

CHARLES UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Political Sciences

Department of International Relations

Master's Thesis

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**The Discursive Construction of Syrian and Ukrainian Asylum Seekers in Czechia and
Migration Outcomes: Observed Covariations**

Master's Thesis

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Abstract

Throughout modern history, Czechia, and formerly Czechoslovakia, have maintained a complex and often troubled relationship with international migration. Periods of German and Soviet occupation, the division of Czechoslovakia into two independent republics, and Czechia's modern EU accession and emergence as an increasingly globalized modern economy have contributed to massive demographic shifts that continue to inform Czechia's national political landscape, culture, and attitudes towards migration and the integration of foreigners into Czech society. The last decade has brought about the largest human migration events in Europe since the end of the Second World War, with the 2015 "European Migrant Crisis" (hereafter referred to as the Crisis) and the outflow of refugees from Ukraine following the Russian invasion of the country in February 2022 presenting significant stresses for Schengen Area States (European Commission, 2023; Pew Research Center 2016). While underlying challenges for European states to equitably and efficiently resettle migrants remained similar through both the 2015 and 2022 migration events, stark differences in the discursive construction of Middle-Eastern (most notably Syrian) and Eastern European migrants by policymakers and public figures in Czechia can be correlated with contrasting migration outcomes between the two people groups.

The primary goal of this thesis is to shed light on the covariation of changes in the discursive framing of Syrian and Ukrainian migrants in Czech political discourse and quantitative migration outcomes over time, focusing on contrasting discursive themes and migration outcomes between the two groups. In pursuit of this goal, this work employs a mixed-methods approach, featuring both a longitudinal Critical Discourse Analysis of Czech political discourse and a longitudinal Quantitative Analysis of the migration outcomes of Syrians and Ukrainians in the Czech context during specific time periods. Harnessing extensive media

coverage and institutional databases, the former method draws on and qualitatively analyzes statements regarding Syrian and Ukrainian migrants made by prominent Czech political figures. The latter method cross-references said statements with quantitative migration outcomes, employing publicly available information databases to observe covariation between utterances of migration-related discourse and overall Syrian and Ukrainian migration outcomes in Czechia.