged their college in Prague, Klementinum, with Charles University—further subjecting higher education and literary production to Catholic control. Ferdinand II's measures changed nearly every facet of Czech society: the population, language, role of the government, and even the appearance of Prague. Baroque style was hailed by the Church as the most faithful expression of their religious convictions and worldly ambitions and thus dominated Bohemian architecture, sculpture, and painting—ostensibly altering Czech identity.⁷

Czech Enlightenment and National Revival

The Habsburgs enforced re-Catholicization and “Germanization” of the Czech

⁶“Czechs,” *Junior Worldmark Encyclopedia of World Cultures*, Accessed 1 September 2017, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/international/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/czechs>.

⁷ Hauner et al., “Czechoslovak History,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 7 March 2016, www.britannica.com/topic/Czechoslovak-history#toc42101.

people, suppressing the Czech language and national consciousness for nearly two centuries. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, Czech identity finally emerged during the Age of Enlightenment. Described by Czech historian Jaroslav Pánek: “At the beginning of the 19th century, only a very few nation-conscious Czechs and Germans in the Czech Lands were found, however, at the end of the century, most of the population defined themselves along national or ethnic lines.”⁸ The buddings of Czech nationalism are considered to have begun under Habsburg Empress Maria Theresa and her son Joseph II who succeeded her. The reforms they enacted characterized the Age of Enlightenment that dominated Europe in the 18th century. Therefore, although Maria and Joseph II centralized and Germanized their imperial bureaucracies, other educational and religious reforms ultimately increased economic and social mobility for the Czechs. Maria expelled the Jesuits in 1773, required educational instruction for all children ages six-twelve, and shifted educational emphasis from theology to the sciences. As the nobility began focusing on industrialization and Czech peasants moved to cities to work in the manufacturing centers, the urban areas (previously dominated by the German population) became increasingly Czech. Also, as the children of Czech peasants received education and attended university, a new Czech intellectual elite emerged. During this same period, the population of Bohemia nearly quadrupled, and a similar increase occurred in Moravia.⁹

After co-ruling with his mother for ten years, Joseph’s sole reign (1780-1790)

⁸ Jaroslav Pánek and Oldřich Tůma, *A History of the Czech Lands*, Prague: Karolinum, 2014, 296.

⁹ Ihor Gawdiak, *Czechoslovakia: A Country Study*, Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1987.

expanded upon his mother's reforms by issuing new edicts and laws along the same Enlightenment principles. This included his issue of the *Patent of Tolerance* (1781) and the *Edict of Tolerance* (1782), each respectively granting tolerance to non-Catholic Christians and Jews. The collective policies of Joseph II (known as Josephinism) helped create a unified, centralized multi-national government and a rational, secular society that permitted greater freedom and equality. This included freedom for serfs, lighter censorship for the press and theatre, and an aggressive policy on religious toleration. While the elite remained highly Germanized, the Czech peasantry and their patois stirred, experiencing a national "awakening" and the beginnings of the Czech National Revival. Although often referred sardonically as an "enlightened despot," Joseph's Enlightenment reforms undeniably paved a course for Czech nationalism to progress in the following decades.¹⁰

The early, philological phase of Czech revival witnessed increased literacy, knowledgeability, and the demand for printed texts. By 1785, the Czech intelligentsia and waves of scholars began recording and systematizing the Czech language, and created a literary milieu through the large-scale publishing of books and newspapers in Czech.¹¹ In 1791, Czech instruction and literature was reintroduced to Charles University.

One of the most influential figures of the Revival was journalist, Václav Matěj Kramerius, whose works contributed the revival of written Czech. He worked for the only Czech language weekly before starting his own newspaper (*Pražské poštovské*

¹⁰ T.C.W. Blanning, *Joseph II and Enlightened Despotism*, London: Longman, 1994, 64.

¹¹ Pánek and Tůma.

noviny, renamed *Kramerijsovy c.k. vlastenecké noviny*) and a publishing house (*Česká expedice*). Most of the Czech books of his time were published at *Česká expedice*, with *Kramerijs* authoring about 80 books himself.¹² Two other contributors to the Czech revival are Josef Dobrovský, and Josef Jungmann who are credited for the introduction of Czech study to state schools and their proliferation of Czech literature. Derek Sayer, a popular Czech historian, credits Jungmann's translation of Milton's "Paradise Lost" as the cornerstone of modern literary Czech language. Dobrovský (a student of Jungmann) personally published five volumes of a Czech-German dictionary. The efforts of these two earned them the honorific dub: "the creators of the modern Czech language."¹³¹⁴

As Czech nationalism was ignited by the revival of language, the dissemination of cultural history via text was the fuel. Another scholar under Dobrovský's guidance, the most influential figure during the Revival, was František Palacký—one of three acclaimed "Fathers of the Nation."¹⁵ Palacký and Count Francis Sternberg (one of the few Bohemian nobles interested in history of the region) helped found the association known as the *Society of the Bohemian Museum* (1818). The Society aimed to revive a Czech nationalist sentiment by collecting objects and articles connected with the history of Bohemia. Palacký's faithfulness to the cause was demonstrated when reacting to critics and doubters of the Revival, even unleashing a fiery diatribe on Dobrovský once

¹² Derek Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia: A Czech History*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000, 79.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 109.

¹⁴ Vladimír Macura, Hana Píchová, and Craig Cravens, *The Mystifications of a Nation: "The Potato Bug" and Other Essays on Czech Culture*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2010, 27.

¹⁵ Sayer, 129.

for only writing in German: “If we all act thus, then indeed our nation must perish through intellectual famine. As for me, even if I was a gipsy by birth and the last descendant of that race, I should consider it as my duty to strive with all my might that honoured records of my race should be preserved to the history of humanity.”¹⁶

Palacký’s five-volume magnum opus, *The History of the Czech Nation in Bohemia and Moravia* chronicles the history of Bohemia to 1526 as a dialectical conflict between the Slavs and Germans, based on national and religious differences. Despite Palacký’s noble patronage, he was mindful of the opposition his work would attract from the Austrian political elite who were ruled by Francis I (previously known as Francis II) at the time. An opponent of the French Revolution, Francis was distrustful of any form of radicalism and set up an extensive network of police spies and censors to monitor dissent.¹⁷ Regardless of the risks Palacký faced in his work, his convictions overcame his fears. Evidence of this can be seen in his personal account of the nature of the government—and may have also incited the people of Bohemia:

The government authorities, no doubt, well knew that the former attitude of the Austrian government with regard to Bohemia would find no mercy before the judgement-seat of history, even though the sufferers could no longer make their grievances known. What happened in the interior of Bohemia during the Thirty Years War is even now one of those secrets of history that make the few who have attempted even slightly to lift the veil, tremble. I was some time ago asked by men of some importance whether it would not be better if the unhappy and melancholy events of the past were consigned to complete oblivion, rather than that an attempt should be made to incite men's minds by recalling these events, thus disturbing the happy peace of the present time. These men knew nothing of the events of the past, but they felt instinctively that an account of the past would excite men's minds. No wonder therefore that the government did not further

¹⁶ Francis Lützow, *Lectures on the Historians of Bohemia; Being the Ilchester Lectures for the Year 1904*, London: Henry Frowde, Amen Corner, 1905, 91.

¹⁷ Andrew Wheatcroft, *The Habsburgs: Embodying Empire*, London: Penguin, 1996, 238-240.

historical studies, and indeed endeavoured to hinder them in every way.¹⁸

Palacký's favorable portrayal of the Hussites drew consternation from the censors who purposely delayed the progress of his work. They allowed him to release only specific volumes at designated times, issued alternative works to undermine his content, and removed or interpolated sections of his text.¹⁹

Before the Revolutions of 1848 began, the Czech Revival was propelled almost exclusively by language, literature, and culture. The Revolutions spurred the Czechs (and other Slavs) to convene in their first political assembly, transforming the Revival into a politically-powered vessel. With Palacký at the head as President of the Prague Slavonic Congress, he steered the various Slavic nations in unity, towards the goal of civil and cultural rights for all Slavs within the monarchy. The Congress approved the *Manifesto to the Nations of Europe* that outlined equal rights for all nations. However, the Congress ended prematurely due to violent events at the 1848 Prague Uprising. The political unrest following the Uprising prevented the Manifesto from improving the political course for the Czech people. Despite this and other set-backs (e.g., the suppression of Slav identity under the new dual-monarchy of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, a failed attempt to attain equal status with Hungary in the *Fundamental Articles* of 1871), Czech identity was fully formed and determined towards independence. The Czech National Revival persevered—into the First World War which proved to be pivotal in the creation of the First Czechoslovak Republic.

¹⁸ Ibid., 92-93.

¹⁹ Monika Baár, *Historians and Nationalism: East-Central Europe in the Nineteenth Century*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2010, 98-99.

The First World War

The Czech people feared the potentially detrimental effects of a German victory on Czech autonomy which prompted them to adamantly oppose the Central Powers (the German, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman Empires, and the Kingdom of Bulgaria). Austro-Hungarian rule was increasingly despotic under both František Josef I and Charles I who suppressed the rise of Slav nationalism by heavily censoring the press, forbidding public meetings, and imprisoning anyone displaying any form of divergence from the dual monarchy. Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, a philosopher, politician, and former member of both the *Reichsrat* (Austrian Imperial Council) and the Young Czech Party was exiled for championing both a unified Czechoslovak nation and the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. While exiled, Masaryk traveled around the world, successfully garnering the support and recognition of many leaders, including U.S. President Woodrow Wilson. Soon after the U.S. joined the war, Wilson debuted his salient *Fourteen Points* outlining principles of peace. Point Ten pertinently demanded: “The peoples of Austria-Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be accorded the freest opportunity of autonomous development.”²⁰ Following the *Fourteen Points*, were two key documents that contributed to the creation of the first Czechoslovak Republic in 1918: the *Pittsburgh Agreement* (the Czech-Slovak memorandum of understanding to create an independent Czechoslovakia) and the *Treaty of Versailles* (ended the First World War and outlined the new territorial arrangements). Finally, after almost four centuries of Habsburg rule, the

²⁰ “President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points,” *Avalon Project*, Accessed 6 September 2017, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/wilson14.asp.

Austro-Hungarian Empire collapsed and the “Czechoslovak State had come to life.”²¹

The First Czechoslovak Republic and the Second World War

The First Czechoslovak Republic (Czechoslovakia, ČSR) attained its independence (recognized on 28 October 1918) and elected Masaryk as its first President to its parliamentary democracy. Parliament ratified the Constitution of the Czechoslovak Republic in February 1920, adopting inspiration from the French, Swiss, and American constitutions in its dedication to democratic rights and freedoms. The nascent government demonstrated stability, a prospering economy, increased international relations (via agreements such as: *The Little Entente*, *Treaty of Alliance and Friendship between France and Czechoslovakia*, the *Czechoslovak-Soviet Agreements*), and held parliamentary elections.²² However, the new republic’s apparent progress was plagued by the unrest of the Sudeten Germans (ethnic Germans that lived in former Bohemia) and fascist Germans (who reoccupied the Rhineland in direct violation of the Versailles Treaty). Czechoslovaks felt increasingly isolated once Great Britain and France notoriously opted for a policy of “appeasement” toward Germany and again when Germany and Poland signed the *Germany-Polish Non-Aggression Pact*.

By 1937, the Czechoslovak Republic was one of the last remaining democracies in Central and Eastern Europe.²³ The following year, the Sudeten German Party became the dominant political group among the fascist, German population of the ČSR. After

²¹ Sayer, 395.

²² *Ibid.*, 403-404, 415.

²³ *Ibid.*, 424.

witnessing the successful annexation of Austria to Germany (*Austrian Anschluss*), the Sudeten German party advocated their own “Anschluss,” causing further trepidation among Czechoslovakians. In a show of resolve, the Czechoslovak army mobilized at the border where the German population was concentrated to demonstrate their resistance to the growing fascist empire. This mobilization and the Soviet Union’s commitment to the security alliance offered Czechoslovaks some relief. However, as British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain began direct negotiations with the German Chancellor Adolf Hitler, any remaining confidence in the Czechs quickly dissipated.

Hitler decried the Czechoslovak oppression of Sudeten Germans who populated the border areas of the Czech lands and demanded their secession. Great Britain responded with faithfulness to their policy of appeasement, offering Czechoslovakia an ultimatum: agree to the terms, or face abandonment. Czechoslovakia conceded to the demands of its Western allies. Days later, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy (Czechoslovakia was not allowed to participate; thus, the slogan was coined: *o nás bez nás* or “about us, without us”) met and signed the *Munich Agreement* (known to Czechs as the Munich Betrayal or *Mnichovská zrada*). The agreement authorized Germany to occupy the Sudetenland immediately and effectively ended the First Czechoslovak Republic—less than twenty years after its founding—in 1938. The agreement was a violation of international law, a violation of the sovereignty of Czechoslovakia, and was the ultimate betrayal by its western allies.

The Second and Third Czechoslovak Republics

Second Republic. The newly outlined Second Czechoslovak Republic attempted

to maintain its remaining sovereignty amid an encroaching fascist Germany. Hitler's demands for the Munich Agreement were based on claims of Czechoslovak persecution of ethnic Germans residing in the border regions. He quickly began "cleansing" those regions which entailed "preventative" arrests of opponents to the new regime. Within the first months, about ten thousand people were arrested, one-third of which were sent to concentration camps.²⁴ Many others emigrated due to fears of repression and persecution. By the end of 1938, less than half of the original Czech population remained in the occupied territory.²⁵ Czech political parties and organizations quickly dissolved, and government offices switched (once again) to speaking solely in German. Speaking Czech in public was subject to fines and public officials were subject to arrest for speaking Czech in private. In the Opava Region, most of the Czech schools were closed (those that remained open began instructing Nazi curriculum), Czechs could not attend secondary schools, and no Czech press, theatre, radio, or film was played. In the Hlučín region (like Opava), Czech cultural life was also forbidden, however, every Czech school was closed. Czech books were taken from the libraries and sometimes publicly burned—estimates suppose as many as twenty thousand books were destroyed.²⁶ The familiar process of Germanization had vigorously restarted, endangering Czech identity once again.

The previous liberal, democratic order had seemingly failed them. The Czechoslovak territory, economy, social structure, and morale were devastated. If conditions were not sufficiently abysmal, the Munich Agreement—that permitted

²⁴ Ibid., 437.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 437-38.

German forces to occupy the northern and western border regions of the region—was no longer satisfactory to Hitler’s ambitions. Less than six months later (169 days), he annexed the remaining territory of Czechoslovakia, ending the Second Czechoslovak Republic, and creating the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

Forced into a seemingly hapless situation, despair did not destroy the ideological foundation of the Czech people. German oppression of Czech culture and identity struck a familiar nerve in the Czech people. Displays of national solidarity emerged alongside growing anti-German attitudes in the form of mass demonstrations. Nazi intolerance and dissent reached new heights following a demonstration at the funeral for student and anti-German protestor: Jan Opletal. Following which, the Nazis launched a campaign to thoroughly remove all traces of Czech intelligentsia. This included sending over a thousand university students to concentration camps where nine were executed without trial.²⁷ Former politicians, journalists, and state employees began organizing the resistance. Magazines supporting the resistance were illegally published, an underground military was created, and the Central Leadership of Home Resistance (*Ústřední vedení odboje domácího*, ÚVOD) functioned as the shadow government. While exiled in London, former Czechoslovak President Edvard Beneš garnered support for ÚVOD from Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States.

The Soviet Union was the exiled-government’s most committed and powerful ally against Nazi Germany. Following *Operation Barbarossa* in 1941 (the German invasion of the Soviet Union) the Soviet Union facilitated the formation of the Czechoslovak armed forces from the hundreds of refugees residing in its territory. Although Beneš

²⁷ Ibid., 444.

feared the possibility that partnering with the Soviets would end with the Soviets installing communism in a liberated Czechoslovakia, he could not risk alienating the powerful ally. He determined to foster cooperation between the democratic and communist governments by approving a communist-dominated cabinet—naively hoping the alliance would ultimately create a “bridge” between the East and the West. The two governments united against their common, fascist enemy via political and military agreements. Article Four of *the Czechoslovak-Soviet Pact of Friendship, Mutual Aid, and Post-War Cooperation* (1943) outlined both parties’ commitments—including a withdrawal of Soviet forces following the war: “the High Contracting Parties, having regard to the security interests of each of them, agree to close and friendly cooperation in the period after the restoration of peace and agree to act in accordance with the principles of mutual respect for their independence and sovereignty, as well as of non-interference in the internal affairs of the other State.”²⁸

Third Republic. In 1945—after six years of oppressive Nazi occupation and an estimated 340,000 Czechoslovak deaths—WWII was over, and Czechoslovakia was an autonomous state once again.²⁹ The Third Czechoslovak Republic feared the Sudeten Germans would demand autonomy once again and stir another uprising. ČSR feared a repeat of the 1938 elections where over 97% of the Sudeten Germans voted for the Nazi Party and welcomed the Nazi invasion shortly thereafter.³⁰ Therefore, the newly

²⁸ "Draft Text of Czechoslovak–Soviet Treaty," *Office of the Historian*, Accessed 6 September 2017, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1943v01/d682>.

²⁹ Boris Uralnis, *Wars and Population*, Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2003, 294.

³⁰ "German Occupation of Czechoslovakia," *Totally History*, Accessed 6 September 2017, <http://totallyhistory.com/german-occupation-of-czechoslovakia/>.

reinstated Czechoslovak government was eager to rid its territory of the remaining Germans to ensure its future security. The *Beneš Decrees* created in 1940 (while the government was in exile) were implemented soon after Czechoslovak liberation and were considered, the "final solution of the German question" (*konečné řešení německé otázky*). The Decrees revoked the citizenship of traitorous Hungarians and Germans, expelled them from the country, and expropriated their property without compensation. The issue of Czechoslovakia's future security, the affirming *Potsdam Agreement* (pertained to German expulsion solely), or perhaps the desire for revenge, motivated Beneš to mercilessly deport around two million Germans or 90% of the ethnic German population. Of those removed, estimates of German deaths range from 14,000 to 30,000 and were attributed to massacres, forced labor, internment camps, suicides, disease, and starvation.³¹ Following Nazi Germany, Beneš deemed the harsh expulsion a necessary measure against future subjugation and ensured the preservation of Czechoslovak independence.

While the ČSR focused on expelling the Germans from its pre-war territory in the west, it faced an increasingly dangerous Communist threat from the east. The ČSR successfully regained its independence following WWII, but it did not take its former territorial shape. It reacquired the Sudeten border region, but had lost Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia to Soviet annexation. The loss of the latter combined with other Soviet territorial gains, ultimately causing the two countries to become immediate neighbors.

Although the Czechoslovaks owed much of their liberation to the Soviet Union,

³¹ Brian Kenety, "Memories of World War II in the Czech Lands: The Expulsion of Sudeten Germans," *Radio Praha*, 14 April 2005, <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/special/memories-of-world-war-ii-in-the-czech-lands-the-expulsion-of-sudeten-germans>.

the political influence of the communists raised concern among the recovering democratic government. The Czechoslovaks who remained disenfranchised with the West (following the Munich Agreement) looked favorably toward the Czechoslovak Communist Party (KSČ) which was influenced by the East. The May 1946 elections maintained a non-communist majority with Beneš' (a member of the Czech National Social Party, ČSNS) reelection as President and Jan Masaryk (son of the revered Tomáš Masaryk) as foreign minister, but communists gained key ministry positions (e.g., KSČ leader, Klement Gottwald as the new prime minister and leader of the police and armed forces). Gottwald capitalized on both anti-German sentiment and Czech nationalism, and declared the intent of the KSČ to proceed in democratic tradition. This seemingly innocuous approach masked Gottwald's true intentions as he subversively garnered a communist base of support. Tensions ignited between parties after Gottwald repudiated the *Marshall Plan* (American initiative providing economic aid to Europe) and began using the police force to suppress noncommunist opposition.³² Tensions erupted later that year when Interior Minister Václav Nosek was accused of attempting to transform the police and security forces into an instrument for the KSČ when he illegally removed all non-communists from the force. Gottwald stalled any efforts to address Nosek's actions, inciting various non-communist members of the government to resign in protest. KSČ influenced the media, suppressed opposition, and removed most of the non-communist political members. Once Gottwald established a credible communist force, he demanded Beneš appoint a communist-dominated government. Fearful of civil war or the Red Army intervening, Beneš capitulated, effectively sanctioning the communist coup d'état, 25

³² Gawdiak.

February 1948.

The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic

After the “bloodless” coup d’état of 1948, the communists quickly consolidated power by hosting a rigged election, firing (thousands) and arresting (hundreds) of non-communists, expropriating private property, and creating a new Soviet-style constitution. Instead of signing it, Beneš tendered his resignation and was succeeded by Gottwald. For the second time within a decade, the Czechoslovak Republic was consumed by an authoritarian dictatorship.

As the countries in Eastern Europe fell prey to Soviet communism and completed the formation of the USSR, Europe was partitioned into Western and Eastern blocs. Neither the shock of the coup or fear of communism expanding was enough to motivate the recovering Western bloc to do much more than verbally denunciate Soviet actions. Lacking assistance, the former Czechoslovak Republic unwillingly remained under Communist rule as a Soviet Satellite State throughout most of the Cold War. However, as history showed, Czech nationalism survived centuries of oppression—first the Habsburgs, then fascist Germany—and the tenacity for autonomy would not be deterred by the Soviet regime.

Prague Spring. The communist regime in Czechoslovakia centralized political, economic, and social life. By the 1960s, the planned economy was declining but social concerns continued to rise. The First Secretary of the KSČ, Alexander Dubček, enacted the *Action Programme of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia* with aims to liberalize the Communist government. Although he was staunchly communist, Dubček believed

that the Communist government could garner popular support by removing some of its strictest facets and permitting greater tolerance. While he successfully gained public approval, he did not anticipate the momentum the reform would gain, or that it would become the nucleus of a brief Czechoslovak liberation (the *Prague Spring*). Soviet leader, Leonid Brezhnev, intervened by renouncing the *Action Programme*, conducting military exercises in Czechoslovak territory, and implementing the *Brezhnev Doctrine*—requiring Warsaw Pact forces to intervene and protect communist rule. Reformists were suppressed once again by re-tightening censorship, culture, and independent thought.

A key form of dissident activity was *samizdat*—the practice of reproducing censored publications by hand, and passing the copies from reader to reader. Václav Havel, a Czech writer and dissident, and future Czech president, helped found *Charter 77*. The informal civic initiative lambasted the government for its violation of civil and human rights. He and two others were detained with the original copy, but others were disseminated via *samizdat*. The government endeavored to minimize the impact of the charter and harshly punished the charter's members to intimidate other dissidents. Although the copies did not reach widespread populations at the time, the leaders of the Charter reemerged in the years preceding the Velvet Revolution to strengthen the opposition and transition the nation to a lasting democratic state.

Velvet Revolution. Reform-minded Soviet President, Mikhail Gorbachev, implemented decentralizing policies known as *prestavba* (the Czechoslovak equivalent of *perestroika*) that contributed to the end of the Cold War and communist rule in Czechoslovakia. By 1986, Gorbachev promised that the Soviet Union would no longer

interfere in Czechoslovakia.³³ However, following the short-lived episode of liberalization under Dubček, the Czechoslovak population remained incredulous of Gorbachev's intent and ability to enact lasting reform.

Czechoslovaks took the initiative 17 November 1989, transforming a march commemorating the 50th anniversary of the murder of anti-German protestor, Jan Opletal, into a pro-democracy protest. The Czechoslovaks protested the Soviet puppet government with non-violent demonstrations that resulted in many students being beaten by police. Once the rumor that a student was killed began to circulate, the protest fostered even more popular support in the form of hundreds of thousands of participants and additional demonstrations in Prague.³⁴ Estimates suggest that more than 200,000 protestors organized on 19 November and grew the next day to 500,000.³⁵ By 24 November, all the senior leaders of the KSČ resigned and Parliament elected Dubček as Chairman of the Federal Assembly and Havel as state President. The success of the Czechoslovak protests exemplified both their dedication to civil liberties and that even the most oppressive regime could be defeated by non-violent protest—earning the moniker: Velvet Revolution. The revolution transformed the country's political, economic, and social system, and marked the end of 41 years of communist rule in Czechoslovakia.

³³ "United States Relations with Russia: The Cold War," *Office of the Historian*, Accessed 6 September 2017, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/pubs/fs/85895.htm>.

³⁴ Dan Bilefsky, "Celebrating Revolution with Roots in a Rumor," *The New York Times*, 17 November 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/18/world/europe/18czech.html?emc=tnt&tntemail0=y>.

³⁵ Douglas Boyd, *Daughters of the KGB: Moscow's Secret Spies, Sleepers and Assassins of the Cold War*, Stroud: The History Press, 2015.

The Czech Republic

Czechoslovakia's new parliamentary republic, market economy, and removed censorship laws signaled its transition from communism to democracy. In June 1990, Czechoslovakia held its first free election since 1946—witnessing an impressive 95% voter turnout.³⁶ A few years later in 1993, Czechoslovakia peacefully divided into two independent states becoming the Czech Republic (also known as Czechia or CZ) and the Slovak Republic (Slovakia) in what is known as the *Velvet Divorce*. The rapidity and seamlessness of both Czech Republic's transition to democracy and split from Slovakia demonstrated its commitment to both western values and relations with its neighboring countries.

The CZ continues to maintain relations with neighbors (Slovakia, Poland, and Hungary) in the political and cultural alliance known as the Visegrád Four (V4). Also, Czech Republic's capacity as a democratic nation was acknowledged when it acceded to NATO in 1999 and the EU in 2004. Both international organizations require its members to share a standard of security, economics, and democratic rights and values—all which CZ maintains. Today, the Czech Republic maintains a parliamentary democracy and is consistently considered one of the highest ranked democracies in the world.³⁷

Summary

Leading up to the Hussite Wars, Czech Protestants faced religious oppression by

³⁶ Rick Fawn, *The Czech Republic: A Nation of Velvet*, Amsterdam: Harwood Academic, 2000.

³⁷ "Democracy Index 2016," *The Economist Intelligence Unit*, 25 January 2017, https://www.eiu.com/public/topical_report.aspx?campaignid=DemocracyIndex2016.

the Roman Catholic Church. Next, they endured centuries of cultural oppression under the Hapsburg Empire, finally achieving an independent state following the First World War. This short-lived victory is remembered as a betrayal by its western allies—*o nás bez nás* (about us, without us)—who essentially gifted the ČSSR’s territory to Nazi Germany. Following the Second World War, cultural oppression, and concentration camps, Czechoslovaks had yet another brief taste of independence in the Third Republic before another annexation—this time by the Soviets. Around 40 years later, and after achieving lasting independence, the role of Czech nationalism within the Czech narrative can be considered at least two ways.

First, the sense of nationalism experienced by the Czech people not only originated centuries ago, but was a compelling source of motivation for the Czechs to ambition for an independent state. That determination survived several setbacks via invasion, oppression, annexation per the Roman Catholic Church, the Hapsburg Dynasty, Nazi Germany, and the Soviet Union. Despite one upset after another, Czech nationalism persevered and is attributed to a lasting, sovereign Czech state. The Czech’s ardent nationalism propelled it to emerge from its repeated subjugation—delivered by larger nations—as the impressive democracy it is today.

On the other hand, that repeated subjugation via various outside powers, the forfeit of territory (per the Munich Agreement) determined by its Western allies (without Czech input) prior to WWII, and the alliance with the Soviet Union that ended in Czech’s annexation following WWII, impressed the Czech memory with apprehension and distrust. It is unsurprising that these experiences created the xenophobic insecurity that “outsiders” are the enemy. Overall, Czech’s history illustrates the strength of Czech

nationalism as it persevered through repeated oppression and attempts at elimination, and emerged from a velvet revolution triumphant, independent, and democratic. Its experience with despotic foreign powers and thus, prolonged struggle for independence (considerably recent when compared to its western European neighbors), remain a familiar and embittered image upon the Czech conscious. The nationalist, xenophobic Czech narrative continues to influence Czech politicians and its general population to retain an aversion to foreigners (including immigrants) as they fear a repeat of their troubled past. This is manifested in its current government policies. As Lantis asserted the correlation between history and experience with the strategic cultural identities of nations, therefore, Czech's cultural and historical experience, revered leaders, and the media, combine to shape its current identity, perceptions, and security objectives. While this chapter outlined deep-seated narratives that define the Czech identity, the next chapter of this thesis analyzes the assimilation progress of Czech's two largest, non-white minority populations to further demonstrate both the depths and tangible effects of the Czech's xenophobic and nationalist sentiments.

CHAPTER THREE: CZECH ROMA AND VIETNAMESE POPULATIONS

Czech xenophobia bleeds into latent racism that is prevalent in the discriminatory treatment of its immigration populations—specifically its non-white minority groups—resulting in the poor integration progress of both the Czech Roma and Vietnamese. As of 2017, 10.55 million people make up the Czech population: 64% Czech, 5% Moravian, 1.4% Slovak, 0.4% Polish, 0.2% German, and 26% undeclared.³⁸ The population is essentially homogeneous, except for the populations of Vietnamese and Roma—the two primary, non-white populations in Czech Republic. The census totaled the Vietnamese population at approximately 83,000 and the Roma at 13,150—although it is estimated that the Roma population is closer to 250,000-300,000.^{39,40} The reason for the significant discrepancy in registered Roma is likely because the Roma are purposely not registering with Roma nationality for fear of stigmatization due to their historical experience of discrimination. Regardless, although the Roma and Vietnamese constitute a fraction of the total Czech population, it is within their efforts at assimilation, that the greatest indicators of Czech xenophobia exist.

Utilizing a set of assimilation benchmarks helps to denote the advancement and integration of immigrants into society: Czech language fluency, education, citizenship, crime, housing, and employment. Often the benchmarks are interconnected and failure in

³⁸ “Czech Republic Population 2017,” *World Population Review*, Accessed 8 September 2017, <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/czech-republic-population/>.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ “Vietnamese Parliament Head, Czech Top Reps Discuss Trade,” *Prague Daily Monitor*, 13 April 2017, <http://praguemonitor.com/2017/04/13/vietnamese-parliament-head-czech-top-reps-discuss-trade>.

one often affects the rest (e.g., the Czech Interior Ministry requires both Czech fluency and permanent housing to qualify for citizenship). A comparison of the historical immigration of both the Czech Roma and Vietnamese and assessment of both group's current assimilation progress—including the roles played by both Czech leaders and the media in propagating and normalizing discriminatory behavior—suggests that the Czech propensity for discrimination emanates from its historical narrative of xenophobia and perhaps its lack of interaction with non-white populations as experienced throughout Western Europe. Examining the effects of Czech's xenophobic perceptions on the assimilation potential of its current non-white immigrants legitimizes the thesis' assertion that Czech's historical and cultural narratives created deep-seated perceptions, that those perceptions currently negatively affect its current non-white minority populations, and predicts that they will likely cause future, non-white immigrants (i.e., Muslims) to experience similar unsuccessful assimilation in the Czech Republic.

Czech Roma

In an interview in 1997, Vaclav Trojan, then-director of the non-profit *Helsinki Citizen's Assembly*, suggested: "Many people here [in the CZ] look at Roma as newcomers and migrants and not as an integral part of Czech society, of Czech culture, of the Czech nation."⁴¹ Now twenty years later, unfortunately Trojan's statement remains true in many ways albeit with an exception—the Roma have resided in Czechia for centuries. In fact, the arrival of Roma (an ethnic group originally from Northern India

⁴¹ "Roma in the Czech Republic: Identity and Culture," *Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada*, 1 November 1997, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6a80f1c.html>.

also known as “gypsies”) to the Czech lands is estimated as far back as the 15th century. At the time, the Bohemian and Moravian territory was under Habsburg rule. The centralized state wanted to settle the traditionally nomadic group and integrate them into the workforce to contribute economically—upending their lifestyle. During the reign of Holy Roman Empress Maria Theresa and her son Joseph II in the mid-18th century, measures to assimilate the group through Christianization and education showed progress in some areas of the empire, but was met mostly with resistance.⁴² The repressed Roma populations became increasingly concentrated in the more tolerant regions of Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Serbia and Russia.

During WWII, Nazi eugenics designated the Roma as “racially inferior” alongside the Jews. The Slovak-Roma endured “milder” persecution while approximately 95% of Czech Roma population was exterminated—largely at *Auschwitz-Birkenau* concentration camp.⁴³ After the war and while under communist rule, many of the Slovak-Roma migrated (both voluntarily and involuntarily) to the evacuated Czech frontier regions and were dispersed as a cheap work force throughout the industrial areas of Bohemia and Moravia.⁴⁴ This insertion of Roma into the CZ—rather than invitation—may have created the “foreigner” perception (mentioned by Vaclav Trojan in 1997) Czechs have of the Roma. Also, while under Soviet rule, Romani women were sterilized as part of an effort

⁴² “Austro-Hungarian Empire 3.1,” *Project Education of Roma Children in Europe*, Accessed 7 September 2017, http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/roma/Source/FS2/3.1_austria-hungary_english.pdf.

⁴³ “The Sterilization Investigation in the Czech Republic: Briefing of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe,” *Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe*, 15 August 2006, Washington: Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 2008, 3.

⁴⁴ Marta Miklusakova and Ctibor Necas, “The History of the Roma Minority in the Czech Republic,” *Radio Praha*, 13 June 2000, <http://romove.radio.cz/en/clanek/18913>.

to eradicate the population. Although changed—the women were no longer informed beforehand they were going to receive the procedure—the sterilization operations continued after the fall of the Soviet Union.⁴⁵

The litany of atrocities committed against the Roma reveal widespread discrimination by the Czech people and its institutions. Much of this intolerance exists today and contributes to the Roma's inability to successfully assimilate into Czech society. The Roma have achieved less language fluency, received below-standard education, suffered greater unemployment and lived in poor living conditions compared to most Czechs. While these misfortunes are typically blamed on the Roma themselves, research suggests the lack of assimilation progress is the result of systemic discrimination and the Roma being socially ghettoized.⁴⁶ The Roma have been targets of police brutality, denied entry to public venues (stores, restaurants, theatres), lived in segregated neighborhoods, and received unequal education opportunities. While several Czech leaders are making efforts to counteract the latent racism, the ubiquitous antipathy towards the Roma remains prevalent in Czech society.

Language and Education. Attempts at assimilating the Roma populations encouraged the use of the national Czech language. During the communist era, this was implemented by forbidding the use of Romani language in schools. However, even after the regime collapsed, the Roma continued to face discrimination in the CZ. Roma parents

⁴⁵ "The Sterilization Investigation in the Czech Republic: Briefing of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe," 1.

⁴⁶ Carol Silverman, "Persecution and Politicization: Roma (Gypsies) of Eastern Europe," *Cultural Survival*, June 1995, <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/persecution-and-politicization-roma-gypsies-eastern-europe>.

raised their children to speak Czech as their first language in hopes they would be better accepted into Czech society. The effects of this are seen in Czech Roma children today who decreasingly retain Romani language abilities.⁴⁷ One of the problems that arose while speaking to their children was that the parents possessed poor Czech language skills as many of them spoke Czech or Slovak as their second language. They commonly spoke *pidgin* or a version of Czech with Romani grammatical elements and cases.⁴⁸ This auxiliary version of Czech spoken by their children was conspicuously different to native Czech speakers. Once in school, ignorant teachers mistook the dialect as a speech impediment and sent the children to special schools for the mentally handicapped. *Amnesty International* studies indicate that although the Roma make up less than 2.8% of the total Czech population, they are disproportionately segregated from receiving mainstream education: 32% of children in education programs for pupils with mild mental disabilities are Roma and only 30% of Roma aged 20-24 have had a general or vocational secondary education (compared to 82% of non-Roma who have received secondary education).⁴⁹

In 2009, Czech Republic launched the *United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Inclusion in Education Project* to increase enrollment, improve education, and reduce discrimination for all students. Efforts to end inappropriately placing Roma children (without disability) in mentally-handicap schools

⁴⁷ "Roma in the Czech Republic: Identity and Culture."

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ "Czech Republic: Roma Progress Report," *Amnesty International*, Accessed 8 September 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2016/08/czech-republic-roma-progress-report/>.

seem successful. However, instead they are being segregated into separate Roma classes or schools that are inferior or lower quality.⁵⁰ In 2014, the European Commission initiated infringement proceedings against the CZ for its continued discrimination against Roma children in schools. The Czech government enacted the *School Act* in 2015 (and new amendments as recently as 2016) which promises to tackle the discrimination by desegregating schools, providing the necessary resources to support Roma students, and eliminate prejudice among the teachers and non-Roma students.⁵¹ If the School Act delivers its promises and Roma students receive fair educational opportunities, this will not only increase their ability to attend university and find better jobs, but will ultimately help them to assimilate in the CZ as contributing members of society.

Citizenship. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Czech's split with Slovakia, CZ enacted new citizenship laws restricting who would receive Czech citizenship. Those with Slovak state citizenship were required to apply for Czech citizenship and meet a series of stringent requirements. Although many Roma had lived in Czech territory since the conclusion of WWII, few had changed their state citizenship from Slovak to Czech. Not only were they considered Slovak citizens under the new law, but their children—even if born in the Czech Republic—were considered Slovak citizens too. Some of the criteria required to obtain Czech citizenship included five years of a clear criminal record (Article 7 also known as the “*gypsy clause*”) and proof of permanent residency. The Roma that were able to meet the stringent requirements were

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

sometimes indiscriminately denied citizenship by local officials.⁵² Additionally, during its fact-finding mission in the CZ, Human Rights Watch collected substantial evidence suggesting that Czech citizenship law was drafted with the specific intent of restricting the Roma population (e.g., the gypsy clause) from obtaining citizenship and has effected a highly discriminatory impact on Roma living in the Czech Republic.⁵³ Denying individuals citizenship deprives them of economic and social benefits (e.g. voting rights, protection under the law, governmental aid), can leave them stateless, and encourages their abuse as scapegoats for things that go wrong in society.

Crime. Many Czechs have stigmatized the Roma based on a popular belief that Roma are responsible for most of the crimes committed in the CZ. To add credibility to the stereotype, they often cite statistics such as: “In 2000, Roma accounted for over half of the prisoners in the Czech prison system despite accounting for a fraction of the overall Czech population.⁵⁴ However, it is important to consider that Roma’s overrepresentation in prisons may be the result of economic and systemic discrimination.

Some may argue that economic discrimination motivates Roma to commit robbery or petty theft—regardless of this argument—once Roma are arrested, their economic plight denies them the ability to afford lawyers or bail. The Roma defendants then face discrimination in the legal system where they are more likely to be convicted

⁵² Fred Abrahams, "Czech Republic: Roma in the Czech Republic" *Human Rights Watch*, June 1996, <https://www.hrw.org/reports/1996/Czech.htm>.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Kate Connolly, "Czech Prisoners Treated Worse than Dogs," *The Guardian*, 15 January 2000, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2000/jan/16/kateconnolly.theobserver>.

and receive longer prison terms than non-Roma⁵⁵ Jana Chalupová, ombudsman for former President Havel, acknowledges the widespread institutional racism and subsequent overrepresentation in prisons when she told *Human Rights Watch/Helsinki* that: “It's connected with the problem that they [Roma] are more criminalized. More often they are in prison. If you have a Czech boy and a Roma boy who commit the same crime, you can bet that the Roma boy will go to prison and the Czech boy will get a suspended sentence.”⁵⁶ Thus, the combination of economic and systemic discrimination creates a ripple effect—ultimately contributing to the high number of Roma in prison and encouraging the generalization of Roma criminal propensity.

In 1992, *The Project on Ethnic Relations* reported that “the rate of conviction for theft is no higher among Roma than the national averages—and the rates for murder and rape are far lower.”⁵⁷ Although this report concluded that Roma criminality is no more than average overall, the stereotype remains prevalent among Czechs and is still propagated by the media (who disproportionately report Roma crime).⁵⁸ The lack of current, reliable demographic and social data (e.g., those currently registered as ethnically Roma number 13,150 although experts estimate there to be around 250,000) inhibits the ability to obtain current and accurate crime-related statistics that may help undermine the stereotype.

⁵⁵ Abrahams.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Dimitrina Petrova, "The Roma: Between a Myth and the Future," *European Roma Rights Centre*, 27 May 2004, <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=1844>.

⁵⁸ Silverman.

In May 1995, 43-year old Roma, Tibor Berki, was beaten to death with a baseball bat inside his South Moravian home in front of his five children. The four male attackers did not know Berki personally, but were overheard in a pub before the attack saying they would "get a Gypsy."⁵⁹ The court ultimately ruled that there was no racial motivation for the attack since the men did not "utter any racial slurs while committing the murder."⁶⁰ The "hate crime" garnered much-needed attention to the government's previously lackadaisical approach to racially-motivated crimes. The law soon required stricter punishments for "hate crimes" and established a new police division specifically to tackle the issue. However, Roma continue to be the primary targets of "hate crimes" and violence by extremists and "skin heads" in the Czech Republic's

In 2015, OSCE reported 21 hate crimes motivated by bias against Roma, including: one physical assault, one case of damage to property, 12 cases of threats, one case of disturbance of the peace, and six cases of incitement to violence.⁶¹ This number is an increase from the 13 hate crimes that occurred the year before. Problems with this report arise when considering the persisting discrimination among the state police force. Some police have reportedly ignored criminal acts of extremists or individuals expressing racist, xenophobic and "Islamophobic" views in public.⁶² This form of discrimination not

⁵⁹ František Kostlán, "† 13. 5. 1995: The Murder of Tibor Berki," *Romea.cz*, 24 May 2011, <http://www.romea.cz/en/news/czech/13-5-1995-the-murder-of-tibor-berki>.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ "Czech Republic," *OSCE/ODIHR Hate Crime Reporting*, 2015, <http://hatecrime.osce.org/czech-republic>.

⁶² Rozumek et al., "Together: National Report for Hate Crimes Monitoring (Czech Republic)," *Organisation for Aid to Refugees OPU*, 12 July 2016, <http://www.togetherproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Czech-National-Report-on-Hate-Crimes-2016-2.pdf>.

only allows the intolerant criminals to act without fear of punishment, but can create a lack of trust in the victims toward the police.

In 2016, *The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination* expressed its concern about continued racially motivated violence against Roma people and on the increase in racially-motivated violence against Muslim communities.⁶³ The *Ministry of the Interior*'s quarterly report on extremism also noted concern for the rise of anti-migrant and anti-Islamic movements in the Czech Republic.⁶⁴ Although various reform campaigns have been launched to eliminate intolerance of the Roma, they continue to be victims of hate crimes. While the CZ has more work to do to resolve the issue, they are facing new targets of discrimination.

Housing. While still under the communist regime, the Roma were guaranteed housing in state-provided apartment blocks. After its dissolution, the buildings the Roma occupied were sold into the real estate market and the Roma were collectively relocated to so-called "excluded localities" or ghettos. As the country began experiencing an overall increase in its standard of living—the Roma's worsened. From 2006 to 2014, the number of excluded ghettos (typically one to a few houses in poor condition) doubled from 300 to 600 and the number of their inhabitants, mostly Romanians, increased from 80,000 to 115,000.⁶⁵ This illustrates that about half of the Roma population are suffering cramped, unsatisfactory living and health conditions.

Due to their low income, the Roma often live on welfare and cannot afford decent

⁶³ "Czech Republic."

⁶⁴ Rozumek et al.

⁶⁵ "Half of Czech Romanians Live in Ghettos, Annual Report Shows," *Adiveh*, 19 June 2017, <http://www.adiveh.com/archives/4086>.

housing. As they continue to face social discrimination, many landlords refuse to rent long-term to gypsy tenants—if at all. According to the *EU Fundamental Rights Agency*, “65% of Czech Roma have experienced discrimination in housing access over the last five years. This is the second largest rate of all nine EU Member States where the survey was conducted.”⁶⁶ Czech law prohibits housing discrimination based on ethnicity, but many owners will refuse to house Roma because of old prejudices that Roma tenants cause “slumification,” lower the value of property, and the fact that nine out of ten Czechs do not want to live next to a Roma.⁶⁷ The challenge of not being able to secure long-term housing affects almost all aspects of Roma life as it is often a prerequisite for many social and economic rights (e.g., voting, citizenship, jobs).

Employment. The centralized government under communism demanded Roma employment. Although the forced assimilation was rejected by some, it was considered beneficial because it provided job security. After the fall of the Iron Curtain and the transition from communism to a free-market economy, the Roma faced discrimination in the labor market and high rates of unemployment. Although the Czech Republic has the lowest unemployment rate (four percent) in the EU, the Roma unemployment rate (ages 15-64) was reported at 39% in 2010.⁶⁸⁶⁹ The lack of education and skillset reduces Roma

⁶⁶ Ana Tomicic and Petr Kupka, “Resisting Dirty Business: Report from the Field of Social Exclusion in the Czech Republic,” *Lefteast*, 29 June 2017, <http://www.criticatac.ro/lefteast/resisting-dirty-business-report-from-the-field-of-social-exclusion-in-the-czech-republic/>.

⁶⁷ Rosie Dimanno, “No Hope for Roma in Czech Ghettos,” *Thestar.com*, 12 September 2009, https://www.thestar.com/opinion/columnists/2009/09/12/no_hope_for_roma_in_czech_ghettos.html.

⁶⁸ Mirka Krufova, “Czech Jobless Rate Drops to 4.0 pct in August - Times of India,” *The Times of India*, 8 September 2017, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/international-business/czech-jobless-rate-drops-to-4-0-pct-in-august/articleshow/60421529.cms>.

⁶⁹ “Czech Republic: A Report by the European Roma Rights Centre,” *ERRC*, February 2013, <http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/file/czech-republic-country-profile-2011-2012.pdf>.

employability and makes it increasingly challenging for Roma to compete for the high-skill jobs that typically pay better. However, even educated Roma have difficulty obtaining jobs due to the discrimination of employers. A survey of Roma reported they were discriminated against (within the last five years) 66 to 75% of the time when looking for work in the Czech Republic.⁷⁰ The lack of fair job opportunities for Czech Roma is an unrelenting cycle, perpetuating their discrimination, and preventing them from improving both their social and economic situations.

Czech Vietnamese

After WWII, the Czech population decreased by about 25% to Edvard Beneš expulsion of over two million ethnic Germans.⁷¹ While under the Soviet regime, estimates suggest over 550,000 Czechoslovaks emigrated due to discontent under the oppressive communists.⁷² These mass emigrations created both gaps in the population and labor market. Relations between the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (ČSSR) and Vietnam facilitated the migration of a small group of Vietnamese students and workers to the ČSSR in the 1950s and 1960s via Central Eastern Europe's "fraternal assistance" package. Following the Vietnam War, cooperation between the two communist states increased and they (and other Eastern European states) signed *Agreements on Mutual Help* (1976 and 1977) creating relations based on "mutual assistance." This encouraged

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Dusan Drbohlav, "The Czech Republic: From Liberal Policy to EU Membership," *Migration Policy Institute*, 1 August 2005, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/czech-republic-liberal-policy-eu-membership>.

⁷² Ibid.

another (larger) influx of Vietnamese migrants into ČSSR which established close cultural, economic, and scientific cooperation.⁷³ Vietnam's membership in the *Council for Mutual Economic Assistance* (CMEA) in 1978 furthered strengthened relations between the two countries. Although reunified, Vietnam's war-torn economy suffered low labor productivity, modern technology, and trade potential resulting in the population of Vietnamese to increase to almost 40,000 by 1983.⁷⁴ As a substitute for material trade, the Vietnamese migrants were primarily students and workers who helped fill vacant jobs in the ČSSR, but also benefited from receiving education and learning job-related skills, ultimately strengthening relations once again. Although the Vietnamese were largely segregated from the local population and experienced adverse working conditions, there was strong competition to obtain the opportunity. An example of this sentiment is shared by Phan, a Vietnamese migrant who initially worked in the steel mills in Ostrava (a city in north-eastern Czech Republic): "It was cold and very noisy. I was very sad. But my mother was very proud of me, because I had won the competition. My father had fallen in the war. Working and studying in Czechoslovakia was a reward for a few happy people."⁷⁵ By the end of the decade, the treaties and contracts expired, and the population temporarily decreased to around 10,000. After Czech's liberation, the transition from managed migration transitioned into economic migration, effecting a resurgence of Vietnamese migrants over the next twenty years.

⁷³ Allan Williams and Vladimír Baláž, "Winning, Then Losing, the Battle with Globalization: Vietnamese Petty Traders in Slovakia," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, vol. 29.3, February 2005, 533-549.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

The Czech Vietnamese population has assimilated seemingly well (according to the six benchmarks of assimilation) over the last few decades, but some latent discrimination exists among the native Czech population. However, most natives describe the Vietnamese as diligent workers, economically sufficient, prodigious students, and conflict-free. Current Czech President, Miloš Zeman, expressed his appreciation of the Vietnamese community whom he described as "a great example of diligence and entrepreneurial spirit."⁷⁶

Language and Education. The offer of free and compulsory education proved beneficial to Vietnamese children who are both more fluent and likely to attend secondary schools than the first generation.⁷⁷ While economic and social opportunities motivate the Vietnamese to assimilate—their determination is also culturally driven.⁷⁸ A research study conducted in 2007 concluded that, "Vietnamese children start basic education with the most serious language problems, but their family support and motivation helps them overcome this barrier relatively quickly."⁷⁹ Traditional Vietnamese parents encourage children to excel in school—where they are commonly considered auspicious learners. A teacher of basic school Vietnamese children in Cheb (west CZ) admits: "There are no problems at all with them. The opposite in fact. As

⁷⁶ Ryan Scott, "The Vietnamese Community in the ČR," *Expats*, 28 February 2012, <https://www.expats.cz/prague/article/community/the-vietnamese-community-in-the-czech-republic/>.

⁷⁷ Katzorova et al., "Country Report on Education," *Ethnic Differences in Education and Diverging Prospects for Urban Youth in an Enlarged Europe*, EDUMIGROM, 2008.

⁷⁸ Jirí Kocourek and Eva Pechová, *S vietnamskými detmi na českých školách*, Jinocany: Nakladatelství H&H Vyšehradská, 2007.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

Czechs, we sometimes feel really ashamed. The Vietnamese need five minutes for the same exercise most of the Czech children will not finish in half an hour. Even their knowledge of Czech is superior.”⁸⁰ The promising results of Czech Vietnamese performance in school are expected to be realized as the second generation begin to fill more professional-grade jobs such as: law, science, and medicine.

Citizenship and Employment. After the temporary workers’ contracts expired at the end of the 1980s, the Vietnamese that remained in CZ obtained residence typically either through marriage or via trade licenses administered for the small businesses they owned. First-generation Vietnamese were often vendors of low-cost merchandise (typically clothing or shoes) in open-air markets. Fortunately, petty trading required little knowledge of the Czech language, allowing the first-generation to accomplish relative economic success. Although the vendors remain popular throughout CZ, the second-generation Vietnamese ambition for better work and quality of life. Thus, they have more incentive to achieve Czech language fluency and citizenship.

Recent census statistics show the Vietnamese population constitutes over 83,000 people, accounting for the largest non-white population in the Czech Republic (the registered Roma population is 13,150—although estimates suggest there are closer to 250,000). Of the estimated 83,000 Vietnamese residing in the Czech Republic, roughly 60% possess permanent residence.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Jakub Hurrle "Multicultural Small Town at the Czech-German Border a Visit to Cheb," *MigrationOnline.cz*, 15 August 2006, <http://migrationonline.cz/en/multicultural-small-town-at-the-czech-german-border>.

⁸¹ "M06 Share of Foreigners with Vietnamese Citizenship in the Population of Foreigners," *Czech Statistical Office*, 10 August 2014, https://www.czso.cz/web/czso/404-?p_p_id=3&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=maximized&p_p_mode=view&_3_struts_action=%2Fsearch%2Fsearch&_3_redirect=%2Fweb%2Fczso%2F404-&_3_keywords=vietnamese&_3_groupId=0.

Crime. The Vietnamese's proficiency in Czech language, education, and economic self-sufficiency demonstrate fulfilling most of the benchmarks (housing information not provided) in the Czech Vietnamese assimilation process. However, there remains a small portion of the Czech Vietnamese who are involved in criminal activity—primarily drug-related offenses. Although Czech criminal law does not consider drug use to be a criminal offense (as long the drug remains within the designated, non-criminal amount), the Czech Criminal Code (Act No. 40/2009) prohibits the unauthorized cultivation of plants containing narcotic and psychotropic substances and poisons.⁸² Large-scale cannabis cultivation in the Czech Republic is increasingly dominated by Vietnamese groups whose drug-related convictions increased almost nine-fold from 2008-2013.⁸³ While this statistic can provoke the assumption that more crimes are being committed by the Vietnamese, the number of drug offenses reportedly remained the same—suggesting that more prosecutions were made and perhaps portraying a less negative image of the Vietnamese.

Similar to the discrimination Czech Roma receive, the media tends to focus on Vietnamese criminals, prompting a negative image of the population.⁸⁴ Additionally, in 2016, 60% of the Czech drug crime detectives began focusing specifically on Vietnamese

⁸² “Czech Republic (261) > Criminal Code (Act No. 40/2009),” *Ministry of the Interior*, 8 January 2009.

⁸³ Tereza Filipková, "Cannabis Policy in the Czech Republic," *Transnational Institute*, 28 September 2015, <https://www.tni.org/en/article/cannabis-policy-in-the-czech-republic>.

⁸⁴ Tereza Pavlíčková, and Irena Reifová, *Media, Power and Empowerment: Central and Eastern European Communication and Media Conference CEECOM Prague 2012*, Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014.

drug crime, than on all criminal groups.⁸⁵ While focusing on the primary ethnic group committing drug-related crimes may result in more convictions, this discriminatory approach can also lead to racial profiling, wrongful arrests, incite more prejudice against Vietnamese, and instill distrust between the Vietnamese and the police.

Perceptions of Czech Roma versus Vietnamese

Often comparisons are made between the Czech Vietnamese and Roma populations due to being the two most populous non-white ethnic minorities in Czech. A survey conducted in 2007 conducted by the *Public Opinion Research Centre of the Academy of Sciences*, attitudes toward ethnonational groups were rated on a scale from one to seven (best attitude to worst). The Vietnamese received an average value of 4.19 and the Roma 5.52—the worst of all the rated minorities.⁸⁶ Therefore, although both Roma and Vietnamese face some form of discrimination from the Czech people—both minorities are targeted by Czech media for their criminality and by xenophobes who abuse them as scapegoats—the Roma experience notably less tolerance than the Vietnamese. Czech senator, Jaroslav Doubrava, expresses a common perception: “The Vietnamese are definitely not saints, but any crime in their communities is an anomaly, a fringe phenomenon. They work, they send their children to school properly, they take care of one another and they don't cause problems, unlike the Roma. In the Vietnamese

⁸⁵ Lucie Stuchlíková, "Protidrogových detektivů je málo. Většina bojuje s gangy Vietnamců, na Turky s heroinem už není čas," *aktualne.cz*, January 2016, <https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/protidrogovych-detektivu-je-malo-vetsina-bojuje-s-gangy-viet/r~bd41842ab9f211e584160025900fea04/?redirected=1505091040>.

⁸⁶ Katzorova et al.

community crime is an exception, but for the Gypsies it's the rule."⁸⁷

One explanation for the contrasting perceptions is that each group has achieved different levels of progress towards assimilation. The Roma ostensibly lag the Vietnamese in every suggested benchmark (sans housing for Vietnamese due to lack of data): language, education, citizenship, crime, and employment—underlining the stereotype of Roma as uneducated, unsuccessful, criminals. In an online discussion of the groups, an anonymous contributor asserted: "It's interesting that most Vietnamese have jobs and most Roma do not! How many Roma and how many Vietnamese graduate from college every year? Lots of Vietnamese and almost no Roma! Both have the same conditions - isn't the flaw in the Roma mentality? I think so."⁸⁸

The Roma's lack of progress within Czech society are often attributed to their genetic propensity for crime, unique dialect, historically nomadic lifestyle, traditions in magic and fortune telling, and darker complexions. Collectively, these stereotypes and a history of persecution—dating back to the Habsburg Empire—contribute to a general perception of: “otherness” and “us” versus “them.” The Roma diaspora in Europe retains no claimed homeland although they originate from the northwestern regions of the Indian subcontinent. Lacking a tangible motherland further perpetuates their image as outsiders; and subsequently, they lack a national government—which denies them the authority to make demands. Although the Vietnamese also possess a unique language, culture, and physical appearance, they share a history of “mutual assistance” with the Czechs that

⁸⁷ Ondřej Klípa, "Commentary: The Roma and the Vietnamese, or the "Evil" and the "Good" Aliens," *Romea.cz*, 19 March 2014, <http://www.romea.cz/en/news/czech/commentary-the-roma-and-the-vietnamese-or-the-evil-and-the-good-aliens>.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

began under the communist regime. The different manners in which both minorities arrived in the CZ subsequently created contrasting impressions on the Czech historical narrative. In the same online discussion, another contributor rhetorically asked: "Why, for example, have the Vietnamese, who have been here only several decades, integrated so completely successfully into society while the Roma, who have been in Europe for several centuries already, still haven't?"⁸⁹ The paradox arises in that it is perhaps due to their lengthy history in Czech that the negative perception of Roma is so firmly cemented in the Czech ethos.

The negative image of the Roma dates to their arrival in the Czech lands during the 15th century, and worsened when the Soviets forced their migration during the mid-20th century as a cheap labor force. Although the Vietnamese also migrated to the then-ČSSR as a labor force, it was facilitated through various economic agreements between the two communist countries. The temporary labor agreements were often perceived by the Vietnamese as an opportunity to improve their education or work skillset, but also provided the Vietnamese with confidence in the eventuality that they would return home. In contrast, the Roma's migration was permanent and without the possibility of returning to their former life. Overall, the arrival of the Vietnamese was perceived as a mutually beneficial "invitation" and were not pressured to assimilate. The Roma—who were to remain indefinitely—were forced to conform, and forfeit their lifestyle and culture. The contrasting historical experiences of the two groups has affected their both their current outlook and ability to integrate. Facing less persecution during their first waves of migration, the next wave of Vietnamese labor migrants—and those that remained after

⁸⁹ Ibid.

the treaties expired—endeavored to integrate into the newly liberated Czech Republic. The Vietnamese’s efforts starkly contrast the Roma’s who prove unable to overcome a history of Czech prejudice. One area where neither Roma nor Vietnamese are immune is in the media’s disproportionate reporting on foreign minority crime and the police’s inconsistent prosecution of hate crimes against two ethnic groups. Although Czech media perceives the Roma much more negatively than the Vietnamese, both are affected by the systemic discrimination which further fuels the public’s prejudice of the minorities.

Summary

The study of both the Czech Roma and Vietnamese populations are pertinent in considering the evolution of Czech’s historical fear of outsiders, into the xenophobia and discrimination that exists today. The xenophobic, anti-immigrant sentiment prevents both the Czech public and political elite to empathize with outsiders and thus, inhibits the ability of the two groups to fully integrate into Czech society. Hence, future non-white immigrants may potentially endure a similarly poor rate of assimilation.

The *Security Strategy of the Czech Republic 2015* advocates the mitigation of potential risks of migration by integrating immigrants into the Czech Republic and “seeks to consistently detect and prosecute manifestations of extremism, including xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance and discrimination.”⁹⁰ However, shortcomings in this stated commitment are exposed when considering the assimilation progress of both Czech Roma and Vietnamese. While each population experienced differing levels of progress, both undeniably experienced discrimination. Ultimately, this study offers a

⁹⁰ “Security Strategy of the Czech Republic 2015,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Czech Republic*, February 2015.

sobering perspective of not only Czech attitudes and perceptions of both current and potential non-white immigrants, but propounds the unlikelihood of additional non-white immigrants to successfully assimilate or benefit from migrating to the Czech Republic. Chapter Two's discussion of the historically deep-seated xenophobia within the Czech identity is evinced in Chapter Three's study of the Czech Roma and Vietnamese. Chapter Four then utilizes both the historic narrative and the study as a vantage point for understanding Czech's contemporary immigration policies and aversion to Muslim immigrants—especially in comparison to Western Europe's traditional liberal policies. This thesis' aim relies upon both the historic understanding of Czech perceptions and the study of the integration of the Czech Roma and Vietnamese to predict the assimilation potential of future non-white immigrants, to understand how its historic narratives influence contemporary Czech politics, and ultimately to predict the future swing of European politics.

CHAPTER FOUR: MUSLIM IMMIGRATION AND EU INTEGRATION

As Chapter Two indicated, analyzing both the Czech Roma and Vietnamese populations' assimilation progress may help to predict the assimilation potential Muslims may have in CZ. With the onset of the European Migrant Crisis in 2015, this became an increasingly pertinent topic as EU member states struggled to determine how to fairly distribute the large number of incoming refugees amassing primarily in Italy and Greece. The EU's solution was outlined in the European Agenda on Migration. However, this mandate was not achieved through consensus among EU states. The xenophobic—or aptly “Islamophobic”—Czech officials refused to abide by the EU-mandated redistribution plan and accompanied quota of refugees assigned to the Czech Republic. The dissent of the Czech Republic and remaining V4 states, highlights the divisiveness of the topic of Muslim immigration among the “Eastern bloc” with the proponents of the plan in Western Europe.

This chapter examines the historical immigration of Western Europe (compared with that of Eastern Europe), current V4 perspectives on coping with the Migrant Crisis (including the influence of leaders and the media), and the trend of rising populist governments. It also discusses Eurosceptic, Islamophobic, politicians who exploit the increasing fear of Islamist terrorism (across all of Europe) to garner public support for their policies and governments. Finally, this chapter underscores the vehemence with which Czech leaders are committed to their anti-Muslim and limited integration policies due to their historic and cultural narratives, with which they are determined to challenge the historically liberal policies of the EU. Ultimately, as right-wing politicians gain

popularity in Central and Eastern Europe and a consensual solution to future Muslim immigration is what, this chapter addresses the thesis' overarching assertion that Czech's historic xenophobia and current anti-Muslim immigration stance are likely to propagate the rising populism.

Historical Immigration within the European Union

The increased immigration seen within the Czech Republic over the past couple decades is a fraction of the amount of immigration experienced throughout Western Europe. As it struggled to recover from WWII, western Europe welcomed an influx of labor immigrants that helped rebuild the war-torn economies. Following the introduction of the free-travel *Schengen Agreement*, contemporary globalization, and prosperous western economies, immigration became easier, faster, and more attractive than before. Although the EU is developing a common immigration policy for its members states, each EU country maintains individual immigration policies (given they do not interfere with EU directives) that influence the number of immigrants they receive. Germany, UK, France, and Spain have a history of lax immigration policies and now retain the largest number of international migrants in northern and western Europe—and some of the largest in the world.⁹¹ The increase in multicultural populations is accompanied by rising anti-immigration sentiments in recent years.

The steady increase of the Muslim population in Europe (892 million total

⁹¹ "International Migration Report 2013," *United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division*, NY: United Nations, 2013.

population) in recent decades, is projected to continue through 2030.⁹² Muslims currently maintain substantial populations in several countries (e.g. France, UK, the Netherlands, Sweden) but Germany and France are home to the largest: 5.8% of the German population (Germany's totally population is 81.4 million) and 7.5% of France (66.8 million).⁹³ Increasingly popular debates within these (and other western European) countries often surround the ability to integrate the Muslim populations into society. The terror attacks experienced in western Europe—like those in Paris 2015 which resulted in the deaths of 130 people—are heartbreaking indications that it has failed the multicultural challenge. Unfortunately, these tragic attacks are also on the rise. Per the *Global Terrorism Database*, although the overall number of terrorist incidents declined in western Europe in 2016, the attacks resulting in fatalities increased (30 attacks in 2016, up from 23 in 2015), confirming that attacks have become deadlier (an average of 26.5 deaths in both 2015 and 2016 compared to an average of four for 2012-2014).⁹⁴ The emotions following these events has stirred a security debate throughout Europe, with anti-immigrant proponents demanding the restriction of free movement across borders. New immigration challenges plague Europe as it experiences unprecedented waves of immigrants and asylum seekers in the European Migrant Crisis.

⁹² Conrad Hackett, "5 Facts About the Muslim Population in Europe," *Pew Research Center*, 19 July 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/19/5-facts-about-the-muslim-population-in-europe/>.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Mark Hanrahan and Jessica Wang, "Number of Fatal Terrorist Attacks in Western Europe Increasing, Data Show," *Reuters*, 12 July 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-attacks/number-of-fatal-terrorist-attacks-in-western-europe-increasing-data-show-idUSKBN19X1QO>.

European Migrant Crisis

Starting in 2015, an extraordinary number of migrants surged into EU countries. Over 60 million refugees fleeing various Asian and African countries represent the greatest number of forcibly displaced refugees since WWII. *Eurostat* determined asylum applications more than doubled from 2014 (626,960) to 2015 (1,322,825), and slightly decreased in 2016 (1,260,630). One of the many challenges caused by the overwhelming number of migrants, is the asylum applications are not spread evenly throughout EU states—they concentrate in a handful of selected countries. The first quarter of 2017 reported that Germany, Italy, France, and Italy combined to account for 80% of all first-time applicants in the EU.⁹⁵ The refugees caused by the ongoing conflict in Syria and continuing proliferation of violence in the Middle East are unlikely to experience much relief in the short term.

Most of the applicants originate from the Muslim-majority countries: Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq.⁹⁶ Although most are presumed to be fleeing their conflict-ridden countries, some applicants are also economic migrants and Islamic-state militants (disguised as refugees). Many of them set out for Europe by boat—navigating the western Balkan route through the Mediterranean Sea and enter via either Greece or Italy (although, Spain is increasingly popular). *The International Organization for Migration* (IOM) estimates that more than 1,011,700 migrants arrived by sea in 2015, and almost

⁹⁵ “Asylum and First Time Asylum Applicants by Citizenship, Age, and Sex,” *Eurostat Data*, 9 August 2017, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_quarterly_report.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

34,900 by land.⁹⁷ The migrants attempt the perilous journey and risk their lives in the process. 2016 witnessed the worst annual death toll of those attempting to cross the Mediterranean, reaching 5,000 people. The exponential increase at which the refugees were fleeing subsequently increased the probability for drownings, smuggling, and illegal entry into the EU. To minimize the effects, EU countries responded by increasing border patrols and intensifying search and rescue efforts—including both adding resources and expanding the patrol areas of EU border police in the Mediterranean (i.e., Operation Triton). Additionally, the tendency of migrants to enter the EU through southern Europe has put an unfair share of responsibility on the most popular countries-of-origin to process asylum applicants—a requirement of the *Dublin III Regulation*. Further, those countries lack effective controls to prevent asylum seekers from heading north under the free-travel *Schengen Agreement* to eventually arrive at more desirable destinations like Germany and Sweden. The migration crisis emphasized the shortcomings of the two agreements and demanded a solution to improve their efficiency and effectiveness. The outcome resulted in the adoption of the controversial European Agenda on Migration.

European Agenda on Migration. EU Interior Ministers endeavored to alleviate the burden on those countries impacted by the *Dublin Regulation* and *Schengen Agreement* during the height of the migrant crisis in 2015—mainly those external border countries where immigrants are overcrowding reception centers. They proposed a burden-sharing scheme that outlined a redistribution of a total of 160,000 migrants across EU states, away from Greece and Italy (Hungary declined participation). Although some

⁹⁷ "Migrant Crisis: Migration to Europe Explained in Seven Charts," *BBC News*, 4 March 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911>.

member states—primarily in eastern Europe—lambasted the plan for placing unfair burden on their states (and others unprepared for the immigrants), almost 50% of the asylum-seekers to be redistributed were set to be relocated to Germany and France, alone.⁹⁸ The Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary voted against it, while Finland abstained—Poland voted for the plan but following its election in 2015, its stance shifted). The plan was approved by majority vote instead of consensus—the typical means for determining sensitive issues and was considered politically unacceptable by some states. One of those critics was Slovakia’s Prime Minister, Robert Fico, who defiantly rebuked the scheme in 2016 claiming, "As long as I am prime minister, mandatory quotas will not be implemented on Slovak territory."⁹⁹ Regardless, the relocation scheme was implemented and became obligatory under EU law. Under the redistribution plan, the Visegrád countries are to accept 11,069 refugees total or face 250,000-euro-per-migrant fines. The breakdown and those effectively relocated by 4 September 2017 are represented in Table 1.

Although the relocation plan was implemented in September 2015, by 2017, the V4 has accepted only 28 of the 11,069 stipulated. After voting down the plan, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland (originally voted in favor) and Slovakia have adamantly refused to abide its mandate (Romania has been accepting relocated migrants). While Czech officials accused the plan of being ineffective and Poland claimed it had a “moral right” to reject incoming refugee populations, both Hungary and Slovakia took their

⁹⁸ Vince Chadwick, "Robert Fico: 'Islam has No Place in Slovakia'," *POLITICO*, 26 May 2016, <http://www.politico.eu/article/robert-fico-islam-no-place-news-slovakia-muslim-refugee/>.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

Table 1. Relocations from Italy and Greece by 4 September 2017.

Member State	Effectively relocated from Italy	Effectively relocated from Greece	Total effectively relocated	Commitment legally foreseen in the Council decisions
Austria	15		15	1953
Belgium	259	677	936	3812
Bulgaria		50	50	1302
Croatia	18	60	78	968
Cyprus	34	96	130	320
Czech Republic		12	12	2691
Estonia		141	141	329
Finland	755	1196	1951	2078
France	330	3948	4278	19714
Germany	3405	4447	7852	27536
Hungary			0	1294
Iceland			0	
Ireland		487	487	600
Latvia	27	294	321	481
Liechtenstein		10	10	
Lithuania	27	355	382	671
Luxembourg	111	271	382	557
Malta	47	101	148	131
Netherlands	762	1595	2357	5947
Norway	815	693	1508	
Poland			0	6182
Portugal	299	1116	1415	2951
Romania	45	682	727	4180
Slovakia		16	16	902
Slovenia	45	172	217	567
Spain	168	1089	1257	9323
Sweden	511	1392	1903	3766
Switzerland	778	344	1122	
Total	8,451	19,244	27,695	98,255

Source: "Annex 3: Relocations from Italy and Greece by 4 September 2017," *Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, and the Council*, 6 September 2017, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-3081_en.htm.

opposition a step further when they challenged the plan's legitimacy before the EU's highest court and appealed for its annulment.¹⁰⁰ They did not challenge the mandatory number of refugees, but accused the plan of infringing on state sovereignty. Czech Republic and Romania did not participate in the challenge—neither questioned the validity of the decision-making of the plan—but Poland publicly supported Hungary and Slovakia's appeal.

Early September 2017, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) stated that the majority-vote (rather than census) was justifiable as an emergency measure—given the urgent situation—and reiterated that the plan's burden-sharing system was effectively alleviating the situations in both Italy and Greece. Ultimately, the court ruled against Hungary and Slovakia's challenge and warned them (and the whole V4) to immediately accept the mandatory refugees—or that they may face legal action.¹⁰¹ In response, Slovakia decried the court's decision—as it remains unconvinced of the Agenda's effectiveness—but respected the ruling and ultimately consented to accept some refugees. Slovakia's Fico may have finally submitted to the mandatory quota, but remains a critic of the plan. Following the verdict, he said, "We fully respect the verdict of the European Court of Justice," but that his government's negative stance on the relocation plan "has

¹⁰⁰ Agnieszka Barteczko and Pawel Sobczak, "Poland Did Not Invite Refugees, Has Right to Say 'No' – Kaczynski," *Reuters*, 1 July 2017, <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-poland-migrants/poland-did-not-invite-refugees-has-right-to-say-no-kaczynski-idUKKBN19M3HI>. "*We have not exploited the countries from which these refugees are coming to Europe these days, we have not used their labour force and finally we have not invited them to Europe. We have a full moral right to say 'no',*" Kaczynski said in a speech broadcast on television."-Jaroslaw Kaczynski.

¹⁰¹ Pablo Gorondi and Lorne Cook, "EU Court Rejects Hungary-Slovakia Appeal of Refugee Quotas," *Ledger-Enquirer*, 6 September 2017, <http://www.ledger-enquirer.com/news/business/article171465227.html>.

not changed at all."¹⁰²

Nevertheless, the other three countries did not submit so easily. Czech President Miloš Zeman defiantly insisted that the Czech Republic would not yield to the court's verdict as their position—doubting the plan's effectiveness—remained unchanged. Furthermore, Zeman boldly suggested that the CZ should give up EU subsidies before submitting to the binding refugee quotas.¹⁰³ Hungary's Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó also criticized the court for its ruling and accused it of blackmailing the states (who refused to abide by the plan) with infringement procedures. He persisted that *European Commission* (EC) had overstepped its authority, "Not even the EC can take away member states' right to decide whom they want to let into their country and whom they want to live together with."¹⁰⁴ Lastly, Polish Prime Minister Beata Szydło's response to the court's verdict echoes both Czech's and Hungary's obstinate sentiments: "This absolutely does not change the position of the Polish government with respect to migration policy."¹⁰⁵

As the ECJ warned following its verdict, the refusal of the three countries to acquiesce to the mandate renders them liable for prosecution under EU law. Infringement proceedings already begun against the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland, began in July 2017 because the Czech Republic had not relocated anyone since August 2016 and

¹⁰² Chadwick.

¹⁰³ "Zeman: Czechs Should Reject Refugee Quotas at Cost of EU Funds," *Prague Daily Monitor*, 7 September 2017, <http://praguemonitor.com/2017/09/07/zeman-czechs-should-reject-refugee-quotas-cost-eu-funds>.

¹⁰⁴ "EU Takes Action Against Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic Over Refugee Quota Plan," *Hungary Today*, 15 June 2017, <http://hungarytoday.hu/news/eu-takes-action-hungary-poland-czech-republic-refugee-quota-plan-90702>.

¹⁰⁵ Gorondi and Cook.

neither Hungary nor Poland took any refugees at all. Since the decision was made to uphold the quota plan, the three countries may soon face the final steps of the infringement procedure—court referral. If found guilty of breaking EU law, the three are likely to face fines. However, additional sanctions and the possibility of revoking EU membership have been suggested—to which German Chancellor, Angela Merkel responded with uncertainty, “We will have to talk about this at the European Council in October.”¹⁰⁶ Although the three countries in question have a few weeks to reconsider their stances—based on the fiery rhetoric issued from Budapest, Prague, and Warsaw recently—the probability of that happening for any one of the three, is nearly unbelievable.

Even though Slovakia eventually acquiesced to the requirements of the Agenda—relieving it from infringement proceedings—its condemnation of the quota plan continues to unite it with the other three members of the V4. The small dissenting group is outnumbered by the other member states who favor the plan, —powerful, western European states like France, Germany, and Italy—tout “solidarity,” and consider the ECJ ruling a victory over the group of four.¹⁰⁷ The quota plan drew contrasting opinions between the V4 and the other EU members and was the catalyst reigniting a deeply divisive issue between central and western Europe—Muslim immigration.

¹⁰⁶ Michael Nienaber, "Merkel Calls on Hungary to Implement Court Ruling on Refugee Distribution," *Reuters*, 11 September 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-germany-hungary/merkel-calls-on-hungary-to-implement-court-ruling-on-refugee-distribution-idUSKCN1BM2UW>.

¹⁰⁷ Valentina Pop and Drew Hinshaw, "Court Rules Hungary Must Take Migrants, Deepening Tensions in EU," *The Wall Street Journal*, 6 September 2017, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/hungary-and-slovakia-must-admit-refugees-as-part-of-eu-relocation-program-court-rules-1504692648>.

Visegrád Four Perspectives

The shared sentiment of the Visegrád Four regarding Muslim immigration can somewhat be explained by its common historical experience. Although the alliance formed following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, their ties date back centuries. All four were ruled under the Habsburg Empire at one time or another and were all part of the Eastern Bloc during the Cold War. The creation of the regional alliance in 1991 solidified relations between the four—united by their shared historical, political, and cultural values. Since then, all four have joined both NATO and the EU, demonstrating their successful transition into democratic institutions.

Although now fully integrated into alliances with the West, the history of the V4 has uniquely shaped its identity compared to western Europe. After WWII, western Europe imported immigrants from Africa and Asia and now contain diverse populations. In contrast, the countries of Central Europe did not experience mass immigration and thus, maintain primarily homogeneous populations. While the bloc has successfully integrated some immigrant populations (e.g., Ukrainian, Vietnamese, and Balkan)—even those populations are mostly ethnically white. Therefore, its apprehension of mass immigration—specifically Muslim immigration—emanates from a historical lack of exposure to diverse populations and a sense of xenophobia. The V4’s aversion to “outsiders” encourages the bloc to value the ability to both control its borders and preserve its ethnic identities. This is indicative in its position on the current migrant crisis.

In response to the millions of Muslim refugees flooding into Europe, the V4 advocated both increased policing of the EU’s external borders and assistance to conflict

areas—instead of the 2015 quota scheme. It complained that the Agenda was not an effective mechanism and undermined state sovereignty. Some may believe the V4’s complaints derive from its repugnance to policies imposed by outside powers—which the bloc experienced while under authoritarian regimes. However, since becoming NATO and EU members, the V4 rarely challenged the decisions of the supranational organizations. The current crisis and subsequent redistribution agenda was enough to upset the former status quo. Otilia Dhand, a Slovakian-born analyst with *Teneo Intelligence*, confirms the surprise caused by the group’s push-back, “The emergence of the Visegrád Four as an opposition bloc is a notable development...since these countries could long be relied on to “sign on the dotted line” of EU policies.”¹⁰⁸ The V4’s xenophobia and hostility towards the massive numbers of refugees impelled them to both publicly oppose the EU scheme and challenge its adoption procedure in the EU’s highest court. The complaint it brought against the scheme revealed the bloc’s unflinching conviction that accepting the (mostly Muslim) refugees would threaten state security and all Europe’s—aggravating the already-divisive debate on Muslim immigration.¹⁰⁹

The V4 share the perception that efforts to integrate Muslim immigrant populations in Western Europe have failed.¹¹⁰ This perception is also shared among the populations of the V4 countries who maintain the most negative views of Muslims across

¹⁰⁸ Neil Buckley and Henry Foy, "The Visegrád Four: Brussels' Eastern Critics," *Financial Times*, 29 August 2016, <https://www.ft.com/content/e99d3b12-6b96-11e6-a0b1-d87a9fea034f>.

¹⁰⁹ Liam Clancy, "No Refugees, No Terror for Poland, Hungary," *WND*, 5 May 2017, <http://www.wnd.com/2017/06/no-refugees-no-terror-for-poland-hungary/>.

¹¹⁰ Radko Hokovský, "How Migrants Brought Central Europe Together," *POLITICO*, 9 February 2016, <http://www.politico.eu/article/how-migrants-brought-central-europe-together-visegrad-group-orban-poland/>.

Europe, according to a Pew Research Poll.¹¹¹ The same poll concluded that the central European countries believe the incoming refugees will cause social and economic problems and increase Muslim-related terrorism (although, this trend is increasing throughout Europe).¹¹² Therefore the bloc not only raises concern only over Muslim refugees who may alter the cultural identity and have negative economic impacts, but asserts that terrorists may be disguised as refugees. The V4's loudest critic of the quota plan, Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, echoed this concern while discussing the relation between Western European immigration and the rise in terrorism, "Migration turned out to be the Trojan horse of terrorism."¹¹³

Other anti-refugee proponents sometimes assert a correlation between Muslim populations and terrorism based on the central European countries—who have small Muslim populations, and no recent terror attacks.¹¹⁴ The V4 countries' individual Muslim populations are considerably smaller than those of western Europe. As of 2010, the Muslim populations as a percentage of total population of the V4 countries are: Slovakia: 0.1%, Poland: 0.1%, Hungary: 0.3%, and Czech Republic: less than 0.1%.¹¹⁵ According to the same poll, the V4's Muslim populations are not expected to change by 2030. A

¹¹¹ Richard Wike, Bruce Stokes, and Katie Simmons, "Europeans Fear Wave of Refugees Will Mean More Terrorism, Fewer Jobs," *Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project*, 11 July 2016, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2016/07/11/europeans-fear-wave-of-refugees-will-mean-more-terrorism-fewer-jobs/>.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Clancy.

¹¹⁴ "Foreign Travel Advice," *GOV.UK*, Accessed 14 September 2017, <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>.

¹¹⁵ Joseph Liu, "Table: Muslim Population by Country," *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project*, 27 January 2011, <http://www.pewforum.org/2011/01/27/table-muslim-population-by-country/>.

different poll regarding terror threat levels throughout the world, the V4 collectively face a “low” terror threat level and ranked at a terror threat “level 1” (Slovakia remains at a level 2 which is still considered low).¹¹⁶ Although the population predictions were made prior to the 2015 migrant crisis, if the bloc continues to rebuke the redistribution scheme—or even if they accept a small number of refugees—the prediction is likely to remain valid. The effects on the number of future terror attacks was not mentioned in the study, but those advocating the correlation between Muslim populations and terror attacks, would likely predict them to remain low too. The seemingly causal relationship and the rise in terror attacks through western Europe, are used to justify the V4’s opposition to accepting Muslim refugees—and thus, the quota plan.

While naturally, not every refugee is Muslim, and not every Muslim will commit an act of terror, the V4 is unwilling to challenge the probability and risk the security of its populations. Apart from Slovakia, the V4 bloc continues to refuse refugees even after threatened with fines and sanctions and are unlikely to succumb to “solidarity” pressures from the west. As it continues to challenge the European Agenda on Migration, the obdurate leaders garner support from their xenophobic populations by propagating anti-Muslim and anti-refugee sentiments.

Czech Republic Perspective

Security Strategy of the Czech Republic. A poll conducted by the International

¹¹⁶ Oliver Smith, "Mapped: The 48 Countries Where a Terrorist Attack is Most Likely," *The Telegraph*, 26 April 2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/maps-and-graphics/Mapped-Terror-threat-around-the-world/>.

Republican Institute indicates Czechs consider immigration as the single biggest problem facing Europe today and one of the greatest threats to their way of life (second only to terrorism).¹¹⁷ Therefore, at the time of the Czech Security Strategy’s formulation in 2015, the European Migrant Crisis was quickly becoming one of the most important and publicized security concerns, and designated the “negative aspects of international migration” as security threat. It also described the dangerous implications of “mass uncontrollable migration” along with proclaiming its intolerance for xenophobia and racism.¹¹⁸ It speculates that insufficient integration of migrants causes not only a rise in social tensions, but can ultimately result in the radicalization of the immigrants.¹¹⁹ It then continues to make various suggestions to counter illegal immigration, some of which include: denouncing the abolition of internal border controls (which the CZ deems vital in the fight against illegal immigration), demanding greater protection of the EU’s external borders, and confirming its support for both the Dublin System and Schengen Agreement—specifically when implemented consistently by all of the European states.¹²⁰ The Strategy also outlines its commitment to prosecute extremism, xenophobia, discrimination, and other forms of intolerance that target minority or immigrant groups—stating that the CZ aims for the social and economic self-sufficiency of immigrants, and their overall integration into Czech society.¹²¹ Although the attitude of the Strategy

¹¹⁷ “Visegrad Four Poll Reveals Vulnerabilities to Russian Influence,” *Center for Insights in Survey Research*, 24 May 2017, <http://www.iri.org/polls>.

¹¹⁸ “Security Strategy of the Czech Republic 2015.”

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

begins by asserting that immigrants are potentially dangerous, it ends with a tone of cooperation and aims for integration. Since the Security Strategy was implemented, leaders in Prague have indicated their denunciation and refusal to cooperate with the EU on its Agenda on Migration. While they cite reasons that do not necessarily interfere with the Security Strategy, Czech leaders often publicly propagate Islamophobic propaganda and fear that Muslim refugees are terrorists in disguise. This behavior is explicitly condemned within the Strategy, yet leaders have not been prosecuted. In the wake of the migrant crisis, the Czech Republic has proved itself to be one of the most vocal critics of mass Muslim immigration and thus, successfully undermined its own inclusive policies.

Czech and Islam. Since the implementation of the European Agenda on Migration, the Czech Republic accepted twelve of the required 2,691 refugees. The Czech Republic's common history with the V4—oppression and invasion by outsiders, a lack of diversity, and xenophobic disposition—similarly motivates its obstinacy amid threats from the EU to adhere to the quota plan. The Czech Republic also shares concerns that Muslim refugees will affect an increase in terrorism and doubts the compatibility of Islam with the culture of the V4.

The Czech census in 2009 showed 407,500 foreign citizens reside in the CZ (most of which are white) out of a population of 10.55 million.¹²² While this foreign population is small in comparison to western populations, it shows that Czech is not opposed to all immigrants. Rather, CZ specifically opposes immigrants that are Muslim. Per the 2010

¹²² Simon Rogers, "Immigration to Europe: How Many Foreign Citizens Live in Each Country?" *The Guardian*, 7 September 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2010/sep/07/immigration-europe-foreign-citizens>.

census, 4,000 Muslims live in Czech Republic.¹²³ Therefore, although the CZ is home to a small Muslim community, Czechs believe any substantial Muslim population will prove unable or unwilling to assimilate into CZ. In the past, the CZ has successfully assimilated Ukrainian and Vietnamese communities, and offered protection for refugees from the Balkans. Today, Czechs have a poor outlook on the possibility of successful Muslim assimilation. In 2015, Czech President Miloš Zeman explained his viewpoint, “Ukrainians, too, are refugees and with their origin and diligence, they are somewhat close to us.... unlike the Islamic ones, they have a much a better ability to assimilate themselves.”¹²⁴ Zeman again, persisted that Islam is incompatible with Czech culture, in 2017, when he praised “immigrants who come here to work and who have similar language and similar culture like ours,” applauding both the Ukrainian and Vietnamese immigrant communities, noting they assimilate well, and are appreciative of and contributive to, Czech culture and society.¹²⁵ If Czechs believe Islam is incompatible with their culture and will not assimilate, they are likely to believe that a large Muslim population would change the overall culture of CZ. This fear is common among most Europeans (including western) who believe that the Muslims residing in their countries, do not want to adopt their countries’ customs or way of life, and want to remain distinct from the majority society.¹²⁶ Whether this is true in the Muslim mindset, the fear and

¹²³ Liu.

¹²⁴ Victoria Friedman, "We Do Not Want More Muslims in Czech Republic': Prime Minister," *Breitbart*, 30 August 2017, <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2017/08/30/not-want-muslims-czech-republic-prime-minister/>.

¹²⁵ Stephen Wynne, "Czech Republic Refuses to Yield on Migrants," *Church Militant*, 30 August 2017, <https://www.churchmilitant.com/news/article/czech-republic-refuses-to-yield-on-migrants>.

¹²⁶ Wike, Stokes, and Simmons.

possibility of losing their identity and culture to Islam is an unthinkable risk.

Although the CZ and remaining V4 cite similar explanations for their aversion to immigrate large Muslim populations, Czech culture has a distinct characteristic that further undermines any desire for Muslim assimilation—secularism. The other three countries that comprise the V4, possess considerably more religious populations than the Czech Republic—who is one of the least religious nations in the world. The Czech Constitution allows freedom of religion and historically, Czechs were considered “tolerant and even indifferent towards religion.”¹²⁷ However, the CZ continues its process of secularization and would likely consider the attempt of any religion to impede on that process as unfavorable. On the other hand, because most refugees are Muslims, it may be difficult for them to assimilate under a secular government. For example, although Syria’s Constitution claims to be a secular state, its Article 3 stipulates that the President must be a Muslim, and that the majority of laws will be based on Islam.¹²⁸ CZ’s dramatically different government and mostly non-religious population may prove exceedingly challenging for a Syrian, who is accustomed to a government that is largely dictated by religion. Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka, asserts his belief that religious and cultural convictions cause populations to clash in saying, “In Europe too often we see problems with the integration of people coming from another cultural or religious environment.”¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Richard Felix Staar, *Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe*, Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, 1994, 90.

¹²⁸ “Syrian Arab Republic’s Constitution of 2012,” *Comparative Constitutions Project*, Constituteproject.org, 6 June 2017.

¹²⁹ Friedman.

In 2004, Islam was officially registered as a religion in CZ and is now eligible to receive state funds. Although there are currently two mosques, the public has opposed the construction of any additional mosques. Perhaps worse, Islamophobic Czechs participate in various public events displaying hate for Muslims. One of the recent, notable events occurred on the anniversary of the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

20 August, 2016, anti-Islamic activists of Martin Konvička Initiative (MKI) staged an Islamic State invasion at the Old Town Square in Prague. Konvička, dressed in the white garb of a Muslim imam, drove into the tourist-packed Old Town Square in a jeep, accompanied by a camel and a group of “DAESH soldiers” dressed in army fatigues, brandishing imitation firearms and shouting “Allahu Akbar.”¹³⁰

The event caused panic and alarm, motivating some people to take cover—causing minor injuries. The fake attack was quickly shut down by police and demonstrators were arrested. However, Prague Metropolitan Police Spokesperson Tomáš Hulan, confirmed the organizers received permission from City Hall for both a “performance” and the use of imitation firearms. The demonstrators were later released.¹³¹ Although some Czech politicians publicly decried the simulation, it has not prevented other displays of Islamophobia, or settled the anxieties of potential Islamic terrorism—that is often fanned by both the media and Czech leaders. As legislative elections passed in October and presidential elections are upcoming in January, anti-immigration and opposition to the EU quota plan are two of the most influential topics candidates can campaign on to garner support.

President Miloš Zeman. Throughout Czech history, reverence has been paid to

¹³⁰ Dominik Jůn, “Populist Politician Stages “Islamic State Invasion” in Old Town Square,” *radio.cz*, 22 August 2016, <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/curraffrs/far-right-politician-stagesislamic-state-invasion-in-old-town-square>.

¹³¹ Ibid.

its various leaders who contributed to the state it is today. Beginning with Jan Hus and the Hussite Movement that planted the seeds of Czech nationalism, to Czechoslovakia's first President Tomáš Masaryk, and his successors: Václav Havel, Václav Klaus, and current Czech President Miloš Zeman. These leaders (among others of the Czech intelligentsia) are attributed with helping to shape Czech identity, achieve independence, and shape the policies that continue to maintain Czech sovereignty. Therefore, it may be unsurprising that even current Czech President Miloš Zeman's controversial presidency benefits from the respect from the Czech population—permitting him to maintain mostly above a 50% approval rating since mid-2015.¹³²

Zeman boasts political tenure dating back to the Prague Spring of 1968, was Czech's former Prime Minister from 1998-2001, and is Czech's first directly elected president (the previous two were elected by parliament). Zeman's years in politics and current presidential term are marked by his outspoken, politically-charged, and sometimes inaccurate statements that are often granted credence because he is a Czech political elite. Zeman's controversial rhetoric and popularity will be tested as Zeman runs for his second term in the upcoming national election in January 2018. He successfully campaigned in 2012 on issues of national security, anti-corruption measures, accession to the eurozone, and the appointment of judges and presidential pardons of convicts. However, as geopolitics have shifted toward the topics of EU integration and Muslim immigration, his current campaign reflects those accordingly. He openly expresses his desire to remain within both the EU and NATO, but takes hardline approaches against

¹³² Jason Hovet, "Czech President's Approval Rating Takes Hit from Government Crisis," *Reuters*, 30 May 2017, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-czech-president/czech-presidents-approval-rating-takes-hit-from-government-crisis-idUKKBN18Q1KD>.

both mass immigration and Islam—including challenging Brussels’ quota plan.

The European Migrant Crisis served as a catalyst for Zeman’s xenophobic, discriminatory propaganda, where he offers misleading quips like, “Not all Muslims are terrorists, but all terrorists are Muslims.”¹³³ Although Zeman’s government decided against challenging the quota plan in court, he remained a vocal critic, and refused to be forced to accept the required number of refugees. He justified this decision to the Czech people by peddling anti-refugee, Islamophobic rhetoric reigniting Czech paranoia, and condemning the foreign group as “criminals” who intend to “subjugate Europe.”¹³⁴¹³⁵ With Czech’s long and recent history of subjugation by foreign powers, this ostensible fear pangs at the core of the Czech conscious.

Although this anti-Muslim rhetoric has retained his popularity in rural areas, his approval ratings and urban voter support have both recently dropped following the controversy surrounding Babiš’ removal from office in May.¹³⁶ Under Czech law, Zeman should have approved Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka’s demand that Finance Minister Andrei Babiš be terminated for tax dodging. Therefore, when Zeman refused to abide by Sobotka’s plans, it was seen as an abuse of power. Even with this recent decrease in approval ratings, Zeman is still a leading candidate for the January presidential election—

¹³³ Robert Tait, “Miloš Zeman: The Hardline Czech Leader Fanning Hostility to Refugees,” *The Guardian*, 14 September 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/14/milos-zeman-czech-leader-refugees>.

¹³⁴ “Czech President Miloš Zeman: The Refugees are Criminals,” *Britské listy*, 6 November 2015, <https://blisty.cz/art/79745.html>.

¹³⁵ “Czech President Miloš Zeman: The Immigrants are Islamists. They are Trying to Subjugate Europe,” *Britské listy*, 5 November 2015, <https://blisty.cz/art/79737.html>.

¹³⁶ Gašper Završnik, “Czech President Miloš Zeman to Seek Reelection in 2018,” *POLITICO*, 10 March 2017, <https://www.politico.eu/article/czech-president-milos-zeman-to-seek-reelection-in-2018/>.

especially due to his close relationship with Andrej Babiš.

Andrej Babiš. President Zeman's former Finance Minister (his employment was terminated in May 2017 following a tax evasion scandal), Andrej Babiš, is a Slovak-born oligarch, and one of Czech Republic's richest and most popular politicians. Despite his termination in May and investigations beginning in September for illegally procuring government subsidies, both his popularity and anti-immigrant platform procured him a substantial victory in the October legislative elections (by a margin of over 30% from the next leading candidate's votes). His populist parties' anti-immigration and Eurosceptic politics have potentially great implications for the Czech Republic and its role within the EU.

Babiš is the founder of the populist party, Action of Dissatisfied Citizens (*Akce nespokojených občanů*, ANO). In addition to *Agrofert*—his agriculture, food processing, and chemical holding company for which he is sole owner—Babiš also owns *Mafra*, the largest media distribution company in the country. *Mafra* distributes some of the most widely read newspapers, such as *Mladá fronta Dnes* (*Young Front Today*, MF Dnes) which is the largest broadsheet newspaper circulated in CZ.¹³⁷ *Mafra* also owns several monthly magazines, a TV music channel, radio stations, and several web portals—including one of the most visited news servers, *iDnes.cz*.¹³⁸ This cartel of media outlets raises concerns that the Czech Republic is transforming into an oligarchy under Babiš,

¹³⁷ Jan Puhl, "Friday Elections: Czech Republic Prepares to Welcome 'Babisconi'," *SPIEGEL ONLINE*, 25 October 2013, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/outside-have-good-chances-in-friday-elections-in-czech-republic-a-929994.html>.

¹³⁸ "The Most Popular Czech Websites," *Gemius Global*, 28 July 2015, <https://www.gemius.com/agencies-news/the-most-popular-czech-websites.html>.

earning him the nickname, “Babisconi”—a reference to the disreputable former Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi, who used his vast media empire to influence Italy’s politics for close to two decades.¹³⁹ By owning media that is sympathetic to him, Babiš can influence what is reported about him, and thus skew a favorable perception. Although this is widely accepted as an unfair advantage for Babiš over other politicians, the Czech people support him, and elected him this October—further demonstrating the power of his influence and perhaps explains why he is considered the most influential man in Czech Republic.¹⁴⁰

Although Babiš successfully secured the necessary votes and receives Zeman’s support, he is still tasked with forming a new coalition government to gain majority rule in Parliament. Currently, no other parties (the communist party is the only one considering aligning and they do not carry enough seats) within Parliament support a coalition with his ANO party due to the fraud charges recently brought against him.¹⁴¹ Despite this challenge, he is expected to eventually obtain the coalition government required to provide him majority and thus, the capacity to influence new policies to his liking.

Concerns arise regarding Babiš’ intentions on Czech membership within the EU due to his steadfast denunciation of the EU quota plan and refusal to further integrate into

¹³⁹ Henry Foy, "Lunch with the FT: Andrej Babiš," *Financial Times*, 19 February 2016, <https://www.ft.com/content/83908fd2-d4a5-11e5-829b-8564e7528e54>.

¹⁴⁰ Czech News Agency (ČTK), "Politico Server: Babiš is Most Powerful Man in Czech Republic," *Prague Daily Monitor*, 30 October 2015, <http://www.praguemonitor.com/2015/10/30/politico-server-babi%C5%A1-most-powerful-man-czech-republic>.

¹⁴¹ Karel Janicek, "Czech Leader Asks Election Winner to Form Government," *Houston Chronicle*, 31 October 2017, <http://www.chron.com/news/world/article/Czech-leader-asks-election-winner-to-form-12320026.php>.

the EU. He opposes the adoption of the euro in CZ because he believes it infringes on Czech sovereignty and competitiveness. He said, "I want the Czech koruna, and an independent central bank. I don't want another issue that Brussels would be meddling with."¹⁴² Babiš purposely touts the idea of EU interference because it resonates with Czech citizens—who have the second-lowest amount of trust in the European Union (second to the Greeks) of all 28-member states.¹⁴³ This "Euroscepticism" raises fears of a "Czexit" among an uneasy union of states still coping with Britain's 2016 decision to leave the EU. However, Babiš frequently refutes concerns of leaving the EU, praising the economic benefits the CZ gains by operating within the EU market—including the impressive fact that the CZ maintains the lowest unemployment rate (2.7%) in the EU (and has for the past four years).¹⁴⁴ Babiš affirms, "We are a democratic movement. We are a solid part of the European Union and we are a solid part of NATO. We certainly are not a threat to democracy. I am ready to fight for our national interests and to promote them."¹⁴⁵ From this Babiš pledges Czech's membership to the EU, but reiterates the priority of his commitment to both Czech sovereignty and national interests. Therefore, while Babiš remains committed to the EU, his determination to resist mass migration and

¹⁴² Ladka Morkowitz Bauerova and Michael Winfrey, "'We Don't Want the Euro,' Says Czech Tycoon Poised to Be Premier," *Bloomberg.com*, 26 June 2017, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-06-25/-we-don-t-want-the-euro-says-czech-tycoon-poised-to-be-premier>.

¹⁴³ "Standard Eurobarometer 87," *Public Opinion - European Commission*, August 2017, <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/STANDARD/surveyKy/2142>.

¹⁴⁴ "EU's Unemployment Rate Fell in September," *World Bulletin*, 1 November 2017, <http://www.worldbulletin.net/headlines/195496/eus-unemployment-rate-fell-in-september>.

¹⁴⁵ Soeren Kern, "'Czech Donald Trump' Wins Landslide Victory," *Gatestone Institute*, 22 October 2017, <https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/11208/czech-election-babis-victory>.

refusal to cooperate with the quota plan, are the more pressing challenges facing the EU.

Due to the split between Western and Eastern perspectives on the topic of immigration and Babiš' determination to not forfeit Czech's sovereign rights merely to appease Brussels, this is likely to be the nucleus of numerous heated debates emanating from the new Czech administration. Babiš' fear-inciting rhetoric paints him as a strong force, with the determination to fight for the safety of his people: "I will not accept refugee quotas for the Czech Republic. The situation has changed. We see how migrants react in Europe. We must react to the needs and fears of the citizens of our country. We must guarantee the security of Czech citizens. Even if we are punished by sanctions."¹⁴⁶ As Zeman and other V4 presidents argued in opposition to the quota plan, Babiš similarly advocates that the Czech Republic possesses the authority to authorize who it lets in its borders and that the EU mandate overstepped its boundaries by trying to force its laws on Czechs. Babiš realizes that Czechs detest this type of foreign hegemonic behavior and exploits it: "We have to fight for what our ancestors built here. If there will be more Muslims than Belgians in Brussels, that's their problem. I don't want that here. They won't be telling us who should live here."¹⁴⁷ He also frequently expresses the common Czech Islamophobic sentiment, referring to the increased Islamist terrorism experienced in Western Europe: "After what has been happening in Europe, I say clearly that I don't want even a single refugee in the Czech Republic, not even temporarily."¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Kern.

¹⁴⁷ Bauerova and Winfrey.

¹⁴⁸ Robert Muller, "Czech Deputy PM Rejects Refugee Quotas, Says Country Should Fight Any EU Sanctions," *Reuters*, 3 August 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-czech-refugee-pm/czech-deputy-pm-rejects-refugee-quotas-says-country-should-fight-any-eu-sanctions-idUSKCN10E227>.

While facing fraud charges, Babiš' campaigned on these two topics, and won emphatically during the October elections. If Babiš decides to support Zeman during the upcoming presidential election in January, and Zeman achieves reelection, the two are likely to be a challenging force for Brussels and the future Muslim immigration. With similar sentiments on the rise within the V4 and Western Europe, the power of this potential coalition within the Czech government may have considerable influence on the European political stage.

Summary

The topic of Muslim immigration became a major topic of debate in the wake of the European Migrant Crisis of 2015. The Czech Republic and remaining V4 members denounced the controversial solution imposed by Brussels within the European Agenda on Migration. The Czech Republic's history of discrimination against non-white immigrants and current refusal to accept a significant number of refugees, highlighted the divide between Western and Eastern Europe's immigration policies (the V4's stance was similar to Czech's). As indicated in Chapters One and Two, the Czech Republic's expressed Islamophobia is so deep-rooted that it has emboldened Czech officials condemn the EU quota plan as an infringement on Czech sovereignty. This stance successfully garners the support of the Czech public who share the same concern due to the Czech historical narrative of being subjugated by outside powers.

Czech populist, Andrei Babiš, successfully campaigned on a platform of anti-immigration and Euroscepticism during the October 2017 legislative elections. Throughout Babiš' campaign, current Czech President Miloš Zeman supported him—

publicly touting the same agenda. In turn, Zeman is likely to receive similar support for his upcoming run for reelection in January 2018. With the widespread support for anti-Muslim and Eurosceptic policies throughout CZ, the Czech government is undergoing its furthest shift right since its split with Slovakia. With these recent events, and Czech's historic and cultural narratives, this thesis predicts that a CZ led by both Babiš and Zeman will not only pose further challenges to the liberal EU consensus, but will encourage Prague to become more entrenched in its policies, continue to ally with the V4, and likely contribute to the rising populism trending throughout Central and Eastern Europe. Chapter Five will conclude this thesis' findings and posit further predictions regarding the recent shifts in EU states.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Nationalism is a defining characteristic of Czech identity as it has motivated them through centuries of oppression. Czech nationalism slowly emerged in the 15th century after facing the repeated crusades of the Roman Catholic Church. Not long after, the Czechs endured several centuries of what is known as the “Dark Ages” while subjected under Habsburg rule. After a period of enlightenment, Czech was invaded by fascist Germany, and almost immediately afterwards—subjected to communist rule under the Soviet Union for the next 40 years. After three stints at achieving autonomy—all cut short by a foreign aggressor—the Czech Republic finally emerged a sovereign nation in 1993 (after its split with Slovakia), becoming the secular, democratic country it remains today. Czech Republic’s history of repeated invasions (including its recent subjugation under the communist regime less than thirty years ago) and foreign attempts at oppressing Czech identity are impressed upon the Czech conscious and continue to influence Czech politics. Czech’s distrust of “outsiders” and fear of stronger, foreign powers threatening its sovereignty remain a genuine concern. It has manifested itself in Czech’s xenophobic and discriminatory attitude towards non-white, immigrant populations—including those that currently reside in CZ.

Czech’s two largest, non-white immigrant populations—the Roma and Vietnamese—immigrated to the CZ under distinct circumstances. While both groups undoubtedly endured discrimination, the contrasting manner with which each group arrived likely influenced Czech’s perception of them, explaining why they have integrated into Czech society at drastically different rates. Compared to the progress the

Vietnamese have made in assimilating into Czech society within a matter of decades, the Roma have realized only a fraction of progress although residing in the CZ for centuries. The Roma's historic experience with systemic discrimination has resulted in their segregation in schools and neighborhoods, high rates of unemployment and criminal activity, and overall poor quality of life. Failure to meet the various assimilation benchmarks denies the Roma to obtain Czech citizenship or receive social and economic benefits, further perpetuating their inability to achieve any assimilation progress, and ultimately continuing the unproductive cycle. While some attribute the inability of the Roma to assimilate to be a result of a cultural phenomenon of the Roma, the comparative analysis of the Roma and Vietnamese suggests that the means with which the Roma arrived into the CZ may offer a better explanation. If the latter provided true, then it could be assumed that the immigration of any uninvited, non-white minority population, would likely produce comparably dismal results. In the context of the European Migrant Crisis, the inability of the Roma to assimilate is conflated with negative predictions of Muslims' likelihood to assimilate. Thus, the Roma's poor assimilation progress may be offered as an argument against Muslim immigration.

Czech's xenophobic disposition garnered new attention during the migrant crisis as it became an outspoken critic of the *European Agenda on Migration*. Although Europe is facing the worst refugee crisis since the Second World War, the Czech Republic remains fixed in its refusal to accept large numbers of refugees. The quota plan requires the Czech Republic to accept 2,691 asylum seekers who are mostly Muslim. Czech's current Muslim population is about 4,000. Therefore, if they were to abide by the mandate, they would be increasing their current Muslim population by 67%. This is

unacceptable for the Czech Republic who remains highly fearful of terrorism and continues to search for avenues to combat Islamists. Although some argue that immigration is beneficial to economies, aging populations, cultural diversity, and justify it morally, it is the leaders of the countries whom are responsible for assimilating those immigrants, while concurrently, promoting the security of their nations and people. In the Czech Republic, it seems that none of those reasons are worth the slightest risk of potential Islamist terror attacks that may occur when assimilation fails. Thus, the purported solution of the CZ is to not allow Muslim immigration—or at least keep it highly restricted. Islamophobia pervades both Czech elites and the public whose politicians, media, and anti-Muslim activists freely exhibit Islamophobic, racist, and discriminatory remarks and actions. This makes it challenging for the Czech perception of Muslims to improve. If Czech finally concedes and accepts asylum seekers, it would necessitate a “welcoming” perspective like the Vietnamese population experienced during their immigration to the CZ. However, because the quota is EU-mandated and considered an invasion of Czech sovereignty, it is unlikely that a “welcoming” perspective will ensue anytime soon. The haste with which asylum-seekers need to be redistributed is an insufficient amount of time to improve Czech Islamophobia. Forcing the immigration of another, non-white, minority population (in this case, Muslims) is likely to result in similar (or worse) discrimination and ineffective assimilation—ultimately resulting in a disservice to those refugees.

The stubborn refusal to comply with the EU ruling indicates a sharp turn from Czech’s past when it was eager to ally with the west via the EU, and concede power to the supranational organization. Today, the CZ rebukes the EU’s mandatory quota plan

even as the EU begins infringement proceedings against the Czech Republic—who has taken 12 of the EU-mandated 2,691 asylum seekers. It remains steadfast in its decision and is determined not to succumb to EU “blackmail.” The CZ asserts that the quota plan not only infringes on their sovereignty to decide their immigration policy, but conflicts with its openly anti-Muslim posture. The resolve with which the CZ adheres to its anti-Muslim immigration stance—amid the threat of sanctions—demonstrates the depths of its Islamophobia. The quota plan has also been used as tool by politicians who want to wield the population’s support in refusing to integrate further into the EU. As the EU continues to negotiate Britain’s exit, Eurosceptic sentiments are increasingly alarming as a Brexit “domino effect” remains a concern.

The collective V4 expresses similar contentions with the EU quota plan largely due to their shared history of foreign invasion and lack of experience with immigration from North Africa or the Middle East (like that experienced by Western Europe). They also possess largely homogeneous populations, Islamophobic dispositions, and thus also censure the EU for impeding their sovereignty. Although the plan expired in September 2017, opposition to the plan remains and is growing among EU members (e.g., Estonia, Latvia, Romania, and Austria) due to increasing anti-immigrant views and concerns over future mass immigration. The growing anti-immigration attitudes and dissent within the EU regarding the quota plan suggest that the EU is likely to have to reconsider an alternative solution to cope with future immigration crises. Further, V4 politicians are capitalizing on the controversial quota plan, encouraging the rise of anti-Muslim and Eurosceptic sentiments to garner popularity among their people and promote a right-ward shift in their governments.

Czech politicians have strategically exploited the xenophobic and nationalistic feelings among the population to successfully campaign for their populist parties. Former Finance Minister Andrei Babiš' populist ANO party decisively won in the October parliamentary elections, shifting the government to the right, and paving the way for Babiš to become Czech's new Prime Minister. In turn, the upcoming January presidential elections is likely to witness Babiš' support of Zeman for reelection. Both politicians maintain similar views regarding anti-Muslim immigration and limited EU integration. As Babiš successfully campaigned with this platform, Zeman is doing the same, and will likely gain the vote of ANO sympathizers. While Babiš will likely form a coalition government to help him pursue the policies he intends, with Zeman's reelection, the two will combine to lead a nativist and Euroskeptic Czech Republic. Working together with the remaining members of the V4 will strengthen the role of the alliance who is committed to resisting mass immigration and the transfer of national sovereignty to the EU. A stronger V4 will accentuate the division between the pro-EU states of Western Europe with the increasingly Eurosceptic states in Central and Eastern Europe. The V4 is likely to pursue coalitions with additional governments (e.g., Austria) to the detriment of EU solidarity. This is becoming more feasible with the rise of populism throughout Europe and will further challenge the historically liberal consensus of the EU.

The rising discontent with established parties, seemingly failed multiculturalism, and concerns of mass immigration have resulted in surge of support for anti-establishment parties, populist's ascendancy, and an overall shift in the political landscape in Europe. As the EU still copes with Britain's exit, the V4's non-compliance with the quota plan, and the Catalan secession crisis, EU solidarity is consistently under

duress. To compound the pressure for reform, the populism that was most ostensible in Eastern Europe expanded to Central Europe in the recent September and October elections. With the left and right becoming increasingly defined in terms of their position on immigration, it is no surprise that virtually every European election in 2017 witnessed left parties suffering staggering defeats—losing their voters to far right anti-immigration populists. Austria’s October legislative elections resulted in the conservative Austrian People’s Party—led by the notoriously xenophobic, populist Sebastian Kurz—to become the largest party in the Austrian National Council. Also, in Germany, although Angela Merkel was reelected for her fourth term as Chancellor in September 2017, the rising discontent of liberal immigration policies bolstered a right-wing party to win seats in Parliament for the first time in more than half a century. The issues of state sovereignty and immigration are likely to continue to be highly influential platforms for politicians to campaign on, already effecting a rise of populism in Central and Eastern Europe, and threatening the solidarity of the European Union.

Although the Czech Republic remains firmly within the EU, under Babis, it will limit further integration. With Czech’s productive economy and lowest unemployment rate in the EU, Babis maintains a cogent argument. Furthermore, he is determined to reform the EU regarding immigration. He insists that the CZ alone (any EU state) should decide their own immigration policies and who they will allow in. This sentiment is shared among the populists, indicating that Central and Eastern European states will continue to challenge Brussels in protest of its immigration policies and exertion of authority. To maintain harmony among its members in the changing political environment, it is essential for Brussels to find common ground the CZ and other populist

states. While this will likely further close the border to future refugees and effect a sense of isolationism, ultimately it may prevent further governments from shifting right, prevent other states to leave the EU, and salvage the remaining solidarity of the EU.

This thesis has shown that deep-seated historical and cultural narratives shaping Czech identity continue to influence Czech policy. The effects of this xenophobic disposition are demonstrated in the study of the Czech Roma and Vietnamese populations that not only reiterates the thesis' assertion of immutable sentiments, but suggests that any future mass Muslim immigration will likely face poor integration. This thesis also illustrates the efficacy of Czech politicians who capitalize on this ubiquitous Czech perception to garner public support—including the recent Parliamentary victory of a right-wing party and (likely) new populist Prime Minister. The evidence suggested within this thesis supports the assertion that the recent legislative election and the anticipated reelection of Czech's current president will not only culminate in a fully-fledged populist Czech government, but both reflect and contribute to the rising populism witnessed throughout Central and Eastern Europe.

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