

Discursive Approaches to the Reception of Non-EU Migrants in Polish Official Political Discourse

Claire Laurent*, Elodie Thevenin**

Poland has faced several crisis situations related to migration in the past decade. With differences in the scale and origins of incoming people, these crises have triggered various reactions from Polish policy-makers, from the welcoming of non-EU migrants to the implementation of restrictive measures at the Polish border. The present research uses a discursive approach to study the ways in which non-EU migrants are presented and discussed in Poland. By comparing official discourses from Polish authorities during the 2015–2016 migration crisis, the 2021 border crisis with Belarus and following the Russian war on Ukraine in 2022, we analyse how different groups of non-EU migrants are discursively described and considered by political figures. Furthermore, as these crises have important links with the European Union (EU), we also investigate how Poland's relationship with the EU is envisioned by Polish authorities. Through the discourse analysis carried out, we argue that 'migrants' and 'refugees' are discursively constructed as opposing groups in a manner that is highly visible. This discursive strategy is instrumentally used to reflect on the perceived deservingness, alterity or proximity of incoming people. We identify one unifying perspective of Poland's relationship with the EU throughout these crises: Polish authorities are keen to stress the importance of its membership of the EU when benefiting from the latter's restriction of migration to Europe.

Keywords: discourse analysis, Poland, refugee, migrant, semantics, European Union

* University of Strasbourg, France. Address for correspondence: claire.laurent@unistra.fr.

** Jagiellonian University, Poland. Address for correspondence: elodie.thevenin@uj.edu.pl.

© The Author(s) 2024. Open Access. This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license, and indicate if changes were made.

Introduction

The migration crisis of 2015–2016 greatly impacted on the European Union (EU) and contributed to the politicisation of immigration in Poland for the first time (Hutter and Kriesi 2022). Since then, migration has become a growing topic of discussion and concern in the country. The 2015–2016 migration crisis, as well as the border crisis with Belarus which began in the summer of 2021, witnessed a degrading depiction of migrants and, consequently, a fierce opposition from Polish authorities from the Law and Justice party to the migrants entering Polish territory. However, Polish reactions towards extra-EU migration have differed considerably from these perspectives since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Indeed, people seeking refuge in Poland from Russian aggression have been welcomed with a near-unanimous consensus by all Polish political parties.

The starkly different reactions to the various subsets of non-EU migrants underscores the tension between the terms ‘refugee’ and ‘migrant’. According to official definitions, the former defines someone fleeing war or persecution and seeking safety in another country, while the latter refers to someone moving from one country to another without specifying the reasons behind the move (UNHCR 2015). Dictionary definitions indicate that ‘migrant’ is often linked to work: migrants leave their country to find better working conditions and wages, whereas refugees flee from danger (Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales 2012a, 2012b). These terms also imply different timeframes: while ‘refugee’ movements seem limited to the conjunctural situation of danger, ‘migrants’ may settle in the host country for an unrestricted amount of time. The differences between these categories vary within social and political contexts but, often, result in the terms being used in opposition to one another. These terms imply, respectively, ‘legal’ vs ‘illegal’ and ‘forced’ vs ‘voluntary’ migration movements, creating conflict and positioning the two groups on binary, opposing sides, through which they are reduced to ‘the “good” vs. the “bad” migrant’ (Apostolova 2015). Research points to the ‘categorical fetishism’ behind these terms and categories – i.e. the issue that these categories are seen as simply existing, with little consideration for the social constructs behind them (Apostolova 2015; Crawley and Skleparis 2018). Additionally, scholars also warn that word choice is often the product of a strategy and hence political actors may manipulate terms (Apostolova 2015; Wodak 2011). From this perspective, our current research analyses discourses on the reception of non-EU migrants¹ in Poland in times of crisis. It focuses on official discourses produced by political actors in Poland and compares three crises: the 2015–2016 migration crisis, the 2021 Polish–Belarus crisis and the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. Through this comparison, we seek to investigate the use of migration categories in discourse, by answering the following research question: How is the binary ‘refugee’ vs ‘migrant’ addressed in Polish political discourses and how does this schematic opposition contribute to the argumentation of Polish officials on Europe in times of crisis? Based on a qualitative analysis of official political discourse on these crises, we observe the different discursive and official political reactions in Poland to non-EU migrants entering the country and the EU. We also investigate what this discourse means with regards to Poland’s relationship with the EU.

Our article is structured as follows: we start by reviewing the main events and reactions during the aforementioned crises and then develop the reasons why investigating how people are referred to and labelled matters in contemporary Polish politics. After a brief presentation of our analytical frame, methodology and data, our analysis focuses on the argumentative, semantic and symbolic dimensions of the words used to refer to non-EU migrants and concludes with a discussion of Poland’s relationship with the EU in the context of this differentiated reception of non-EU migrants. We conclude that Poland’s political discourse on both non-EU migrants and the EU share some instrumental underpinnings: the opposition in discourse between ‘migrants’ and ‘refugees’ is stressed by Polish authorities’ attempts to legitimise competing policies, with important implications when it comes to membership rights, while the EU is mostly depicted under the prism of gain and profit for Poland.

Context: situating Poland in crises related to migration

Three critical moments when it comes to migration to Poland and to Europe make up the context of our discursive analysis: the migration crisis of 2015–2016, the border crisis between Poland and Belarus in 2021–2022 and the Russian war on Ukraine beginning in February 2022. All of these moments in this article are considered as crises, that is to say, as transformations of social and political systems triggered by critical situations (Dobry 2009: 35). Events of this kind have been considered as critical junctures for the EU when it comes to solidarity (Crawley 2016; Takle 2017) or the governmentability of migration (Tazzioli and Walters 2016). Each of these crises has had profound impacts on Poland, especially at the discursive level.

Although being highly politicised, the 2015–2016 migration crisis had little direct impact on Poland. The country was indeed not on the route the most frequently taken by people seeking to enter the EU. Additionally, the Polish authorities rejected the EU's relocation schemes – i.e. the EU solidarity-based mechanism to relocate asylum-seekers from member states highly impacted on by the crisis – notably Italy and Greece – and consequently welcomed only a limited number of people to its territory (Guild, Costello and Moreno-Lax 2017). The crisis, however, impacted on Polish discourse on refugees and migration, as well as regarding its relations with the EU. Following the rejection of the relocation schemes proposed by the European Commission in May and September 2015, a bitter battle with EU institutions ensued (Frelak 2017). At the domestic level, migration has been used as an issue to stir up debate between the different political parties, notably in the run-up to legislative elections in October 2015. After the victory of the right-wing Law and Justice Party (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* – PiS) in the elections against the former ruling party, Civic Platform (*Platforma Obywatelska* – PO), PiS' use of anti-refugee and anti-immigration rhetoric had a significant impact on the public sphere (Krzyżanowska and Krzyżanowski 2018) resulting in an increased polarisation and securitisation of migration (Pędziwiatr 2019). Another important event during the 2015 crisis was the establishment of the EU–Turkey deal, which attempted to limit the number of refugees coming to Europe. The deal was concluded in March 2016 and aimed at restricting the number of Syrian refugees arriving illegally. The deal included significant financial help to Turkey in exchange for the country taking measures to stop irregular travel from Turkey to the Greek islands. Furthermore, Syrians fleeing to the EU from Turkey illegally would be returned. However, for each irregular Syrian returned, the EU would agree to resettle one Syrian from Turkey to the EU. This externalisation of EU migration policy to third countries was seen as an overall positive development by Polish political actors, especially from the governing majority (Thevenin 2021).

Contrasting with the previous migration crisis, the 2021 border crisis – also often referred to as a 'humanitarian crisis' (e.g. Balicki 2022; Grzeškowiak 2023; Pietrusińska 2022) – presented Poland with a direct challenge. An unprecedented number of people, notably from the Middle East (e.g. from Iraq or Afghanistan), sought to cross the Polish–Belarusian border to reach the EU, beginning in the summer of 2021. The Belarusian authorities were accused of facilitating the arrival of people at the border in retaliation for the restrictive measures imposed by the EU following the 2020 Belarusian presidential elections, including an asset freeze and travel ban (Consilium 2023). The situation at the Polish–Belarusian border – being also the EU's external border – resulted in the construction of new border fences and increased border patrols. The situation at the border has been fiercely criticised by non-governmental organisations (Pietrusińska 2022). More-critical and normative research points to the lack of respect for international law, human-rights standards and fundamental ethical principles of Polish authorities in the management of the crisis (Balicki 2022; Bodnar and Grzelak 2023). Furthermore, the systematisation of pushbacks at the border by Polish authorities represented a breach of EU laws by Poland (Grzeškowiak 2023).

The Russian war on Ukraine, which began on 24 February 2022, triggered a large-scale movement of people. As of November 2022, over 7.8 million refugees from Ukraine sought refuge in Europe (UNHCR

2023). Poland became the first point of entry to the EU, as well as the main country of reception. Contrary to the two previous crises, Ukrainian refugees benefited from a more positive portrayal in the media (Zawadzka-Paluckta 2022), as well as from the positive attitudes generally held by Poles (Karakiewicz-Krawczyk, Zdziarski, Landowski, Nieradko-Helusko, Kotwas, Szumilas, Knyszyńska and Karakiewicz 2022). This position calls into question the reasons behind accepting only certain asylum-seekers. According to De Coninck (2022), the symbolic threat posed by refugees from Ukraine compared to those from Afghanistan differs due to intangible cultural factors such as religion or values.

Although the implications for Poland differ, we believe that these three crises share common grounds for comparison. All three crises indeed imply the movement of non-EU migrants seeking to enter and stay in the EU. Moreover, all had implications for the EU: the establishment of relocation schemes and the transferred responsibility of the crisis and its management to third-party countries during the 2015–2016 migration crisis, the (security) management of the EU external border in 2021, and the EU's sanctions against Russia in 2022. As such, these crises are great material through which to investigate Poland's relationship with non-EU migrants and the EU. The PiS right-wing party – in power in Poland since 2015 – has been keen to use both anti-immigration and Eurosceptic populist arguments in their discourse (Csehi and Zgut 2021; Thevenin 2022). Since the party's election in October 2015, Poland and the EU's relationship has become increasingly conflicted, not only with regards to migration and asylum policy but, more generally, concerning rule-of-law matters and the EU's founding values. Indeed, PiS' controversial reforms and subsequent control over the judiciary and most of the public media has created an unprecedented rule-of-law crisis in the EU (Soyaltin-Colella 2022). Such illiberal tendencies and breaches of the rule of law – also observed in Hungary – have greatly challenged EU institutions (Moberg 2020; Pech and Scheppele 2017). The triggering of Article 7 of the Treaty on the European Union against Poland in December 2017 illustrates the still-ongoing conflict between the Polish government and EU institutions.

Against this backdrop, we need to stress the differences between these crises. First of all, Poland's role and place in the crises shifted. Poland was not a direct country of entry in the EU in 2015 although it was during the two ensuing crises of 2021 and 2022. Secondly, the emotional, cultural and political proximity and distance *vis-à-vis* the countries of origin of incoming people differed, with Poland being particularly close to Ukraine in this matter in comparison to other countries of origin of people on the move (De Coninck 2022). As analysed by Abdelaaty (2022), the identity of incoming people matters: 'shared racial, linguistic and religious ties increase the acceptance rate of asylum applications'. Thirdly, the image and perception of the war differed. The Russian war against Ukraine in 2022 stood out as the clear aggression by one country against another, triggering an opposition between good and bad grounded by a certain simplicity. This somewhat black-and-white ideological position swayed public opinion in Poland and urged the country to help Ukraine. However, such was not the case in prior crises. The long, complex, international conflict with the many parties and actors involved in Syria and other countries in the Middle East made discerning who was 'good' or 'bad' significantly more complicated, thus not necessarily triggering a similar response in the public's mind. Finally, in the case of Poland, Russia is often considered to be a historical enemy of the country (Góra, Mach and Styczyńska 2022), thus considerably affecting the country's support for Ukraine against a common enemy. In this vein, Poland and other neighbouring countries might also fear that they could be the next to be attacked by Russia, thus influencing acceptance. Abdelaaty (2021) indeed points out that countries are more accepting towards people fleeing a rival government rather than an allied one. These three crises thus exemplify disparities in the reception of migrants and how 'various groups of refugees are treated' (Halemba 2022: 10), explaining our motive to compare them in discursive terms.

Theoretical approach: the words of migration

Numerous studies delve into the discourse on migration, investigating how migration is framed and narrated by various public and political actors (e.g. Reisigl and Wodak 2001; Rheindorf and Wodak 2020; Triandafyllidou and Kouki 2013; van Dijk 2018; Wodak 2011, 2015, 2017). Different methods are used, particularly frame analysis (e.g. d’Haenens and de Lange 2001), (critical) discourse analysis (e.g. Krotofil and Motak 2018; Wodak 2020), discourse-historical analysis (e.g. Bates 2023; van Leeuwen and Wodak 1999) as well as corpus linguistics (e.g. Baker, Gabrielatos, KhosraviNik, Krzyżanowski, McEnery and Wodak 2008). Overall, research on migration discourse points to the process of securitisation of migration (Bigo 2002; Huysmans 2006; Léonard and Kaunert 2020) and its interplay with human rights (Miloni, Doudaki, Tsiligiannis, Papa and Vadratsikas 2015). Furthermore, analyses of media coverage on migration and asylum are abundant (e.g. Eberl, Meltzer, Heidenreich, Herrero, Theorin, Lind, Berganza, Boomgaarden, Schemer and Strömbäck 2018; Greussing and Boomgaarden 2017; Horsti 2008) and illustrate processes of the politicisation and mediatisation of migration (Baker *et al.* 2008), which were reinforced during and following the 2015–2016 migration crisis (Krzyżanowski, Triandafyllidou and Wodak 2018). Finally, research on migration discourse often takes into account the specific words and categories by studied actors used to refer to people on the move. Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart (2009), for instance, focus on the news coverage in Germany connected to ‘immigrants’, while d’Haenens and de Lange (2001) study Dutch newspapers’ framing of ‘asylum-seekers’.

The increased salience, politicisation and mediatisation of the migration crisis in 2015 sparked a lexical debate regarding the words used to refer to people on the move (Apostolova 2015; Calabrese 2018). Calabrese (2018) argues that terms have deeper meaning than their dictionary definitions and that those meanings evolve in tandem with social representations. Context is crucial to observing changes in meanings. She further suggests that the 2015 migration crisis acted as a moment of ‘semantic instability’, during which the uses and meanings of words were re-considered and re-negotiated by social, political and media actors (2018: 109).

Within this lexical debate is situated the binary opposition between the terms ‘refugee’ and ‘migrant’. While these two terms refer to different legal as well as practical categories, ‘refugee’ has often been used, since the crisis, as a way to legitimise certain migration movements over others. Scholars argue that the strict opposition between forced and voluntary migration in practice reflects the reality and multiple motives of people on the move less and less (Collyer and de Haas 2012). Crawley and Skleparis (2018: 59) argue that this opposition is used to exclude some people: ‘This is not merely an issue of semantics. Categories have consequences. They entitle some to protection, rights and resources whilst simultaneously disempowering others’. Against this background, Crawley and Skleparis argue that these categories fail to convey the complexity of migration movements and mostly serve political purposes. The authors hence encourage other scholars to further examine the ‘politics of bounding’, i.e. how categories are created and the purpose they serve (2018: 60–61). The (re)consideration of these categories also echoes studies on membership categorisation, building on the work of Sacks (1972, 1995), who discusses how social categories work as ‘membership categorization devices’ and hence reflect on belonging, inclusion and exclusion. As developed by Permoser (2017), membership rights in European polity depend on these ‘politics of categorisation’.

The binary opposition between the lexical categories of ‘migrant’ and ‘refugee’ also suggests an inherent notion of deservingness in migration discourse. Particularly during the 2015 migration crisis, political discourse stressed the ‘opposition of *deserving* refugees and *undeserving* or *deceptive* economic migrants’ (Paynter 2022: 293). Abdelaaty and Hamlin argue that, throughout their research on political discourse, ‘the term refugee conveys or is conflated with deservingness’ (2022: 237). As such, the use – or non-use – of this term invokes deservingness and is – as previously explained – part of political ideologies and strategies. Analysing the situation and conditions of asylum-seekers in Italy, Paynter (2022) argues that deservingness is also embedded in racially

based processes of exclusion. In a similar vein, Holmes and Castañeda talk about a ‘hierarchy of deservingness’, which ‘reflects arrangements of race that are interpenetrated by US and European political-economic interests’ (2016: 19). This racialised notion of deservingness, crucially leading to discrimination and exclusion, needs to be considered in light of the social construction of identity and alterity.

Wodak (2011: 57), in her study of inclusion and exclusion, conceptualises these dynamics as relying on the ‘discursive construction of in-groups and out-groups’. She further develops the notion that collective identity formation, as well as identity politics, is based on the discursive opposition between the Self – often framed positively – and a negatively perceived Other. Triandafyllidou (2006) acknowledges that migration often relies on this inclusion/exclusion, in-/out-groups and Self/Other dynamics, as migrants – in a general sense – are often perceived as significant Others for the national community. The Othering process of migrants reflects ‘hierarchies of entitlement’ upon which ‘immigrants and various “others” are taxonomically categorized’ (Kirtsoglou and Tsimouris 2018: 1879). Alterity is thus reflected through the process of categorisation of migrants and refugees. The notion of proximity and alterity are also intrinsically linked. (Cultural) proximity indeed plays an important role in the categorisation and racialisation of migrants (Rzepnikowska 2023).

Against this backdrop, the aim of our study is to analyse two similar and therefore comparable political speeches in order to distinguish the means of creating alterity and proximity by using the words ‘refugee’ and ‘migrant’. This linguistic approach is based on an argumentative discourse analysis approach. Argumentative discourse analysis consists of several aspects. To understand the discursive construction of alterity/proximity with the use of the terms ‘refugee’ and ‘migrant’, the linguistic aspect is the most relevant. It consists of analysing the lexical, declarative choices made by the speaker in his or her argumentative dimension (Amossy 2000). At a broad level, discourse analysis takes into account the context of production of a text, including it in a *discourse*, which is understood as a linguistic *genre* – a category that allows a text to be included in its social context (Rastier 2011). Like Amossy (2016), we consider that *argumentation* is what happens when two or more divergent opinions on the same subject are expressed and the parties involved try to impose theirs as the best. In political discourse, argumentation is the result of a complex process of the association and dissociation of knowledge and beliefs conducted by the involved parties and depending on their prestige, authority and legitimacy as well as on the characteristics of the situation of utterance (Charaudeau 2005).

Analysed data and methodology

Our corpus is composed of two speeches made by official members of the Polish state authorities, during which this representative spoke with the press about non-European migrants coming to the European Union and to Poland. These two selected speeches serve as illustrations of official political discourse on migration at distinct periods. We do not look at politicians *per se* but focus only on their production of discourse in a power position. Although these politicians do differ in terms of prerogatives, one being the head of government and the other the head of state, they are both participating in establishing and regulating political life in Poland – hence the importance of analysing their discourse. These speeches have been selected because they have had a significant circulation and impact within the Polish public sphere. Both had repercussions on the (inter)national arena, garnering widespread media coverage. The material consists of transcribed videos² and comes from governmental YouTube channels. As this study focuses on the discursive construction of alterity and proximity within the selected texts, the transcription does not include the schematisation of prosody – that is to say, the phonetic specificities of oral speech. However, taking into account issues related to the transcription of oral material (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2017), in some cases where the end of a sentence cannot be clearly determined, arbitrary decisions have been made in consideration of the length and coherence of the written text.

The first speech comes from a press conference organised after a European Council summit on 18 March 2016 featuring Poland's Prime Minister (PM) Beata Szydło. The summit aimed to manage the migration crisis of 2015–2016. The press conference is entitled '*Premier Beata Szydło o porozumieniu UE-Turcja w sprawie migrantów: jest dobre dla wszystkich stron*' (Prime Minister Beata Szydło on the agreement between the EU and Turkey in the case of migrants: it is good for all sides). It was published on the official YouTube channel of the Prime Minister's chancellery and lasts approximately 23 minutes with 2,700 words (Kancelaria Premiera 2016). In this speech, PM Szydło expresses the Polish government's official view on the aforementioned crisis. The conference starts with a declaration from the Prime Minister and then journalists from Polish TV and radio, monitored by a moderator, ask her 6 questions in total.

The second analysed speech was given by the Polish President Andrzej Duda to the international press in the Vatican, after an audience with Pope Francis. It broaches the subject of the invasion of Ukraine by Russia in 2022. The video, entitled '*Wypowiedź Prezydenta po audiencji u Papieża Franciszka*' (Declaration of the President after the audience with Pope Francis), was published on the personal channel of the Polish President (Prezydent RP Andrzej Duda 2022). It took place on 1 April 2022 and lasted approximately 22 minutes with 2,650 words. President Duda summarises his audience with Pope Francis before answering 9 questions from journalists. The speech mostly focuses on 'refugees' from Ukraine but the situation at the Polish–Belarusian border is also mentioned as it is brought up by a journalist.

Institutional discourse – in this case, discourse produced by political national institutions represented by state officials (Krieg-Planque 2017) – has several functions. At an international scale, it has a diplomatic effect, regulating the relationships between states (Krieg-Planque 2017), who shows that, generally, discourse production is essential to institutions because it ensures the creation, transmission and transformation of their ideological basis to guarantee both existence and legitimacy. As our corpus features press conferences, these also share the characteristics of this *genre* of mediatised discourse which consists mostly in phrasing and rephrasing according to specific interests (Krieg-Planque 2017). Press conferences are an 'institutionalized form of public performance', where one or several public character(s) aim at gaining attention from the media while conveying a message (Ekström 2007: 1). As the author states: 'The political press conference is an arena where two institutions meet – politics and journalism (...). For politicians, the press conference is a way to win legitimacy and popularity, whereas for journalists it is an occasion to ask critical questions' (2007: 1). This polyphonic construction of discourse, shaped by politicians as well as journalists, is also influenced by the plurality of addressees (Amossy 2016), while the speakers are influenced by their own representation of the auditory stimuli (Perelman, Olbrechts-Tyteca 2008). As our study focuses on official Polish discourse, only the argumentation of President Duda and PM Szydło will be examined in detail. We do, however, take into account journalists' questions as the triggers of 'pressing and tricky questions' asked to the politicians to test their ability to answer them (Ekström 2007: 2).

The generic and argumentative approaches allow for a better understanding of the context that shapes the Polish official discourse on alterity and proximity. Our analysis primarily focuses on the enunciative common points of the two selected speeches and the way in which they influence their argumentation. It continues with the use of semantics, understood as the study of linguistic meaning (Hébert 2001) to analyse the occurrences of 'migrant' and 'refugee' within President Duda and PM Szydło's speeches. Semantics enables a focus on precise terms as well as a detailed comparison of their meaning in discourse. In this case, it includes two steps: firstly, commonly accepted definitions of 'migrant' and 'refugee' are identified; secondly, these definitions are compared with the meaning associated with the terms within the selected speeches. To determine meaning, the occurrences of 'migrant' and 'refugee' are taken with their left and right collocations. This semantic approach is combined with the study of argumentative schemes (*topoi*) that shape discourse (Krzyżanowski

2020; Wodak 2011) as well as other rhetorical means that shape the general argumentation on alterity and proximity, such as metaphors and *pathos*.

Enunciative dimension: addressing national and supranational audiences

The two official speeches from the Polish authorities selected for this article share similarities and show differences that are at the heart of our analysis and comparison. While the context differs, both occurrences can be considered as examples of ‘crisis discourse’ since both were produced in a context of crisis and as a means of confronting the crisis in question. Furthermore, both argumentative lines implicate a supranational frame of reference. PM Szydło suggests that the EU ought to provide protection against unwanted immigration to Poland:

*The Polish government is saying very clearly and explicitly that we want migrant problems to be solved outside the borders of the European Union.*³

While the former Polish PM refers to the EU to justify Polish governmental positions regarding migrants, President Duda appeals to Christian values to legitimise official decisions concerning the welcoming of Ukrainians in 2022:

*For me [it was] an extremely important conversation with the Holy Father, Francis, whom I thanked for his spiritual protection, for his prayer for our country, for Poland, for the Poles, because this prayer continues unceasingly for Ukraine and for the Ukrainian people at this extremely difficult moment, for the condemnation of the war.*⁴

The circumstances of the press review speak for themselves as the Polish President is relating his meeting with Pope Francis precisely about the Ukrainian ‘refugees’ to the press. The first part of President Duda’s speech establishes him as a pious man and extends this quality to all Polish citizens: ‘Well, and extremely important also for us Poles, the last touch of presence on the Vatican grounds’.⁵ In the excerpt, he justifies the help given to Ukrainians with a syllogism: as the Pope is the spiritual head of the Christian world, he is supposed to pray for every Christian. Poland is a Christian country and so is its neighbour, Ukraine, therefore the Pope should spiritually help Ukraine.

Moreover, both speeches share numerous addressees who shape official Polish discourse on migration. As state authorities speaking in their country’s official language in front of an assembly of journalists, they primarily address the press with the aim of broadcasting their message. In PM Szydło’s case, journalists represent only the Polish media whereas, for President Duda, Polish journalists are mixed with journalists from other countries. However, even when the speech is directed at Polish nationals, it uses – as mentioned above – a supranational frame of reference that contributes to the legitimisation of its discourse. In this regard, PM Szydło’s message is also addressed to the EU, seen as a gathering of institutions; that of President Duda is addressed to a European community based on the shared values of Christianity. Finally, as both speeches are available online, one could say that they can reach an international community of viewers. Nonetheless, this does not seem to be their intent, since PM Szydło’s speech on YouTube only offers Polish subtitles while President Duda’s speech, delivered entirely in Polish, does not make use of subtitles at all. In both cases, Polish-speaking people are clearly discernible as the target audience.

Semantic and argumentative dimensions: differentiating between ‘refugees’ and ‘migrants’

In the selected discourses, people on the move are referred to using two different terms: ‘*uchodźcy*’ (refugees) and ‘*migranci*’ (migrants) which, as in English, do not carry the same meaning. They are employed by PM Szydło and President Duda to talk alternatively about the so-called ‘migration crisis’ of 2015–2016 – which saw the arrival of hundreds of thousands of people seeking refuge in the EU – and the Ukrainians fleeing war in 2022.

The aforementioned UNHCR definitions of ‘migrant’ and ‘refugee’ allow room for interpretation since, in both cases, fleeing from one’s country can be caused by life-threatening contexts. However, from a lexicographical point of view, only ‘refugees’ flee whereas ‘migrants’ leave their country for better life conditions.

In PM Szydło’s speech, there are 7 occurrences of the word ‘migrant’, out of which 6 come from PM Szydło herself, whereas journalists mostly used the word ‘refugee’ when asking her questions. This indicates that both the Prime Minister and journalists chose their terms consciously and that they are not considered to be equivalent. The first round of questions and their answers seems to indicate a preference among journalists to use ‘refugees’ as well as reluctance from PM Szydło to do so. When the Prime Minister is asked: ‘How many refugees can [Poland] host and at what frequency?’⁶ by Marcin Czapki from TVP (the Polish official TV channel), she avoids re-using the same term. Non-EU migrants are referred to by Szydło as ‘people’ in an indefinite and impersonal fashion: ‘For (...) these people’,⁷ ‘The delimitation of the kind of people that could come to Poland’,⁸ ‘The kind of people who might want to come to Poland’.⁹ PM Szydło’s wording shapes the image of migrants as an indistinct mass that must be handled with caution, as she adds: ‘We will certainly proceed as we have so far, very cautiously, primarily focusing on the security of Polish citizens’.¹⁰ The use of two conditionals to mention the arrival of ‘migrants’ underlines both the reluctance of the Polish government to host them and the idea that their coming to Poland is somewhat hypothetical.

President Duda, in his press conference, uses only ‘refugees’ except in 1 case. When a journalist asked him whether he considered that some kinds of ‘refugees’ were better than others, he explained:

As I said, very rich people are fleeing [from Ukraine] and less well-off people are also fleeing, people who have a lot of property are fleeing, people are fleeing who have not managed to take anything from their homes because they have literally fled from bombs and these are refugees – and international law calls these people refugees. And there [at the Belarusian border] we had migrants who came to Belarus on planes, they could afford the plane tickets.¹¹

President Duda’s explanation seems to match the lexicographical definitions for ‘migrant’ and ‘refugee’ since he qualifies the Ukrainians as ‘refugees’ and people at the Belarusian border as ‘migrants’ based on whether they have/had the choice to leave their country or not. Thus, he discards wealth as a criterion to distinguish between ‘migrants’ and ‘refugees’. Rich Ukrainians had to flee the war as well, as President Duda affirms: ‘We also have people coming to us from Ukraine who are very wealthy, who live in Poland in hotels that they finance/pay for themselves, who arrive in luxury cars and who are refugees as well’.¹² President Duda implies that these people will not stay in Poland, whereas ‘migrants’ at the Belarusian border, who went to the trouble of buying plane tickets to a remote country such as Poland, are prepared to leave their country permanently in order to live in the EU. In fact, Belarus promoted discounted plane tickets and facilitated the reception of ‘hunting’ or ‘tourist’ visas, in a process of weaponisation of migration (Filipec 2022).

In both PM Szydło’s and President Duda’s press reviews, the use of ‘refugees’ and ‘migrants’ primarily matches the official and lexicological definitions of the terms but is adapted to fit the political needs of the speakers. PM Szydło emphasises the voluntary aspect of the decision to leave one’s country, to come to Poland

and to the EU by using the term ‘migrants’. President Duda discards wealth as a criterion to qualify Ukrainians as ‘migrants’ since they are expected to go back to Ukraine when the war ends, whereas people at the Belarusian border, as longer-term residents who did not choose the closest safe country to move to and who seek to enter the EU, qualify as such.

A syntagmatic analysis of the occurrences of ‘migrants’ and ‘refugees’ suggests that greater meaning is attributed to the terms by PM Szydło and President Duda. In PM Szydło’s speech, where most occurrences of ‘migrants’ are, the term is not preceded or followed by any complements. The term is itself employed as complement to phrases like ‘*w sprawie*’ (in the case of), ‘*problemy –/ z*’ (problems of/with) and ‘*mamy do czynienia z*’ (we have to deal with), thus emphasising the illegality of their presence. These so-called ‘migrants’ are de-agentified and the issue of migration is presented as a simple problem to solve: ‘This is, of course, in line with the expectations of Poland, which, ever since we took over the government in Poland, the Polish government has been saying very clearly and explicitly that we want the problems of migrants to be solved outside the borders of the European Union’.¹³

This de-agentivisation is further stressed by the use of passive phrases whenever ‘migrants’ are concerned. The only exception, where ‘migrants’ are active agents, is connected to movement. In President Duda’s speech, there are two occurrences: ‘*[migranci] napływali do Europy*’ ([migrants] flowed to Europe) and ‘*[migranci] przylatywali na Białoruś*’ ([migrants] who flew in to Belarus). The first occurrence can be linked to the metaphor of the wave coming to submerge Europe, used twice by PM Szydło, as in the following extract: ‘The aim of this agreement is first and foremost to stem the tide of illegal migrants that has been flowing into Europe’.¹⁴ The metaphor of the ‘flood’ has been used before by Antoni Macierewicz, Minister of Defence (PiS) in 2015, concerning the 2014–2015 ‘refugee crisis’, an argument which is a part of a *topos of threat* to Polish national security (Krzyżanowski 2018). El Refaie (2001) shows how water has become a ‘naturalised’ metaphor with which to refer to incoming people. Water metaphors are built on the idea of invasion, often reinforced by past cultural experiences (Charteris-Black 2006). They participate in the dehumanisation of refugees and/or migrants, as well as in the securitisation of migration by suggesting that invasion be controlled and that protection be given against an outside threat (Charteris-Black 2006). On 27 September 2021, a few months after the start of the crisis at the Belarusian border (July 2021), the *topos of threat* was officially presented by the Polish government at a press conference given by Stanisław Żaryn – the director of the National Security Department – and Mariusz Kamiński, the Minister for Internal Affairs and Administration (Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych i Administracji 2021). In a document that is accessible on the Polish government’s official website to this day, they exposed material allegedly taken from 200 migrants’ smartphones at the Polish–Belarusian border which depicted some of them as radicalised Islamists, Russian agents, drug addicts, paedophiles or zoophiles.

Whereas ‘migrants’ are considered as an indistinct mass, in the shape of a wave trying to invade Europe and which needs to be brought back to the EU borders, ‘refugees’, is employed by President Duda with highly positive connotations as far as Ukrainians are concerned. The following extract shows how the President stresses the proximity of and closeness between Poland and Ukraine and uses *pathos* to justify the help provided by Poland:

*I told the Holy Father how we welcome refugees, whom we call our guests from Ukraine, because they are our neighbours who have found themselves in an extremely difficult situation, who are fleeing from war, from death, from Russian bombs that are falling on their homes, to whom we try, with all our strength and capacity, to provide assistance.*¹⁵

Several relative clauses bring the Ukrainians closer to the Polish people as a whole: ‘refugees’ are firstly considered as *guests*, then as *neighbours*, the former being used twice through the speech, in a grammatical structure that makes them synonyms. In addition, numerous possessive determiners (‘our guests’, ‘our neighbours’) can be found in several other places in the studied text. ‘Migrants’, however, lose agentivity in PM Szydło’s speech, while the register regarding ‘refugees’ in President Duda’s invokes, in many ways, *pathos*. This is well illustrated in the quote above, where numerous relative clauses help to create empathy with the ‘refugees’, through hyperbole. The President describes their ‘extremely difficult situation’ and his intention to provide aid to Ukrainians ‘with all our strength and capacity’. *Pathos* is also present when the President mentions wealthy Ukrainians as being ‘refugees’ as well: ‘People from Ukraine, who are very wealthy, (...) are also refugees, they have had to flee as well, because their homes very often in Ukrainian cities, in luxurious neighbourhoods are at risk of being demolished today, today their life is threatened just like everyone else’s’.¹⁶

The semantic analysis of ‘migrant’ and ‘refugee’ in both texts shows a rhetoric of proximity and distance depending on the situation. In PM Szydło’s speech, ‘migrant’ is associated with illegality. Furthermore, migrants are de-agentified and treated as a problem. She is also reluctant to use the word ‘refugees’, unlike President Duda, who uses only ‘refugees’ to refer to Ukrainians. The only occurrence of ‘migrants’ concerns people on the move stuck at the Belarusian borders. These individuals are denied legitimacy and depicted as migrants who have purchased plane tickets, suggesting that they have had time to prepare for their travel and therefore do not find themselves in a dire situation, contrary to the Ukrainians fleeing the war for a neighbouring country.

In sum, the differentiated view and discourse on ‘migrant’ and ‘refugee’ reflect both their perceived deservingness, as well as their alterity or proximity *vis-à-vis* the national community. As argued by various scholars, this opposition has a crucial impact when it comes to (membership) rights (e.g. Hamlin 2021; Permoser 2017). In the Polish context reviewed here, this point is exemplified by Ukrainian ‘refugees’ being welcomed in Poland, while those perceived as less-deserving ‘migrants’ are denied entry.

Supranational dimension: Poland’s relation with the EU

As these crises had great implications for the EU, our analysis also touches upon Polish discourses on the EU. We seek to understand the vision(s) of Poland’s relationship with the EU that is/are embodied by Polish political actors’ discourses on migration.

With regards to word frequency, Europe is more central to PM Szydło’s speech (which contains 39 occurrences of ‘EU’ or ‘Europe’) while, in President Duda’s speech, the EU sits adjacent to the main discussion and is evoked 7 times. The repetition of ‘Europe’ in the case of PM Szydło mostly makes reference to the newly signed agreement between the EU and Turkey to deter migration to Europe. Her discourse therefore contains repeated references to EU institutions (European Commission; European Parliament). Although a fierce dispute with EU institutions had just begun at the time of her speech following the rejection of the relocation scheme by the newly elected Polish parliament, PM Szydło’s discourse on EU institutions regarding the EU–Turkey deal remains mostly positive. She indeed stresses that Poland wants to maintain good relations with EU institutions: ‘We want to build good relations between Poland and the European Commission and the European Parliament’.¹⁷ She further stresses that, for the Polish authorities, Poland’s membership in the EU is crucial: ‘We are a member of the European Union, we are a member of these institutions, then we want a good climate and we want Polish affairs to be dealt with at home and not here outside’.¹⁸

In this last excerpt, PM Szydło seeks to differentiate herself from the previous (PO) government which, according to her, ‘worked very hard here yesterday to discredit Poland in the eyes of European opinion’.¹⁹ She

therefore opposes domestic political opposition, rather than the EU. This move needs to be considered from a utilitarian perspective: Poland is actually seen as benefiting from the EU–Turkey agreement. She indeed repeatedly stresses that the agreement ‘meets all of Poland’s expectations’²⁰ and that it stands as ‘a chance to solve this European migration crisis’,²¹ providing that both parties commit to implementing the deal. Little criticism of the EU institutions can thus be discerned in her speech although, in practice, the relationship between the Polish government and the European Commission was rife with tension at the time due to the refugee relocation scheme.

In connection to the EU–Turkey deal, PM Szydło highlights the security dimension of the crisis, focusing on the fact that the agreement aims at providing more security and ensures that ‘conditions that are safe for Polish citizens are also safe for those who would like to come to Poland’.²² According to PM Szydło, this security must include scrutiny of and decisions about incoming people: ‘We want to have the right to make a choice, to determine which people could come to Poland’.²³

The quasi-absence of mention of the EU in President Duda’s speech regarding the war in Ukraine suggests that decisions regarding the reception of Ukrainian refugees were mostly made domestically, without involving the EU. The EU is indeed mentioned only when journalists inquire about the situation at the Polish–Belarusian border. Their question about ‘whether there are series A and series B refugees’²⁴ hints at the differential treatment at the Polish border. President Duda’s answer points to the fact that the situation of ‘refugees’ from the Russian war in Ukraine completely differs from the hybrid attack coordinated by Belarus at the border. He contrasts these two groups of people by underlining their values:

*So, on the one hand, please close the [Belarusian] border, please guard the border, on the other hand, please open the border immediately, let all these people in, we will talk to them, we will offer them our homes, we will offer them our help, (...). Why? Because everyone can see what the difference is and everyone understands that the newcomers from Ukraine, our guests from Ukraine, the refugees from Ukraine today need help. Any of us could find ourselves in this situation and someone is in the European Union looking for a better life, very often living in their own country in very decent conditions but I don’t know, I think the welfare is very good and you won’t have to work in the European Union, you’ll just get money from governments in Western Europe for nothing, no! Poles understand very well that anyone who wants to live a normal life should work hard.*²⁵

In this excerpt, President Duda differentiates non-EU migrants. On the one hand, migrants at the Polish–Belarusian border represent a homogenous group of people who come to Europe in order to benefit from social services without contributing to the economy and host society. President Duda further stresses that people from the Middle East arriving through the Belarusian border are looking for ‘a better life in the European Union, in the German Federal Republic and in other countries in Western Europe’,²⁶ pointing out that Poland is only on their way but not a final destination. Against this background, the border should be closed. On the other hand, President Duda pictures Ukrainian ‘refugees’ as victims of the Russian war. Through this distinction, President Duda also points to differences in the EU, whereby Western European member states are seen as probably wealthier but giving away money to incoming people without expecting them to contribute while, once again, President Duda stresses Polish values of hard work.

Like PM Szydło’s discourse in 2016, President Duda stresses security concerns *vis-à-vis* the situation at the Polish–Belarusian border:

*Illegally crossing it [the border], therefore, we simply fulfilled our obligations resulting from membership in the European Union, resulting from NATO membership, having, I want to emphasise, having the absolute support of the absolute majority of Polish society in defence of this border.*²⁷

Here, the Polish President seeks to legitimise the implementation of security measures at two levels. First, he insists that the protection of the EU's external border illustrates Poland's membership in the EU. Furthermore, he stands firm on the fact that the protection of the border from non-EU migrants is democratically embedded in the will of Polish citizens. From this perspective, President Duda views the Polish government as responding to both domestic and Europe imperatives.

We can see that, in official discourses on non-EU migrants coming to Poland, the EU still remains an important component. While, in 2016, PM Szydło's discourse tries to soften the tensions with the EU from the perspective of the gains from the EU's deal with Turkey, President Duda brings Poland's actions to the forefront when it concerns the help extended to Ukrainian 'refugees' and the protection of the EU's external border. Both therefore seek to stress the importance of Poland's membership in the EU, especially in a context where Poland might benefit from the EU's actions. This observation echoes research on Polish views of the EU, stressing that 'the EU is portrayed as a source of economic profit, while the identity or value dimension is lacking' (Mach and Styczyńska 2021: 116). From this perspective, in PM Szydło's discourse, Poland is clearly pictured as benefiting from the EU–Turkey deal. President Duda's discourse, instead, puts forward Poland's actions while also stressing them as protecting the EU. Both share a quite utilitarian vision of the EU, in which Poland might gain from staying an active member state, in spite of ongoing conflict over the rule of law.

Conclusions

In this article, we have investigated discourses on non-EU migrants at different points in time, as well as ensuing discourses on the EU. The chosen texts belong to a larger corpus of Polish official discourse on migration to Poland. As such, the selected addresses share several characteristics, even though their momentum is different. Firstly, they were produced in a context of crisis by Polish officials. Secondly, they are directly addressed to the press, primarily national and, to a lesser extent, international. Through them, the orators speak both to Polish citizens and to other institutions, whether official (the EU for PM Szydło) or symbolic (the Christian world for President Duda), legitimising their decisions and negotiating their position discursively within the said entities. Thirdly, even though the use of 'migrants' and 'refugees' complies at a primary level with the official and lexicological definitions of both concepts, their use in both speeches accomplishes a similar task by creating a sense of proximity or alterity with certain non-EU migrants. The word 'migrant' is used by both political leaders to stress alterity and to de-agentify human beings by transforming them into problems that have to be solved. These 'migrants' are denied nationality and are presented as an indistinct mass and a wave that threatens not only European borders but, first and foremost, the security of Poland. This repetitive *topos of threat* is often found in discourses on migration, in Poland and abroad (e.g. Bennett 2018; Wodak and Boukala 2015a, 2015b). The term 'refugee' is used only in President Duda's speech in the case of Ukrainians fleeing the invasion of their country by Russia. The occurrences and collocations show a high degree of discursive proximity between Ukraine and Poland, geographically as well as symbolically. Although the combined argumentative and semantic analysis of the selected texts, embedded in a *genre*, differs from most recently conducted studies on the Polish political discourse on migration, it nonetheless allows for a comprehensive analysis of the parameters that shape political discourses and their variations. Echoing Hamlin (2021), this opposition between 'refugee' and 'migrant', which seems apolitical, happens to be a significant – and

‘dangerous’ – political tool with which to legitimise stricter asylum and immigration policies, notably with border controls excluding certain people (2021: 157). Permoser (2017: 2541) further warns that the ‘categorisation of migrants into hierarchically defined statuses can work both as a basis for rights restrictions and as a mechanism for the expansion of rights’. As shown in our study, the discursive opposition between ‘migrants’ and ‘refugees’ in Polish political discourses depicts a differentiated and hierarchical categorisation of these groups, based on perceived deservingness and proximity.

Given the tense relations between the EU and the Polish government on diverse topics, we also investigated how the EU is discursively referred to in official political addresses. Our analysis thus demonstrates that the EU occupies an important place in the discussion on migration. Official discourses on the migration situation in Poland have indeed been the occasion to insist on Poland’s place in the EU. Both in 2016 and 2022, Poland’s commitment to its membership in the EU is reaffirmed, through respectively supporting the EU–Turkey deal and protecting the EU’s external borders. This rhetoric is quite instrumental in understanding the benefits that EU membership brings to Poland. In 2016, PM Szydło stressed the gain in security that the deal with Turkey would bring to the EU and to the country. In 2022, President Duda instead focused on the potential protection that the EU would provide to Poland should the situation at the EU–Belarusian border or that with Russia worsen.

The comparison we have made thus allows for a better understanding of the linguistic, argumentative and contextual aspects of the contemporary discourse on migration and on the EU in Poland. The racialised aspect of exclusion at the EU’s external border, notably pointed out by Stachowitsch and Sachseder (2019), was also observable. Discourses on migration deserve to be further investigated, notably through a postcolonial theoretical approach, in order to disentangle the power relations that exist in the context of the growing militarisation of the Polish border.

Notes


1. As a convention, when used without single quotation marks, the word migrant is employed in this research as a generic word to define non-EU individuals moving to Poland. The choice of this term is made without presumption regarding the legal status of the people on the move.
2. All material collected has been transcribed by the authors. All translations of analysed data from Polish to English are by the authors, the original versions of which are provided in endnotes.
3. *‘Polski rząd mówi bardzo jasno i wyraźnie, że chcemy, żeby problemy migrantów były rozwiązywane poza granicami Unii Europejskiej’* (Szydło).
4. *‘Dla mnie niezwykle ważna rozmowa z Ojcem Świętym, Franciszkiem, któremu podziękowałem za opiekę duchową, za modlitwę za nasz kraj, za Polskę, za Polaków, bo ta modlitwa trwa nieustannie za Ukrainę i za naród ukraiński w tej niezwykle trudnej chwili, za potępienie wojny’* (Duda).
5. *‘No i niezwykle ważny także dla nas, Polaków, ostatni akcent obecności na terenie Watykanu’* (Duda).
6. *‘Ilu i w jakich odstępach czasu tych uchodźców może [Polska] przyjmować?’* (journalist Marcin Czapski from TVP).
7. *‘Dla (...) tych osób’* (Szydło).
8. *‘Określenia, jakie osoby mogłyby do Polski przyjechać’* (Szydło).
9. *‘Takie osoby, które do Polski chciałyby przyjechać’* (Szydło).
10. *‘Będziemy na pewno postępować tak jak do tej pory, bardzo ostrożnie, przede wszystkim koncentrując się na bezpieczeństwie polskich obywateli’* (Szydło).
11. *‘Tak jak powiedziałem uciekają ludzie bardzo bogaci i uciekają również ludzie gorzej sytuowani, uciekają ludzie, którzy mają duży majątek, uciekają ludzie, którzy nic nie zdołali ze swoich domów’*

- zabrać, bo uciekali dosłownie przed bombami i to A tam mieliśmy do czynienia z migrantami, którzy przylatywani na Białoruś samolotami, było ich stać na bilety lotnicze' (Duda).
12. 'Przyjeżdżają do nas też ludzie z Ukrainy, którzy są bardzo zamożni, mieszkają w Polsce w hotelach, które sami sobie finansują, przyjeżdżają luksusowymi samochodami a też są uchodźcami' (Duda).
 13. 'To wpisuje się oczywiście w oczekiwania Polski, która od momentu, kiedy myśmy objęli rząd w Polsce, polski rząd, mówi bardzo jasno i wyraźnie, że chcemy, żeby problemy migrantów były rozwiązywane poza granicami Unii Europejskiej' (Szydło).
 14. 'Celem tego porozumienia jest przede wszystkim powstrzymanie fali nielegalnych migrantów, którzy napływali do Europy' (Szydło).
 15. 'U nas opowiadam Ojcu Świętemu, jak przyjmujemy uchodźców, których nazywamy naszymi gośćmi z Ukrainy, bo to są nasi sąsiedzi, którzy znaleźli się w niezwykle trudnej sytuacji, którzy uciekają przed wojną, przed śmiercią, przed bombami rosyjskimi, które spadają na ich domy, którym staramy się, ze wszystkich naszych sił i możliwości udzielić pomocy' (Duda).
 16. 'Ludzie z Ukrainy, którzy są bardzo zamożni, (...) też są uchodźcami, też musieli uciekać, bo też ich domy bardzo często w miastach ukraińskich, w luksusowych dzielnicach dzisiaj są narażone na zburzenie, dzisiaj są narażeni na śmierć tak jak wszyscy inni' (Duda).
 17. 'Chcemy budować dobre relacje pomiędzy Polską a Komisją Europejską, Parlamentem Europejskim' (Szydło).
 18. 'Jesteśmy członkiem Unii Europejskiej, jesteśmy członkiem tych instytucji, to zależy nam na dobrym klimacie i na tym, żebyśmy polskie sprawy załatwiali w domu, a nie tutaj na zewnątrz' (Szydło).
 19. 'Z politykami Platformy, którzy tutaj bardzo intensywnie wczoraj pracowali nad tym, żeby dyskredytować w oczach opinii europejskiej Polskę' (Szydło).
 20. 'spełnia wszystkie oczekiwania Polski' (Szydło).
 21. 'Jest szansa na to, żeby ten europejski kryzys migracyjny rozwiązać' (Szydło).
 22. 'Że przede wszystkim musimy tworzyć warunki bezpieczne dla polskich obywateli, bezpieczne również dla ewentualnie tych osób, które chciałyby przyjechać do Polski' (Szydło).
 23. 'Chcemy mieć prawo dokonywania wyboru, określenia, jakie osoby mogłyby do Polski przyjechać' (Szydło).
 24. 'czy są uchodźcy serii A i serii B?' (journalist to Duda).
 25. 'Tak z jednej strony, proszę zamknąć granicę, proszę strzec granicy, z drugiej strony, proszę otworzyć granicę natychmiast wpuścić tych wszystkich ludzi, my będziemy im pomagać, my zaoferujemy im nasze domy, my zaoferujemy naszą pomoc, (...). Dlaczego? Dlatego że każdy widzi, jaka jest ta różnica. I każdy rozumie, że przybysze z Ukrainy, nasi goście z Ukrainy, uchodźcy z Ukrainy wymagają dzisiaj pomocy. Każdy z nas mógłby się znaleźć w takiej sytuacji, a ktoś, kto w Unii Europejskiej szuka lepszego życia, bardzo często żył w swoim kraju w bardzo przyzwoitych warunkach, ale nie wiem, uważał, że socjal bardzo dobry jest i nie trzeba będzie w Unii Europejskiej pracować, tylko będzie się dostawało pieniądze od rządów na zachodzie Europy za nic, no nie! Polacy doskonale rozumieją, że każdy, kto chce żyć normalnie, powinien ciężko pracować' (Duda).
 26. 'Lepsze życie w Unii Europejskiej, w niemieckiej Republice Federalnej i w innych krajach na zachodzie Europy' (Duda).
 27. 'Nielegalnie ją przekraczając, w związku z powyższym my po prostu realizowaliśmy nasze obowiązki wynikające z członkostwa w Unii Europejskiej, wynikające z członkostwa w NATO, mając, chcę podkreślić, mając absolutne poparcie, absolutnej większości polskiego społeczeństwa w obronie tej granicy' (Duda).

Conflict of interest statement

No conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

ORCID IDs

Claire Laurent  <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-9321-2393>

Elodie Thevenin  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6880-6911>

References

- Abdelaaty L. (2021). *Discrimination and Delegation: Explaining State Responses to Refugees*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Abdelaaty L. (2022). European Countries Are Welcoming Ukrainian Refugees. It Was a Different Story in 2015. *The Washington Post*, 23 March. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/03/23/ukraine-refugees-welcome-europe/> (accessed 23 January 2024).
- Abdelaaty L., Hamlin R. (2022). Introduction: The Politics of the Migrant/Refugee Binary. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 20(2): 233–239.
- Amossy R. (2016). *L'Argumentation dans le Discours*. Paris: Armand Colin.
- Amossy R. (2000). *L'Argumentation dans le Discours. Discours Politique, Littérature d'Idées, Fiction*. Paris: Nathan.
- Apostolova R. (2015). Of Refugees and Migrants: Stigma, Politics, and Boundary Work at the Borders of Europe. *American Sociological Association Newsletter*, 14 September. <https://asaculturesection.org/2015/09/14/of-refugees-and-migrants-stigma-politics-and-boundary-work-at-the-borders-of-europe/> (accessed 10 February 2024).
- Baker P., Gabrielatos C., KhosraviNik M., Krzyżanowski M., McEnery T., Wodak R. (2008). A Useful Methodological Synergy? Combining Critical Discourse Analysis and Corpus Linguistics to Examine Discourses of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK Press. *Discourse & Society* 19(3): 273–306.
- Balicki J. (2022). Migration Crisis on the Polish–Belarusian Border (2021–2022) from a Humanitarian and Human Rights Perspective. *Studia Europejskie – Studies in European Affairs* 26(2): 75–87.
- Bates D. (2023). ‘The Jobs All Go to Foreigners’: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Labour Party’s ‘Left-Wing’ Case for Immigration Controls. *Critical Discourse Studies* 20(2): 183–199.
- Bennett S. (2018). New ‘Crises’, Old Habits: Online Interdiscursivity and Intertextuality in UK Migration Policy Discourses. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 16(1–2): 140–160.
- Bigo D. (2002). Security and Immigration: Toward a Critique of the Governmentality of Unease. *Alternatives* 27(1, Special Issue): 63–92.
- Bodnar A., Grzelak A. (2023). The Polish–Belarusian Border Crisis and the (Lack of) European Union Response. *Białostockie Studia Prawnicze* 28(1): 57–86.
- Boomgaarden H.G., Vliegthart R. (2009). How News Content Influences Anti-Immigration Attitudes: Germany, 1993–2005. *European Journal of Political Research* 48(4): 516–542.
- Calabrese L. (2018). Faut-il Dire Migrant ou Réfugié? Débat Lexico-Sémantique autour d’un Problème Public. *Languages* 210(2): 105–124.
- Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales (2012a). *Définition de ‘Migrant’*. <https://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/MIGRANT> (accessed 10 April 2023).

- Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales (2012b). *Définition de 'Réfugié'*. <https://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/r%C3%A9fugi%C3%A9> (accessed 10 February 2024).
- Charaudeau P. (2005). *Le Discours Politique: Les Masques du Pouvoir*. Paris: Vuibert.
- Charteris-Black J. (2006). Britain as a Container: Immigration Metaphors in the 2005 Election Campaign. *Discourse & Society* 17(5): 563–581.
- Collyer M., de Haas H. (2012). Developing Dynamic Categorisations of Transit Migration. *Population, Space and Place* 18(4): 468–481.
- Consilium (2023). *EU Restrictive Measures against Belarus*, 27 February (last reviewed). <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/restrictive-measures-against-belarus/> (accessed 10 February 2024).
- Crawley H. (2016). Managing the Unmanageable? Understanding Europe's Response to the Migration 'Crisis'. *Human Geography* 9(2): 13–23.
- Crawley H., Skleparis D. (2018). Refugees, Migrants, Neither, Both: Categorical Fetishism and the Politics of Bounding in Europe's 'Migration Crisis'. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44(1): 48–64.
- Csehi R., Zgut E. (2021). 'We Won't Let Brussels Dictate Us': Eurosceptic Populism in Hungary and Poland. *European Politics and Society* 22(1): 53–68.
- d'Haenens L., de Lange M. (2001). Framing of Asylum Seekers in Dutch Regional Newspapers. *Media, Culture & Society* 23(6): 847–860.
- De Coninck D. (2022). The Refugee Paradox During Wartime in Europe: How Ukrainian and Afghan Refugees are (not) Alike. *International Migration Review* 57(2): 578–586.
- Dobry M. (2009). *Sociologie des Crises Politiques: La Dynamique des Mobilisations Multisectorielles*. Paris: Presses de Sciences Po.
- Eberl J.-M., Meltzer C.E., Heidenreich T., Herrero B., Theorin N., Lind F., Berganza R., Boomgaarden H.G., Schemer C., Strömbäck J. (2018). The European Media Discourse on Immigration and its Effects: A Literature Review. *Annals of the International Communication Association* 42(3): 207–223.
- Ekström M. (2007). *Occupying the Floor in Political Press Conferences: A Study on Interaction and Territorial Power*, paper delivered at the ICA's annual conference, San Francisco, 24–28 May.
- El Refaie E. (2001). Metaphors We Discriminate by: Naturalized Themes in Austrian Newspaper Articles about Asylum Seekers. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 5(3): 352–371.
- Filipec O. (2022). Multilevel Analysis of the 2021 Poland–Belarus Border Crisis in the Context of Hybrid Threats. *Central European Journal of Politics* 8(1): 1–18.
- Frelak J.S. (2017). Solidarity in European Migration Policy: The Perspective of the Visegrád States, in: A. Grimm, S. My Giang (eds), *Solidarity in the European Union: A Fundamental Value in Crisis*, pp. 81–95. Cham: Springer.
- Góra M., Mach Z., Styczyńska N. (2022). Poland and Russia: Turbulent Relations and No Rapprochement in Sight, in: M. Kaeding, J. Pollak, P. Schmidt (eds), *Russia and the Future of Europe: Views from the Capitals*, pp. 79–83. New York: Springer.
- Greussing E., Boomgaarden H.G. (2017). Shifting the Refugee Narrative? An Automated Frame Analysis of Europe's 2015 Refugee Crisis. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 43(11): 1749–1774.
- Grześkowiak M. (2023). The 'Guardian of the Treaties' Is No More? The European Commission and the 2021 Humanitarian Crisis on Poland–Belarus Border. *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 42(1): 81–102.
- Guild E., Costello C., Moreno-Lax V. (2017). *Implementation of the 2015 Council Decisions Establishing Provisional Measures in the Area of International Protection for the Benefit of Italy and of Greece*. Center for European Policy Studies. <https://www.ceps.eu/ceps-publications/implementation-2015-council-decisions-establishing-provisional-measures-area/> (accessed 10 February 2024).

- Halemba A. (2022). Ethnographic Snapshot. Europe in the Woods: Reflections on the Situation at the Polish–Belarusian Border. *Ethnologia Europaea* 52(1): 1–13.
- Hamlin R. (2021). *Crossing: How We Label and React to People on the Move*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Hébert L. (2001). *Introduction à la Sémantique des Textes*. Paris: Champion.
- Holmes S.M., Castañeda H. (2016). Representing the ‘European Refugee Crisis’ in Germany and Beyond: Deservingness and Difference, Life and Death. *American Ethnologist* 43(1): 12–24.
- Horsti K. (2008). Hope and Despair: Representation of Europe and Africa in News Coverage of ‘Migration Crisis’. *Communication Studies* 3: 125–156.
- Hutter S., Kriesi H. (2022). Politicising Immigration in Times of Crisis. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 48(2): 341–365.
- Huysmans J. (2006). *The Politics of Insecurity: Fear, Migration and Asylum in the EU*. London: Routledge.
- Kancelaria Premiera (2016). *Konferencja Prasowa Premier Beaty Szydło po Szczycie Rady Europejskiej*, 18 March. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7j2xet8hdk> (accessed 10 February 2024).
- Karakiewicz-Krawczyk K., Zdziarski K., Landowski M., Nieradko-Heluszkó A., Kotwas A., Szumilas P., Knyszyńska A., Karakiewicz B. (2022). The Opinions of Poles about the Need to Provide Humanitarian Aid to Refugees from the Area Covered by the Russian–Ukrainian War. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 19(20): Article 20.
- Kerbrat-Orecchioni C. (2017). *Les Débats de l’Entre-Deux-Tours des Elections Présidentielles Françaises*. Paris: L’Harmattan.
- Kirtsoglou E., Tsimouris G. (2018). Migration, Crisis, Liberalism: The Cultural and Racial Politics of Islamophobia and ‘Radical Alterity’ in Modern Greece. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 41(10): 1874–1892.
- Krieg-Planque A. (2017). *Analyser les Discours Institutionnels*. Malakoff: Armand Colin.
- Krotofil J., Motak D. (2018). A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Media Coverage of the Migration Crisis in Poland. *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis* 28: 92–115.
- Krzyżanowska N., Krzyżanowski M. (2018). ‘Crisis’ and Migration in Poland: Discursive Shifts, Anti-Pluralism and the Politicisation of Exclusion. *Sociology* 52(3): 612–618.
- Krzyżanowski M. (2018). Discursive Shifts in Ethno-Nationalist Politics: On Politicization and Mediatization of the ‘Refugee Crisis’ in Poland. *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies* 16(1–2): 76–96.
- Krzyżanowski M. (2020). Discursive Shifts and the Normalisation of Racism: Imaginaries of Immigration, Moral Panics and the Discourse of Contemporary Right-Wing Populism. *Social Semiotics* 30(4): 503–527.
- Krzyżanowski M., Triandafyllidou A., Wodak R. (2018). The Mediatization and the Politicization of the ‘Refugee Crisis’ in Europe. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 16(1–2): 1–14.
- Léonard S., Kaunert C. (2022). The Securitisation of Migration in the European Union: Frontex and Its Evolving Security Practices. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 48(6): 1417–1429.
- Mach Z., Styczyńska N. (2021). Poland: Economic Enthusiasts, Value Adversaries, in: M. Kaeding, J. Pollak, P. Schmidt (eds), *Euroscpticism and the Future of Europe*, pp. 115–118. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Milioni D.L., Doudaki V., Tsiliogiannis P.G., Papa V., Vadratsikas K. (2015). Conflict as News and News as Conflict: A Multidimensional Content Analysis of TV News in Cyprus. *International Journal of Communication* 9(1): 752–772.
- Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych i Administracji (2021). *Konferencja Prasowa S. Żaryn, M. Kamiński*, 27 September. <https://www.gov.pl/web/mswia/sluzby-ustalily-ze-wsrod-zatrzymanych-migrantow-sa-osoby-niebezpieczne> (accessed 10 February 2024).

- Moberg A. (2020). When the Return of the Nation-State Undermines the Rule of Law: Poland, the EU, and Article 7 TEU, in: A. Bakardjieva Engelbrekt, K. Leijon, A. Michalski, L. Oxelheim (eds), *The European Union and the Return of the Nation State: Interdisciplinary European Studies*, pp. 59–82. Cham: Springer.
- Paynter E. (2022). Border Crises and Migrant Deservingness: How the Refugee/Economic Migrant Binary Racializes Asylum and Affects Migrants' Navigation of Reception. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 20(2): 293–306.
- Pech L., Scheppele K.L. (2017). Illiberalism Within: Rule of Law Backsliding in the EU. *Cambridge Yearbook of European Legal Studies* 19: 3–47.
- Perelman C., Olbrechts-Tyteca L. (2008). *Traité de l'Argumentation*. Brussels: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles.
- Permoser J.M. (2017). Redefining Membership: Restrictive Rights and Categorisation in European Union Migration Policy. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 43(15): 2536–2555.
- Pędziwiatr K. (2019). *The New Polish Migration Policy – False Start*. OpenDemocracy, 19 August. https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/the-new-polish-migration-policy-false-start/?fbclid=IwAR2UWXbbRChGMyA43nYb5n2GzrE6TEPGS69fGyxxcv2vHU2mHo2_45QWRoQ (accessed 10 February 2024).
- Pietrusińska M. (2022). 'People From the Forest': Discourse About Migrants in the Narratives of NGO Workers and Activists Involved in the Humanitarian Crisis at the Polish-Belarusian Border. *Sprawy Narodowościowe* 54: Article 2803.
- Prezydent RP Andrzej Duda (2022). *Wypowiedź Prezydenta po Audiencji u Papieża Franciszka*, 1 April. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K6nnfIyySLY> (accessed 10 February 2024).
- Rastier F. (2011). *La Mesure et le Grain : Sémantique de Corpus*. Paris: Champion.
- Reisigl M., Wodak R. (2001). *Discourse and Discrimination. Rhetorics of Racism and Antisemitism*. London: Routledge.
- Rheindorf M., Wodak R. (2020). *Sociolinguistic Perspectives on Migration Control: Language Policy, Identity and Belonging. Language, Mobility and Institutions*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Rzepnikowska A. (2023). Racialisation of Polish Migrants in the UK and in Spain (Catalonia). *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 49(6): 1517–1533.
- Sacks H. (1972). On the Analyzability of Stories by Children, in: J.J. Gumperz, D. Hymes (eds), *Directions in Sociolinguistics: The Ethnography of Communication*, pp. 325–345. New York: Rinehart & Winston.
- Sacks H. (1995). *Lectures on Conversation*. Volumes I and II, G. Jefferson (ed.), with introduction by E.A. Schegloff. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Soyaltin-Colella D. (2022). The EU's 'Actions-Without-Sanctions'? The Politics of the Rule of Law Crisis in Many Europes. *European Politics and Society* 23(1): 25–41.
- Stachowitsch S., Sachseder J. (2019). The Gendered and Racialized Politics of Risk Analysis. The Case of Frontex. *Critical Studies on Security* 7(2): 107–123.
- Takle M. (2017). Is the Migration Crisis a Solidarity Crisis? In: A. Grimmel (ed.), *The Crisis of the European Union*, pp. 116–129. London: Routledge.
- Tazzioli M., Walters W. (2016). The Sight of Migration: Governmentality, Visibility and Europe's Contested Borders. *Global Society* 30(3): 445–464.
- Thevenin E. (2021). Between Human Rights and Security Concerns: Politicisation of EU–Turkey and EU–Libya Agreements on Migration in National Parliaments. *European Security* 30(3): 464–484.
- Thevenin E. (2022). Protecting Europe Against Migration: Law and Justice's Populist Discourse in the Polish Parliament, in: H. Dajč, I. Jarić, L. Dobrovšak (eds), *Contemporary Populism and Its Political*

- Consequences: Discourses and Practices in Central and South-Eastern Europe*, pp. 289–306. Zagreb: Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar.
- Triandafyllidou A. (2006). Nations, Migrants, and Transnational Identifications: An Interactive Approach to Nationalism, in: G. Delanty, K. Kumar (eds), *The Sage Handbook of Nations and Nationalism*, pp. 285–294. London: Sage.
- Triandafyllidou A., Kouki H. (2013). Muslim Immigrants and the Greek Nation: The Emergence of Nationalist Intolerance. *Ethnicities* 13(6): 709–728.
- UNHCR (2015). *Refugee vs Migrant: Which Is Right and Why It Matters*. <https://www.unrefugees.org/news/refugee-or-migrant-which-is-right/> (accessed 10 February 2024).
- UNHCR (2023). *Ukraine Emergency*. <https://www.unhcr.org/ukraine-emergency.html> (accessed 10 February 2024).
- van Dijk T.A. (2018). Discourse and Migration, in: R. Zapata-Barrero, E. Yalaz (eds), *Qualitative Research in European Migration Studies*, pp. 227–245. Cham: Springer.
- van Leeuwen T., Wodak R. (1999). Legitimizing Immigration Control: A Discourse-Historical Analysis. *Discourse Studies* 1(1): 83–118.
- Wodak R. (2011). ‘Us’ and ‘Them’: Inclusion and Exclusion – Discrimination via Discourse, in: G. Delanty, R. Wodak, P. Jones (eds), *Identity, Belonging and Migration*, pp. 54–77. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- Wodak R. (2015). The Discursive Construction of Strangers: Analyzing Discourses about Migrants and Migration from a Discourse-Historical Perspective, in: Migration and Citizenship. *Newsletter of the American Political Science Association, Organized Section on Migration and Citizenship*: 6–10.
- Wodak R. (2017). ‘Strangers in Europe’: A Discourse-Historical Approach to the Legitimation of Immigration Control 2015/16, in: S. Zhao, E. Djonov, A. Björkqvall, M. Boeriis (eds), *Advancing Multimodal and Critical Discourse Studies: Interdisciplinary Research Inspired by Theo Van Leeuwen’s Social Semiotics*, pp. 31–49. New York: Routledge.
- Wodak R. (2020). The Language of Walls: Inclusion, Exclusion, and the Racialization of Space, in: J. Solomos (ed.), *Routledge International Handbook of Contemporary Racisms*, pp. 160–177. London: Routledge.
- Wodak R., Boukala S. (2015a). European Identities and the Revival of Nationalism in the European Union: A Discourse Historical Approach. *Journal of Language and Politics* 14(1): 87–109.
- Wodak R., Boukala S. (2015b). (Supra)National Identity and Language: Rethinking National and European Migration Policies and the Linguistic Integration of Migrants. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 35: 253–273.
- Zawadzka-Paluckta N. (2022). Ukrainian Refugees in Polish Press. *Discourse & Communication* 17(1): 96–111.

How to cite this article: Laurent C., Thevenin E. (2024). Discursive Approaches to the Reception of Non-EU Migrants in Polish Official Political Discourse. *Central and Eastern European Migration Review*, 25 March, doi: 10.54667/ceemr.2024.03.