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Level: Master (1 year)

The Visegrad Group and the 2015-2016 Migration Crisis

"The countries of the Visegrad Group declare that they will continue to fulfil their obligation under the EU aquis, including the responsibility to protect the EU and Schengen Area external borders" (Visegrad Group,

4 September 2015)

Author: Giuliana Chiesi Lundgren
Supervisor: Kjetil Duvold
Examiner: Thomas Sedelius
Subject/main field of study: Political Science
Course code: ASK22M
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Dalarna University – SE-791 88 Falun – Phone +4623-77 80 00

Declaration

I hereby declare that this project is an outcome of my own efforts under the guidance of Professor K. Duvold. The project is submitted to the Dalarna University. I also declare that this project has not been previously submitted to any other university.

15/08/2020
Giuliana C. Lundgren

Abstract:

This thesis intends to establish whether and to what degree possible explanations for the Visegrad Group´s response to the 2015-2016 migration crisis can be provided by Postfunctionalism and Intergovernmentalism. The purpose of this study is not to explicitly test the two theories but to use them as tools to better understand the case under analysis, by applying a non-competitive approach. Based on the elaboration of 21 official statements released by the Visegrad Group between 2015-2016, findings show that both theories could (partially) confirmed my initial hypotheses. I conclude that security matters (as Intergovernmentalist suggests) consisted in the lion´s share in the statements, while economy matters (as also suggested by Intergovernmentalism) did not. When it comes to identity matters (as Postfunctionalism suggests), I conclude that those were used in connection to security matters, with the aim of forging a common European response to the crisis and to justify the partisan reaction of the Visegrad Group.

Keywords:

Acknowledgements

"*E quindi uscimmo a riveder le stelle*" Dante Alighieri, (Inferno, XXXIV)

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List of Abbreviations

AS- Affected states

CEE- Central Eastern Europe

EC-European Commission

EU – European Union

IVF- International Visegrad Fund

LI- Liberal Intergovernmentalism

NAS- Non-affected states

V4- Visegrad Group

1 Introduction

The EU has been facing record numbers of migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees in its recent history. That has also highlighted several difficulties in the implementation of these initiatives, due to the lack of solidarity and agreement about the European relocation scheme. In 2015, an unprecedented refugee migration driven by the conflicts and poverty in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Africa reached the European borders, resulting in over 1.5 million refugees and more than 1.2 million asylum applications (in 2016). In September 2015, the Council adopted two Decisions regarding the relocation of 160,000 asylum seekers from Greece and Italy to other Member States over the following 24 months. This mechanism was based on the Council Decision (EU) 2015/1523 of 14 September 2015, introducing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and Greece, and on the Council Decision (EU) 2015/1601 of 22 September 2015, introducing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and Greece (European Parliament, 2016). The September 2015´s plan was formulated to share the burden of relocating up to 120,000 people from the so called "Frontline States" of Greece, Italy, and Hungary to elsewhere within the EU. The plan assigned quotas to each Member State: the number of people to receive was determined in consideration of the economic strength, population, and unemployment of each country. When the European Union leaders agreed in assembly to establish quotas in order to distribute the refugees that had arrived in Europe, several responses were positive. However, the so called Visegrad Group countries Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia rejected the proposal, claiming the quotas were not fair. The tensions between the Visegrad Group and the European Union started in 2015, when the EU approved the quotas for the relocation of refugees, thus overruling the dissenting votes of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia. When asking the Court of Justice to annul the deal, Hungary and Slovakia argued that there were procedural mistakes, and that these quotas were not a suitable response to the crisis. Besides, the politic leaders said the problem was not their making, and the policy exposed them to a risk of Islamist terrorism that represented a threat to their homogenous societies. Shortly afterwards, the Commission launched an

infringement procedure against Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic for refusing to accept the refugees. Eventually, Slovakia joined in the quota system to a limited extent. By 2017 the Czech Republic had accepted less than 1% of its allocation and Slovakia had relocated between 1% and 2% of its quota (European Commission 2017a). Hungary and Slovakia claimed that the EU´s 2015 mandatory scheme was unlawful. The final ruling of the European Court of Justice in early September 2017 rejected the case of Bratislava and Budapest and decided in favour of the scheme. In order to better enforce the relocation procedure, in April 2016 the Commission started sanctioning the countries that refused to accept refugees by setting a penalty price of €250,000 per migrant (Winneker 2016). As a result of the growing anti-immigrants' sentiments within the EU, the migration crisis became a sovereign-sensitive issue with some Member States showing reluctance to implement decisions that they believed could threaten their national interests. The events occurred during the 2015 migration crisis showed that it was complicated for the Member States to agree on the refugee relocation system. Tensions between the supranational and the national level of government within the decision-making process of how to respond to the migration crisis emerged. For many years, theories of European integration focused on explaining the progress of integration: from the internal market and the currency union via the EU's task expansion to internal and external security policies to enlargement (Pollack 2010, p.17). Theoretical debates in these areas dealt with the conditions and mechanisms of 'more integration' (e.g. Moravcsik 1998; Schimmelfennig 2003). It is only recently that the regional integration theory has shifted to Euro-scepticism, and to differentiated integration.

The abolition of internal borders within the EU produced debates suggesting new challenges derived from the opening of internal borders, leading to increasing politicization and securitization of migration and asylum issues (Castelli Gattinara and Morales 2017, p.2). This gradual de-nationalization of state sovereignty required cooperation, though the Visegrad countries and the EU did not reach a common position on how to deal with the so-called migration crisis. Grounded on two of the Grand Theories of European Integration (Postfunctionalism and Intergovernmentalism), this study aims to show how and to what degree national strategic interests and cultures ended up shaping the position of the Visegrad

countries, by using those theories as analytical tools. Despite the fact that each of the considered integration theories represents different approaches to the European integration process, both Postfunctionalism and Intergovernmentalism will be used in this study with the purpose of formulating and investigating different hypotheses about the possible causes of the Visegrad four´s response.

1.1 Aim, research questions and significance

Given these premises, this paper intends to establish whether and to what degree possible explanations for the considered outcome can be provided by Postfunctionalism and Intergovernmentalism. The purpose of this study is not to explicitly test the two theories but to use them as tools to better understand the case under analysis. It is not either the aim of this work to shape the analysis as a competitive approach between the two considered theories, rather as a complementary one. Therefore, this work suggests that both Postfunctionalism and Intergovernmentalism contain some elements of validity. What will be proposed here, therefore, is the operationalization of both Postfunctionalism and Intergovernmentalism in relation to one specific case study to find out whether both theories may be separately or jointly considered as necessary, or if any of the two explanations can be dismissed. The idea behind this analysis is to investigate whether or not it is reasonable to contemplate the possibility that Postfunctionalism, or Intergovernmentalism, or the two combined, can offer a clearer picture of the Visegrad Group´s response. The operationalization of the considered integration theories, on which the foundation of this study is based, will be explained later in this paper. My initial hypotheses are:

- H1 economic and security issues will prevail in the analysis
- H2 issues of national, regional, and European identity will not only result relevant but will also play a functional role in shaping the common response of the Visegrad countries.

The research questions are the following:

- To what extent and how can the Intergovernmentalism theory explain the position of the Visegrad Group during the migration crisis?
- To what extent and how can the Postfunctionalism theory explain the position of the Visegrad Group during the migration crisis?
- To what extent and how can Intergovernmentalism and Postfunctionalism theories complementally explain the position of the Visegrad Group during the migration crisis?

The Migration crisis being a recent event, is still generating a wide range of literature analysing it from different domains. The debate about which theory can better explain the crisis is still an ongoing one in the literature (e.g. Hooghe and Marks 2009, Moravcsik and Schimmelfennig 2018, Hodson and Puetter 2019), and those who have contributed to it have stated that there is still scope for further research. So why another work about this topic? Because, as previously stated, this work will not try to assess how and to what degree the LI and Postfunctionalism remain in comparison with each other. Certainly, the nature of the analysis depends on which theory has opened "the box". Undoubtedly, each theory offers a perspective, while having blind spots at the same time. It is my conviction that different theories complement each other and avoid too-narrow a view that can be easily debunked. Consequently, the theories will not be seen as competitors. Given that both approaches contain some elements of truth, and that neither of them will result sufficient if considered on its own, insights from both may be needed to understand more deeply the dynamics of the topic of this study.

1.2 Structure of the Study

The study is organized as follows. In the upcoming section, I illustrate the choice of method and I then describe the collection of data. In section 3, I move forward to the theories of European integration, Postfunctionalism and Intergovernmentalism. The theories will be presented both *per se* and in relation to the migration crisis, in order to highlight the contributions of each theory in explaining the landmark events occurred during the crisis. Section 4 introduces the analytical framework, which consists in the operationalization of the frames

grounded on the elaboration of Postfunctionalism and Intergovernmentalism. Section 5 gives a background picture of the Visegrad countries as a group, its origins, goals, and love and hate relationship with the EU. I then point out *both* the V4´s joined position in the context of migration crisis, and the individual policy that each of the Visegrad countries implemented in this area. The followings subchapters will deal with the individual activities towards the EU of each of the four V4 Member States in the migration crisis context. Despite common roots and similar paths of direction, the Visegrad four also differ from each other-and these differences will be highlighted. I then proceed with the analysis of the examined data in section 6. Finally, in the concluding section, I summarize the main findings, discuss their wider implications, and suggest avenues for future research.

2 Method and Methodology

The main purpose of this study is to investigate whether shared economic, or security interests (as Intergovernmentalism suggests), or politicized identity issues (as Postfunctionalism suggests), or both combined can explain the response of the V4 countries during the migration crisis. To do so, this study engages in a sequence elaboration of the joined V4 Prime Ministers´ press statements in the years 2015-2016. Against the background of the topic, the main questions asked in the analysis of the V4´s official Visegrad statements, is whether economic (or security) issues or politicized identity issues feature more prominently with respect to their ratio and elaboration, and how they are exploited.

2.1 Research Model

This study will be conducted as a single case study. For a definition of the term *case study* I refer to Gerring´s, according to which a case study can be defined as "as an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units. A unit connotes a spatially bounded phenomenon—e.g., a nation-state, revolution, political party, election, or person—observed at a single point in time or over some delimited period of time" (Gerring 2004, p.342).
I have chosen to study the official statements of the Visegrad Group during the European migration crisis, over the period 2015-2016. This in an attempt to test my initial hypotheses, to answer the proposed research questions, and, with the help of integration theories, to eventually highlight specific features of the unified position of the Visegrad Group´s countries in relation to the migration crisis and against the 2015 EU relocation plan. I considered a combination of both quantitative and qualitative research methods as the most suitable for the purpose of this study. In this thesis, the analysis will be developed on three levels. Initially, it will take the form of a frame analysis. A frame analysis identifies the leading frames in specific patterns. Researchers of policymaking argue that political issues are not external to the political process, which means that every policy issue can be subject to conflicting perceptions that are difficult to refute. Which problem

definition prevails, and which dimension of an issue dominates policy debates at a given time can substantially influence political choices (Falk 2007, p.654). Framing can be defined in the words of Falk, as "the process of selecting, emphasizing and organizing aspects of complex issues according to an overriding evaluative or analytical criterion" (Ibid). Additionally, frames influence the way issues are processed, how they affect which interests play a role during policy deliberation and what type of political conflicts and coalitions are likely to emerge as a result. Framing, then, can be defined as "the process whereby communicators act to construct a particular point of view that encourages the facts of a given situation to be viewed in a particular manner, with some facts made more or less noticeable than others" (Kuypers 2009, p.182).

Methodologically, framing is divided into qualitative and quantitative analysis. According to Azpíroz, quantitative method in framing is based on the premise that it is possible to systematically identify and measure all the elements of the frame present in the discourse (2014, p.76). Resuming Hertog and McLeod, Azpíroz also points out that quantitative analysis is more successful when there is a particular set of concepts clearly related to a frame, and the number of times they are repeated reflects the emphasis in that frame (Ibid). On the other side, qualitative methodology allows the researcher to use a more intuitive way, since it "seeks to describe and interpret the qualities of a phenomenon in its context and to achieve a deep understanding, in contrast with the statistical measurement of some elements or the generalization of results typical of quantitative methodology" (Azpíroz 2014, p.77). One of the advantages of the qualitative methodology is that it allows to go beyond the pure content since words are contextualised. Thus, it also creates other sorts of problems, related to categorization or to an excessive influence of the analyst (Ibid).

The first level of analysis will therefore focus on identifying the different frames which will be successively operationalized. The following chapters will illustrate the elaboration of the analytical frames (and subthemes), and the theoretical ground which the frames are developed from. Secondly, according to my research questions, I will examine to *what extent* the identified frames have been used. In order to answer this question, the frames will be processed in a twofold way. After

identifying the frames, a quantitative description of them will be given. The quantitative description will look at which frames, and the direct and indirect references related to the frames, are the most dominant in terms of ratio. However, as stated by Verloo (2005), "frames are not descriptions of reality, but specific constructions that give meaning to reality, and shape the understanding of reality" (p. 20). In other words, frames need to be contextualised to find a possible causal relationship between discourse and the historical or political dimension in which they are inserted (Reisigl 2017, p.55). These considerations will lead me to the third part of my analysis.

After examining to what extent, the Visegrad Group made use of the frames, I will look at *how* these frames have been used in the official statements of the V4. This is a critical point of the analysis. In order to test my hypothesises, and answer to this study´s research questions, I consequentially consider necessary: 1) To investigate if and how frames have changed over time; 2) To identify casual reasons for this change. Thus, through process tracing, it is examined whether the expected evidence can be demonstrated by a hypothesized casual mechanism. Process tracing can be defined as "an analytic tool for drawing descriptive and causal inferences from diagnostic pieces of evidence— often understood as part of a temporal sequence of events or phenomena" (Collier 2011, p. 824). The first step will be to theorize a plausible mechanism based on existing literature and logical reasoning, and to give some thoughts to the contextual conditions required to be present for the mechanism to work (Ricks and Liu 2018, 843). Here it is assumed that, if variation has occurred, it is necessary to find out *how* it did happen. Grounding the logical sequence on theoretical assumptions of European integration theories, it can be postulated that the way the use of frames in Visegrad Group´s statements has variated is related to political events occurred during the migration crisis.

If we consider the political events occurred during the migration crisis as a threat to the V4 and their collective goods or beliefs (H1 economic, security, *or* H2 identity issues), we can also hypothesize that a predisposition among the V4 to defend their status quo was actually embodied in that same status quo even before these events occurred. As an alternative, if we consider the political events occurred during the migration crisis as an opportunity for the V4 to expose

deficiencies (H1 economic, security, *or* H2 identity issues), in the status quo prior the migration crisis, we can also hypothesize the existence of a predisposition among the V4 to point out disliked policies, in order to mobilize support for their removal or changing.

2.2 Collection of Data and Reliability

The material collected for this paper consists in the Visegrad Group´s official statements between the years 2015 and 2016. All the statements were originally published in English and were available at the Visegrad Group´s official website. In total, 21 documents were analysed. The examined material is considered to be a reliable source. While the reliability of the quantitative one will be achieved using quantitative data to exactly present how I reached certain conclusions, the reliability of qualitative can give much independence to self-interpret the results. To respond these reliability problems, it is important to clearly describe how the results have been interpreted. Since the material used for the research is public, no ethical considerations were considered as necessary.

3   Theoretical Framework

3.1 Grand theories of European Integration

The process of European integration has caused the development of a number of theories trying to explain this process on its various levels and aspects while studying the European integration from different theoretical angles. No single theory of the European integration could entirely explain the complexity of this process, and that could maybe justify the still growing number of integration theories. The European integration process has been for many years intertwined with the analysis of the European Community (EC). This analysis mainly focused on two of the leading schools of European integration: Postfunctionalism, and Intergovernmentalism (Pollack 2010, p.17). In this section, I will outline what is distinctive about Postfunctionalism and Intergovernmentalism- before turning to their contribution in explaining the migration crisis.

3.2 Comparing Theories

Postfunctionalism underlines "the disruptive potential of a clash between functional pressures and exclusive identity" (Hooghe and Marks, 2019 p.1116). As a matter of fact, while assuming that Member States are the central actors in European integration, Postfunctionalism also stresses the identity approach (Ibid). According to Hooghe and Marks (2009), identity is decisive for both multi-level governance, and for regional integration. Communities demand self-rule and the preference for self-rule is almost always inconsistent with the functional demand for regional authority. Thus, from a Postfunctionalist point of view, in order to understand European integration, it is vital to understand how, and when, identity is mobilized (p.2). Departing from Lipset and Rokkan´s cleavage theory which highlighted how social changes were corroding class conflict, Hooghe and Marks do not consider- as Lipset and Rokkan did- territorial identity, nationalism, and ethnic nationalism as inert remnants of long-past peripheral resistance to nation building. In line with Postfunctionalism, they instead argue that territorial

identities still serve as "perhaps the most powerful sources of mass political mobilization" (Hooghe and Marks, 2018 p.113). Consequentially, from a Postfunctionalist perspective, European integration raises fundamental issues of rule and belonging for those who wish to preserve national sovereignty against external pressures from other countries and international organizations (Hooghe and Marks, 2018 p.1114). According to Postfunctionalism, asymmetrical interdependence among identity and European integration shape the sort of new political conflicts within and outside Member States: firstly, mass politics in elections, referendums, and party primaries let in the mobilization of national identity as a constraint of integration. Secondly, European integration "activates identity issues related to the reconfiguration of the state, disrupts established party systems, gives rise to the new radical left and radical national parties, and constrains supranational problem solving" (Hooghe and Marks, 2019 p.1117). From a Postfunctionalist perspective, the results of this situation make European integration a conflictual process where transnational cleavage has increased. Given the politicization in the shadow of exclusive national identity and increased prominence of transnational cleavage, European integration becomes "trapped in a cultural cleavage that has reconfigured political conflicts" (Hooghe and Marks, 2019 p.1120). While mainstream parties have lost their traditional consensus, radical left and nationalist parties has been reinvigorated, pitting proponents of European integration against the guardians of national sovereignty (Ibid).

From a Postfunctionalist perspective, the results of this situation make European integration a conflictual process where transnational cleavage has increased.

Intergovernmentalism views European integration from the standpoint of national states searching for mutually advantageous bargains and consequently explains integration as the outcome of cooperation and competition among national governments. Intergovernmentalism emerged from Stanley Hoffmann´s critique of the Neofunctionalist approach and was based on the assertion that "the nation-state, far from being obsolete, had proven obstinate" (Pollack 2010, p.19). The Intergovernmentalist perspective emphasizes the importance of the national governments, rather than that of supranational organizations. Furthermore, according to Hoffmann, central role of the nation states during the historical

development of the EU was strengthened, rather than weakened, as a result of the integration process (Hodson and Puetter 2019, p.1154).

Intergovernmentalism regards differences in integration preferences and bargaining dynamics as sufficient to explain the variation in political reforms outcomes. From an Intergovernmentalist perspective, European integration can be seen as a result of calculated negotiations among national governments that weight the costs and benefits of cooperation in the light of their national interests. Additionally, Hoffmann highlighted the dichotomy between low and high politics arguing that while functional integration might be possible in less controversial areas, states would resist any incursion into areas of high politics (such as the political and the security sphere). It follows that when vital interests are involved, national governments would try to retain control over decision processes. Hoffmann´s Classical Intergovernmentalism underpins the idea that integration stands in conflict to national diversity and that national differences are likely to prevail when these logics collide. Consequently, integration has its core in economics, and it either leaves state sovereignty untouched or strengthens the national state (Hooghe and Marks, 2019 p.1115). Further, according to Hoffmann, national identities are very persistent and represent a major obstacle to European integration. As a matter of fact, in Hoffmann´s Classical Intergovernmentalism the interplay between national consciousness, national situation, and nationalism provides the framework for foreign policy within which political leaders can act. "In other words, national leaders are constrained by national identity and the legacy of the nation state" (Kuhn 2019, p.1219).

Liberal Intergovernmentalism is a more recent stream of Intergovernmentalism. Based on the work of Moravcsik, LI emerged during the 1990s as the leading theory of European integration (Pollack 2010, p.21). At the most fundamental level, LI stands on two major beliefs about international politics. The first is that states are the main actors in a context of international anarchy. That is, states seek to achieve goals primarily through intergovernmental negotiation and bargaining, rather than through a centralized authority making and enforcing political decisions. National security is not the dominant motivation, state preferences and identities are not uniform, state power does not rest on coercive capabilities, and international institutions are not marginal. In this context Member States enjoy

preeminent decision-making power and political legitimacy. The second basic LI belief is that states´ actions are rational and well calculated. Which means that Member States calculate the utility of alternative courses of action and choose the one that maximizes their utility under the circumstances. Agreements to cooperate, or to establish international institutions, are explained as a collective outcome of interdependent rational state choices realized through intergovernmental negotiation (Moravcsik and Schimmelfennig 2019, pp.1-2).

LI describes the power and the EU Member States in a three-step framework. First, states define preferences, then bargain to individual agreements, and finally create institutions to commit to and secure those outcomes in the face of future political uncertainty (Pollack 2010, p.20). Like Neofunctionalism, Liberal Intergovernmentalism conceives international institutions as a response to interdependence. However, unlike Neofunctionalism, Liberal Intergovernmentalism sees international cooperation as the exclusive product of national leaders, and behind these, of functional interests. Those interests that drive decisions on European integration are primarily economic and issue-specific, and aggregation is pluralistic because governments´ preferences are chiefly the result of interest groups (Hooghe and Marks, 2019 p.1116).

3.3 Postfunctionalism and The Migration Crisis: The Identity Issue

According to Hooghe and Marks, the Postfunctionalist interpretation of the European migration crisis puts the spotlight on identity politics (2019, p.1122). By that it is meant that the response of Member States to the crisis showed how the events occurred in 2015 and later on, touched a nerve of national identity "because it asked Europe´s population to harbor culturally dissimilar people" (Ibid). Since the Maastricht Treaty European integration has been a highly politicized issue and public opinion could not be ignored. By giving to European citizens the opportunity to express their approval or disapproval in national and European elections, politicization made possible to change the content and the process of political decision making in the EU (Kuhn 2019, p.1220). Postfunctionalism expects that this politicization will be able to mobilize Euro-sceptic citizens around

national identities, empower Euro-sceptic parties, and undermine support for European integration. If politicization is weak, the likelihood of more integration is higher, because intergovernmental negotiations and supranational institutions can operate undisturbed by Euro-sceptic opposition. On the contrary, a strong politicization limits the European political and economic elites´ capacity for action. In the Postfunctionalist perspective, then, the difference in integration outcomes of crises is explained by variation in domestic mass politicization (Schimmelfennig 2017, p.5).

The political conflict generated between the EU and the Visegrad group is therefore based on a Postfunctionalist perspective- on the national states and individuals´ perception on whether they see themselves as belonging exclusively to a national community or (also) as Europeans (Kuhn 2019, p.1221). Social identity theory claims that group identifications shape self-conception of individuals and groups. Humans have an 'innate ethnocentric tendency', which leads a person to choose his or her own group over others. This favoritism for one's own group does not automatically generate hostility towards others. Individuals typically have multiple identities. They identify with territorial communities on vastly different scales, from the local to the regional, to the national and beyond. What appears decisive is not the group with which one identifies, but how different group identities relate to each other, and whether and how they are mobilized in elite debate (Hooghe and Marks, 2009, p.12). During the migration crisis, the Visegrad leaders not only renewed the focus on the principles of sovereignty against the centralizing EU, but also became the defenders of a more traditional idea of state and nationhood, connected to traditional Christian values, and national and ethnical identity. "We defended Hungary - and with it, incidentally, Europe", stated Orbán (Hungarian Prime Minister 2017), claiming that the Visegrad alliance that "the four of us have succeeded in defending not only the borders of Hungary, but also the southern borders of Europe". Such ideas come from the deep-rooted Central European belief that, seen from a historical perspective, multiculturalism is responsible for much of the (negative) situation in western European states. In his 2017 state of the nation speech, Orbán described the refugee crisis as a "wave of fundamentalist migrants assaulting [our] national identities" and pointed out how "the era of open

societies" has weakened democracy by introducing the concept of "political correctness" (Hungarian Prime Minister 2017).

3.3 Intergovernmentalism and The Migration Crisis: Economic and Security Issues

In migration policy, when talking about states´ exposure to migrant flows, this reflects the respective position of countries on migration routes. States that are confronted with strong migratory pressure are expected to push for regulatory reforms, e.g. by demanding a fairer burden-sharing mechanism. States that experience a low influx of migrants should display strong preferences for keeping the legal status quo and its effective implementation (Biermann 2017, p.15). According to Biermann et al. (2017), during the spring of 2016, when Schengen and Dublin had de facto broken down, those Member States which experienced the hardest migratory pressure, pushed for a reform of the existing regulatory framework, while states less affected by migratory pressures preferred the persistence of the status quo (p.14). When talking about states´ exposure to migrant flows, Moravcsik and Schimmelfennig (2018) explain that each European government can find itself in one of four positions: that of a Front-line, Destination, Transit or Bystander State (p.17). Transit States such as the Visegrad Group countries find themselves on the migration routes between Front-line and Destination states. When migrant flows increase, Transit States avoid having "mid-stream" refugees stuck in their country "by tacitly supporting stronger external policing, as long as the cost remains low" (Moravcsik and Schimmelfennig 2018, p.19). Those states are against centralized allocation of refugees, as they expect eventually to offload those refugees they have and would prefer to close their borders. Transit States, which favor stronger external border controls, have an incentive to undermine schemes for such redistributing migrants within the EU in order to dissuade migrants from coming in the first place. Biermann et al. (2017) distinguish instead between two sets of states. The first is the affected states (AS). Those states experienced high migratory pressure due to the fact of being either first arrival states or destination states. First arrival states, such Italy and Greece- are typically located at Schengen's external border and are

thus the main entry point into the EU for refugees (p.15). The second set of states are the non-affected states (NAS). This group of states are exposed to low migratory pressure (Biermann 2017, p.15). NAS, such as Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic, include those states "that are either harder to reach for migrants due to their geographical location off the main migration routes, or which are positioned on transit routes and receive concomitantly few asylum claims" (Ibid). Biermann claims that from a game-theoretic perspective, the NAS showed a dominant strategy by blocking reforms that would impose a common framework while refusing responsibility for the refugees (Biermann 2017, p.19). As a matter of fact, following the temporary suspension of the Schengen system, the NAS oppose the AS's preference for political reform. The NAS aimed to preserve the de jure status quo, which would provide for the reintroduction of and effective compliance with Schengen and Dublin and prevent mandatory redistributive measures. This would allow to minimize migratory pressure and to secure the economic benefits provided by the Schengen system (Biermann 2017, p.21).

4 Analytic Framework

4.1 Frames

Before proceeding with the frame analysis, it is important to identify the different frames used in the Visegrad Group´s official statements in reference to the migration crisis. This will lay the ground for the analytical part of this thesis. The selection of frames for my analysis in based on the theories of European integration previously reviewed in this paper. This choice is connected to the initial assertion of this work, according to which integration theories can be considered powerful tools in understanding the causes of the V4´s response. Each frame is coded by coding speeches. Direct references to each subtheme, indirect references, or both will be noted. Indirect references include other terms related to that specific topic (APPENDIX I). Three frames have been mapped: 1) Economic matters; 2) Identity matters; 3) Security matters. Economic matters relate to Liberal Intergovernmentalism. The identified subthemes of this frame are *Schengen, Free movement, Labour Market, Economic Migrants.* According to Liberal Intergovernmentalism, economic matters are the main reasons why states may decide to collaborate with each other in order to gain advantages and to preserve their national interests. The frame of economic matters is expected to be communicated in relation to both the refugee crisis and European migration policies, and both to the Schengen system as a structure to protect and preserve. Identity matters relate instead to Postfunctionalism theory. The identified subthemes of this frame are *Nation, Values, Solidarity*. National identity and national sovereignty can be used as opponents to the idea of multiculturalism and a centralizing EU, against which the V4 allied in the name of a more traditional idea of state and nationhood. Identity, both at national and regional level, is connected to ethnic balance, as well as language, culture, and religion. Europe can only be saved if it "returns to the source of its real values: its Christian identity", proclaimed Orbán in November 2019 at the opening of an international conference on persecuted Christians, underlying that protecting Hungary's constitutional identity and Christian culture was an obligation for each state agency under Hungary's fundamental law (Visegrad Group 2019). Solidarity, which is one of the

values underpinning the project of European integration, is supposed to be presented as twofold. On the one side, the concept of 'flexible solidarity' is expected to play a role in the discussion on the refugee relocation system. As stated by the Visegrad Group, "migration policy should be based on the principle of the *flexible solidarity*. This concept should enable Member States to decide on specific forms of contribution taking into account their experience and potential. Furthermore, any distribution mechanism should be voluntary" (2016e).

On the other side, solidarity, and cooperation between the four Visegrad States in the name of common historical and cultural roots are also expected to be an important feature in the Visegrad four´s statements. Security matters also relate to (Realist) Intergovernmentalism. The identified subthemes of this frame are Migration crisis, Illegal, Borders, Terrorism, Crime. This frame is based on the Intergovernmentalist assumption that integration is related to "low politics". It follows that core functions of the states (the "high politics" of internal and external security) will be prevented from being integrated by states willing to keep their autonomy in these areas. Migration can be matter for national security in situations when migrants or refugees are perceived as a security risk. The securitization of migration includes four different areas: "socioeconomic, due to unemployment, the rise of informal economy, welfare state crisis, and urban environment deterioration; securitarian, considering the loss of a control narrative that associates sovereignty, borders, and both internal and external security; identitarian, where migrants are considered as being a threat to the host societies' national identity and political, as a result of anti-immigrant, racist, and xenophobic discourses" (Estevens 2018, p.4).

The Figure below illustrates the three frames and the respective subthemes.

Frames	Subthemes
Economic Matters:	Schengen, Free movement, Labour Market, Economic Migrants
Identity Matters:	Nation, Values, Solidarity.

Security Matters:	Migration crisis, Illegal, Borders, Terrorism, Crime

Figure 1. *Overview of identified frames.*

4.2 Process Tracing

Having previously defined the testable hypotheses, the next steps in the process tracing analysis are the timeline and the construction of a causal graph (Ricks and Liu 2018, 843). The casual graph identifies the independent variable(s) of interest. It also provides structure, allowing on focusing on the link between the explanation and the concerned outcome. In other words, a causal graph visually describes the causal process through which X, the casual mechanism (the migration crisis to be a threat to the V4 and their collective goods) causes Y (higher ratio of the economic and/or security topics in the statements). Alternative, X, the casual mechanism (the migration crisis as a threat to the V4 and their identity) causes Y (higher ratio of the identity topics in the statements). As stated in the theoretical framework, Intergovernmentalism sees national states as acting according to functional interests. The interests that drive states´ decisions are primarily economic and issue specific (Hooghe and Marks, 2019 p.1116). Furthermore, the Visegrad Group states belonged to the so-called NAS countries, which aimed to preserve the de jure status quo, provide for the reintroduction of and effective compliance with Schengen and Dublin, and prevent mandatory redistributive measures (Biermann 2017, p.21). This would allow to minimize migratory pressure and to capture the economic benefits provided by the Schengen system. I expect H1 economic and security issues will prevail in the analysis. H2 issues of national, regional, and European identity will not only result relevant but will also play a functional role in shaping the common response of the Visegrad countries. From a Postfunctionalist prospective, the Visegrad´s leaders not only renewed the focus on the principles of sovereignty against the view of a centralizing EU, but also became the defenders of a national and ethnical identity tied to a more traditional idea of state and nationhood, and connected to traditional

Christian values which can be jeopardized by the migratory flows. The relationships are illustrated in figure 2 and 3 below.
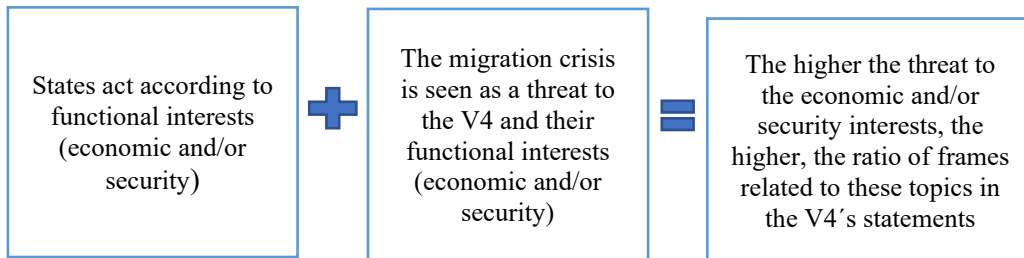
Figure 2. *Casual process in relation to security and economic issues.*
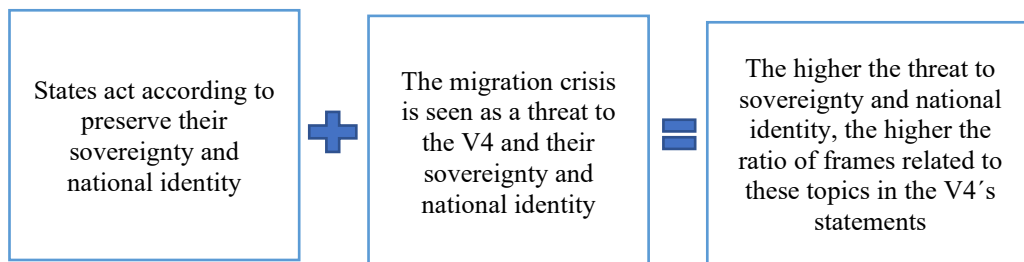
Figure 3. *Casual process related to identity issues.*

Finally, it would be necessary to summarize the crisis´ major events in a timeline sequence in order to assess if there is a casual mechanism in the variation of the Visegrad Group´s statements on the political events related to the migration crisis.

- May 2015. The EU issued the Agenda on Migration. The Agenda contained both short- and long-term measures to tackle the massive inflows of migrants and asylum seekers into Europe and to set the basis for a more cautious handling of the issue (Šeruga 2018, p.7).
- September 2015. The second Relocation scheme Decision was approved. To the policy rhetoric emphasising the 'external' challenge posed by the massive influx of migrants, the EU added another layer of rhetoric that underscored the emergent internal challenge for the Schengen regime (Popa 2016, p.99).

- After September 2015. Several Schengen countries - Germany, Austria, Slovenia, Hungary10, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Belgium - reintroduced internal border controls due to an alleged "big influx of persons seeking international protection" (Ceccorulli 2019, p.309).

- October 2015. EU signed a joint action plan with Turkey. To support Turkey in coping with the challenge represented by the presence of Syrians under temporary protection, the EU approved the allocation of €3 billion (Ibid).

- November 2015. Terrorist attacks in Paris strengthened the importance of securing both external and internal borders (Ibid).

- December 2015. The EC puts forward the Third Implementation Package stating that the proposed measures would 'manage the EU's external borders and protect our Schengen area without internal borders' (Šeruga 2018, p.17).

- March 2016. The EC calls for a return to a functioning Schengen system by reconciling the reintroduction of internal border controls with existing legal frameworks governing Schengen (Ceccorulli 2019, p.311).

- March 2016. Closure of the migration routes through the Balkans due to re-activation of Schengen border regimes. EU-Turkey deal made to relocate new arrivals. Turkey will agree to take back all migrants not in need of international protection crossing into Greece from Turkey (Šeruga 2018, p.24).

- May 2016. another Council Implementing Decision of the Schengen system, which allowed the prolongation of checks for an additional six months in Germany, Austria, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway (Ceccorulli 2019, p.315). The EC proposes to fine the Member States if they do not take their quota of asylum seekers.

- July 2016. The EC presents the second series of proposal to reform the common European asylum system and a proposal to create a common EU resettlement framework (Šeruga 2018, p.24).

5 Contextual Framework

5.1 The Wolf Pact: The Alliance between the Visegrad Group Countries

As it was previously pointed out, nowhere was the opposition against the EU distribution quota more vocal than in the countries of the Visegrad Group, where initial euphoria following the fall of the Iron Curtain was soon replaced with disenchantment with the EU and fascination with border control.
This regional alliance made up of Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic, quickly embraced a hardline position on the issue of migration and proclaimed its unwillingness to accept refugees. For a political union, it is undeniable that the European refugee crisis brought a new cohesion and purpose to the Visegrad Group (Bayer 2017). The uncompromising position of the alliance gained it more international attention than ever before, although predominantly in the negative light of criticism from western politicians and commentators (Nič 2016, p. 282).

The Visegrad Group is a diplomatic framework for regional cooperation, without institutions or formal structures, apart from the International Visegrad Fund (IVF) (Nič 2016, p.283). Despite the frequent interaction between state officials, the partnership finds its strength in the noninstitutionalized flexibility. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia realized that regional cooperation could have helped them move away from the Communist legacy and break free from a long-term isolation, while at the same time, gaining favor in the West. Another strong common belief was that cooperation would have increased security for the CEE countries. Many in Central Europe believed- maybe not unjustifiably- that the Russian retreat was only temporary, and that consequently, building closer security ties to the West was highly necessary (Schmidt 2016, p.119). Based on the idea of a strong Central Europe, the three states (which became four after Slovakia's independence in 1993) signed a Treaty in the Hungarian town of Visegrad in 1991, thus establishing a new intergovernmental alliance (Schmidt 2016, p.118). They soon targeted the EU and NATO membership, which they progressively worked towards over a decade, and

finally achieved in 2004. Having reached this milestone, their shared purposes became less obvious. However, geographic, and historical interests and the awareness of overlapping economic, supported the continued existence of the Group (Végh, 2018 p.2). The overall aim of the Visegrad Group was to increase the influence of the central European region in Brussels, and at the same time to gain a new prime role in the countries neighboring the EU´s borders. As a matter of fact, following the Visegrad countries´ EU accession, and the international recognition for having successfully completed their transformation process to new, stable democracies, the four countries launched a new mission. The IVF gradually started providing financial support in the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe, and the South Caucasus to sustain the democratic transition (Ibid).

Nevertheless, despite the Visegrad Group´s coalition-building and cooperation efforts, the four countries struggled to gain visibility in terms of high politics in the EU arena. That until 2015. With an unprecedented determination, the Group stood against the relocation quota proposed by the European Commission. While, at the beginning their position was directly against taking the refugees, gradually the Visegrad Group also united against Brussel, starting to express more dissidence and critique. Interesting enough, critique against Brussel does not necessarily mean disenchantment with the European Union, at least not for the citizens of the four countries. According to the 2018 Eurobarometer Survey 89.2 of the European Parliament, a Public Opinion Monitoring Study- there are still quite high levels of support for the EU among the Visegrad Group´s citizens. The 70% of the Polish and the 61% of the Hungarian population considered the EU membership "a good thing" for their countries (European Parliament 2018, p.23) while 88% of the Polish and 78% of the Hungarian population believed that their countries benefited from being member of the EU (European Parliament 2018, p.25). Lower results were registered in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, where respectively 50% and 34% of the population considered the EU membership "a good thing" for their countries (European Parliament 2018, p.23) and respectively 77% and 62% of the population believed that their countries benefited being members of the EU (European Parliament 2018, p.25).

Having only recently achieved political autonomy after a long turbulent history of Russian dominance, the four Visegrad countries despite different positions, share a common disregard for EU centralization and a common skepticism towards EU integration, especially towards market transformation and polity related issues. The adaption of marked-based principles within the European unity and the overall economic growth could not hide the fact that there still is an economic gap between the core of the old Member States and the V4 countries (Schmölz 2019, p.28). Frustration also exists in terms of polity related issues. From the perspective of the V4, the EU membership is perceived as second-class membership. The feeling of inferiority and disparity on the EU level has impacted the Visegrad Group´s role performance of a self-perceived disadvantaged group and their rhetoric towards the EU (Ibid). The leaders of the V4 countries have shown strong unwillingness to let the European Commission interfere in what they considered sovereign matters and have built their political rhetoric around the idea of national identity, in straight opposition to Brussels. The mandatory relocation scheme fueled the protest reaction of the Visegrad Group against the EU. Migration is considered a threat to the very foundations of the central European states, and therefore a matter of sovereign discretion. Milan Nič argues that Poland and Hungary are thus determined to construct a regional coalition to counter the Western European vision of integration, and by doing that, they aim to re-establish a central European identity in counter-weight to the western-oriented manifestation of the European Union, within which the Visegrad countries increasingly feel both politically and culturally marginalized (Nič 2016, p.287).

Nevertheless, this cooperation cannot be defined as unproblematic. The Visegrad countries have conflicting bilateral relations with external partners. One above all, Russia and the annexation of Crimea which significantly tested the unity of the alliance (Schmidt 2016, p. 129).

5.2 Migration Crisis and the Visegrad Group

"Anti-migrant sentiment has unified the "Visegrad group" of Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic—normally a disparate bunch who agree on some

subjects (like opposing Europe's climate policies) but are divided on others (like Russia)" (The Economist 2016).

Despite describing a semi-derisive picture of the Visegrad Group, on closer inspection the article "*Big, bad Visegrad*" also showed some revealing truths. The first one is that the high profile of the V4 on the refugee and migration crisis from mid-2015 has earned it more coverage than ever before in the 25 years of its existence. The second one is that most of this coverage was predominantly negative, as politicians and public opinion in the old Member States accused the Visegrad countries of lacking solidarity towards the refugee issue. The third one regards the fact that regardless of the Visegrad four´s rise in the European scene as a unified actor, differences between activities in terms of individual states persisted. When studying the action taken by the V4 in the context of the migration crisis, it is therefore important to explain it by using two parallel perspectives or levels. The first level is the V4's policy as a regional organization that collects the interests of all the four countries and responds to the EU policy. The second level is represented by the individual Visegrad Group´s members (Bauerová 2018, p.100).

When the EU launched the European Agenda on Migration in May 2015, introducing the concept of shared responsibility and solidarity between Member States of the EU, this evoked a reaction from the V4 countries which interpreted the Agenda on Migration as insufficient, as it did not deal with the problem of transit countries, that were primarily the states of the Western Balkans. Additionally, the V4 countries disagreed with the system of mandatory redistribution of asylum seekers which was based on pre-decided quotas. On the V4 level, the migration crisis was dealt with at a special summit in September 2015. The V4's mutual declaration pointed to the fact that each of the Member States should have the opportunity to decide on the number of migrants in its territory After the summit, the leaders of the V4 states commonly concluded that,: 1) The V4 states respected European legislation in the area of migration and asylum policy; 2) The V4 states criticized the EU for its inadequate implementation of measures to eliminate the number of migrants in Europe (in terms of country of origin and transit); 3) The V4 states accepted the principle of

solidarity only in regard to the specific nature of each state and therefore refuse the mandatory quota system created within the EU (Bauerová 2018, p.102). The negotiations on the quota system at an EU level continued in Autumn 2015 and were concluded with the final approval of refugee quotas on September 21, 2015. The Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia did not agree with the proposal. Poland accepted the system and did not follow the unified stance agreed upon by the V4 group. However, after the elections in the autumn of 2015, which marked the change of the political representation in Poland, the country returned to the opinion platform of the V4. Slovakia, together with Hungary, openly refused the system approved by the Council of the EU and presented a case for the European Court of Justice (Nagy 2017, p.9). The Czech Republic also refused the quota system but did not follow the drastic solution adopted by its V4 partners (Bauerová 2018, p.103).

In 2016 the relationship between the EU and V4 in relation to the migration crisis became more mitigate; openly negative rhetoric came individually from respective V4 Member States, not from the Group. The V4 also increased cooperation with the EU e.g. by participating to the EU – Turkey action plan and provided aid to the Western Balkans Sates in handling the massive wave of migration (Bauerová 2018, p.104). Still, even though the Visegrad countries agreed with the individual efforts of the EU to reform migration and asylum policy, their resistant stance on mandatory quotas was still strong and evident: "*Migration policy should be based on the principle of the "flexible solidarity". This concept should enable Member States to decide on specific forms of contribution taking into account their experience and potential. Furthermore any distribution mechanism should be voluntary*" (Visegrad Group 2016g).

5.3 Member States of the Visegrad Group and the Migration Crisis

In addition to dissimilarities in size, population, and economic power, there are also political differences between the four Visegrad countries. For instance, Slovakia is member of the Eurozone; the other three countries are not. Also, contrary to its V4 partners, Slovakia has had experience with significant minorities

(primarily Hungarians and Romas). The following subchapters deal with the individual activities of the four Visegrad Member States with special consideration to the specific characteristics of each given state. A heavy emphasis in all four countries is placed on cultural and often religious symbols, and above all, on state sovereignty (Bauerová 2018, p.114). All the four countries´ ruling governments in power during the 2015 refugee crisis claimed that a sovereign state has the right to its own definition of solidarity and establishment of rules for the reception or rejection of the refugees. A common denominator of the political discourse in all four countries was populism, the linking migrants to terrorism, and fears of Islam on a level of both state politics and society (Ibid).

Hungary

Hungary lies on the Western Balkan route and was crossed by more than 400, 000 migrants in 2015, 177, 000 of whom applied for asylum while the others were simply transported to the Austrian border. The number of applicants receiving protection in the first instance was 505 in 2015. In 2016, asylum applications dropped to 29, 430, of which only 395 received protection in the first instance (Eurostat 2016). (Eurostat 2016). Since 2015 Hungary has been one of the leading opponents of the mandatory quota system even before its negotiation on an EU level. Prime Minister Orbán dismissed the plan as "mad and unfair", remarking that "This is not the time for solidarity but to enforce the law. Illegal immigration is an offence." (Euractiv 2015a). In Hungary, resistance to the influx of migrants was strongly linked to the nationalistic rhetoric supported by the national government (Bauerová 2018, p.106). After issuing a controversial questionnaire which linked migration to terrorism, and accusing European politicians of supporting the influx of refugees, in June 2015 the ruling right-wing populist party FIDEZS (Hungarian Civic Alliance) published a plan for the effective protection of state borders through the construction of a border fence. The 4-metre-high fence was built on the Serbian -Hungarian border with a length of 175 kilometers (Euractiv 2015b). Prime Minister Orbán also made efforts to change Hungarian legislation in order not to allow the acceptance of the mandatory quota system in the country. In order to legalize the change, he first chose to hold a referendum.

Though, voters´ participation was low and therefore, despite its positive result, the referendum was only of a recommendatory nature (Bauerová 2018, p.107). Together with Slovakia, Hungary considers the quotas as a tool that threatens their state sovereignty and has joined in the complaint submitted against the decision to instate a mandatory relocation mechanism (Bauerová 2018, p.108).

Poland

In the time of the migration crisis, Poland joined the group of states that refused the division of migrants according to mandatory quotas. Before the crisis, Poland had taken in large numbers of Ukrainian citizens. Between 2010 and 2014 the rate of new workers registered in Poland hovered around 40,000, with the Ukrainian share of that being 50% (a share broadly consistent since the collapse of the Soviet Union) but between 2014 and 2017 that number sharply increased, with the Ukrainian share jumping up to around 80% (Forbes 2018). The Polish authorities issued their official position towards the migration crisis in September 2015 when Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz proclaimed Poland´s opposition to an automatic top-down assignment of immigrants to Member States. Kopacz committed to receive "as many refugees, but not economic migrants, as we can handle" (Potyrała 2016, p.80). Responding to assertions of not showing solidarity with other European Union member states, Kopacz claimed: "First and foremost, I am the Prime Minister of Poland – my first responsibility is to my fellow citizens" (Ibid). Despite such proclaims, after negotiations with the EU in September 2015, the Kopacz´s government decided to give its support to the system recommended by the EU (Bauerová 2018, p.110). The government assured that the relocation scheme agreed by the member states in September 2015 only meant that Poland would accept persons of specified identity posing no threat to state security or public order. The Polish authorities also proclaimed that the agreement was limited to a mere 12,000 people (Potyrała 2016, p.82).

When the far-right Law and Justice party came to power in 2015, after running a campaign that inspired choruses of "Poland for Poles.", Poland's rhetoric on quotas shifted back to the opinion platform of the V4, i.e. the refusal of mandatory quotas. This was accompanied by strong populism. Poland even retroactively

supported the complaint submitted by Slovakia against the system of mandatory quotas (Bauerová 2018, p.111).

The Czech Republic

The migration crisis in the Czech Republic was not signified by the number of refugees crossing the border or applying for protection. On this regard, Jelínková (2019) defines the situation in the Czech Republic as "a refugee crisis without refugees". Despite that, its presence was largely felt in public and political debates and, similarly to other V4 countries, the Czech response has been primarily focused on securitization of the issue with considerable criticism of proposals from the EU. There has been an emphasis on resisting compulsory quotas on the relocation and resettlement of refugees, supporting stronger border protection, and enhancing humanitarian aid in conflicts zones. The Czech Republic refused the system of relocation quotas claiming that, relocation was only possible based on the voluntary decision of each state (Jelínková, 2019, p.4). The crisis provided the impetus for the rise of old and new populist parties capitalizing on fearmongering and Islamophobia, in large part fueled by sensationalist media in the Czech Republic, who eagerly and unquestioningly embraced the narratives of President Zeman and right-wing nationalist politicians (Ibid). All asylum seekers went under strictly monitoring and only a very small number of them met Czech rules. By the end of 2017, the Czech Republic had accepted 12 refugees (Bauerová 2018, p.108). Refusal to fulfill set migrant quotas has led the EU to initiate proceedings against the Czech Republic for the failure to implement obligations stemming from the European law (Ibid).

Slovakia

Until 2015, there had not been a consistent debate on migration and asylum in Slovakia. As the number of foreigners living in Slovakia constituted 1,14 % of Slovak inhabitants (1,56% considering the BBAP data) at the beginning of 2015, migration wasn´t considered as crucial topic. After the introduction of the refugee

quota system in 2015, the National Council rejected this system of relocation of refugees within EU as a not a systematic solution.

Similarly, to the Czech Republic, Slovakia intended to relocate the refugees on a voluntary basis, which was linked to the possibility of selecting individual asylum seekers. Religious profile was a condition for the acceptance of migrants in Slovakia since the beginning of the crisis. The government of Robert Fico, whose left-wing populist party *Smer* was the largest party in the National Council following the parliamentary election held on 5 March 2016, refused the acceptance of migrants of Islamic faith (Bauerová 2018, p.112). In an interview to the BBC, Fico candidly admitted that Slovakia "could take 800 Muslims, but we don't have any mosques in Slovakia, so how can Muslims be integrated if they are not going to like it here?" (O´Grady 2015). Fico gained much international criticism for his declarations against Islam. At a national level, he managed to disseminate among the Slovak population concern and fear of a multicultural Slovakia, where traditions risked being changed: "The problem is not migrants coming in but rather in them changing the face of the country." (Chadwick 2016). Slovakia held the Presidency of the Council of the EU in the second half of the 2016. Among the priorities of the Slovak presidency there were "Sustainable migration and asylum policies". One of the outcomes of the presidency was the presentation of flexible and effective solidarity, on which the Visegrad countries agreed.

6 Analysis

In this chapter, the two initial hypotheses will be tested, and the three research questions will be answered based on the conducted analysis. The first step will be to explain to what extent the Intergovernmentalism and Postfunctionalism theories can explain the position of the Visegrad Group during the migration crisis. Testing of hypothesis 1 "economic and security issues will prevail in the analysis" will follow. Firstly, the analysis process starts with a quantitative description of the identified frames, that is which frames, and direct and indirect references related to the frames, are the most dominant in terms of ratio, for each year over the period 2015-2016.

A total of 809 frames were recorded within the 21 analysed statements released by the Visegrad Group during the period 2015-2016. The following table illustrates the ratio of each frame per year. The data below do not take in account if the frames were specifically related to the topic the migration crisis or not.

Frames	2015	2016
Economic matters	125 (27,7%)	65 (18,1%)
Security matters	194 (43%)	191 (53,3%)
Identity matters	132 (29,2%)	102 (28,5%)
Total	451 (100%)	358 (100%)

Table 1. *Use of frames in the 2015 and 2016 statements.* Source: the author.

The data in Table 1 suggest that both during 2015 and 2016 frames related to security matters are the most mentioned topics in the Visegrad Group´s official statements. The second most important category of frames is associated to identity matters, suggesting that the V4 were particularly occupied with both themselves and the European identity during that period. Surprisingly, frames related to economic matters are the less frequent, in particular during the year 2016, when they represent only 18,1% of the total amount of frames in the statements.

It is important to point out that not all the frames identified in the statements could be connected to the topic of migration crisis. As such, I considered necessary to make a further distinction between frames and related subthemes that could be linked to the migration crisis and those that could not. Table 2 and Table 3 illustrate this distinction as recorded in the 2015 and 2016 statements.
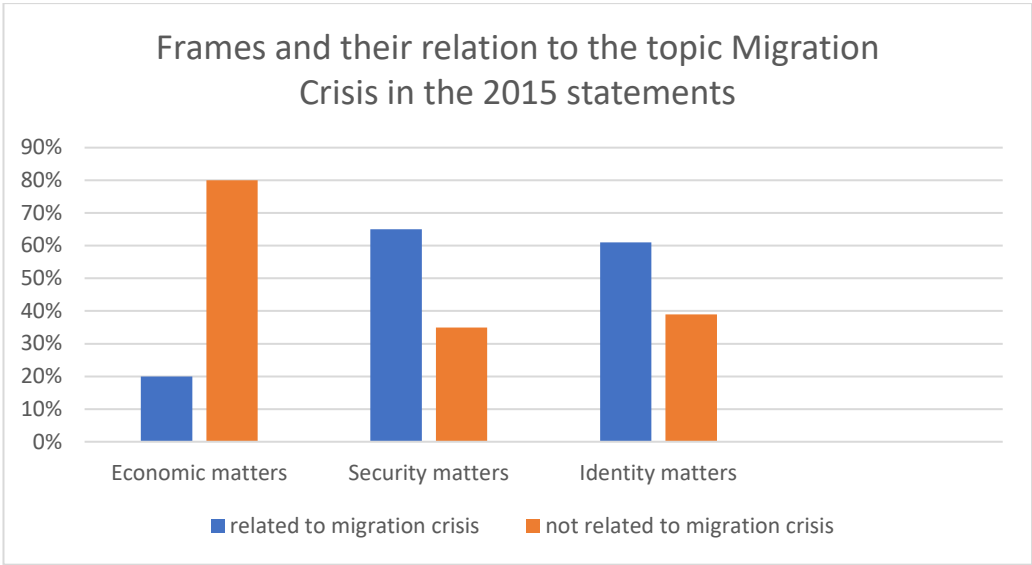

Table 2. *Use of frames related to the topic Migration Crisis in the 2015 statements*. Source: the author.

Remarkably, the results in the table show that in the 2015 statements, security matters are the topics most related to the migration crisis (as Intergovernmentalism would suggest), followed by identity matters (as Postfunctionalism would suggest). Against my initial hypothesis, when it comes to economic matters (Intergovernmentalism), only 20% of the frames and the associated subthemes could be linked to the migration crisis. In the 2016 statements (table 4), it can be noticed that while security matters are still the top frames in the V4´ statements, followed by identity matters- as in 2015, economic matters, and particularly those related to the migration crisis, - became considerably more important in the statements. It is also interesting to notice the decrease of economic matters frames not related to migration crisis, especially in comparison to the 2015 statements. Additionally, decreasing values in the use of frames not related to the migration crisis are recorded for both identity and security matters. This suggests that migration crisis became a hot topic in the V4´s statements during that year. In the

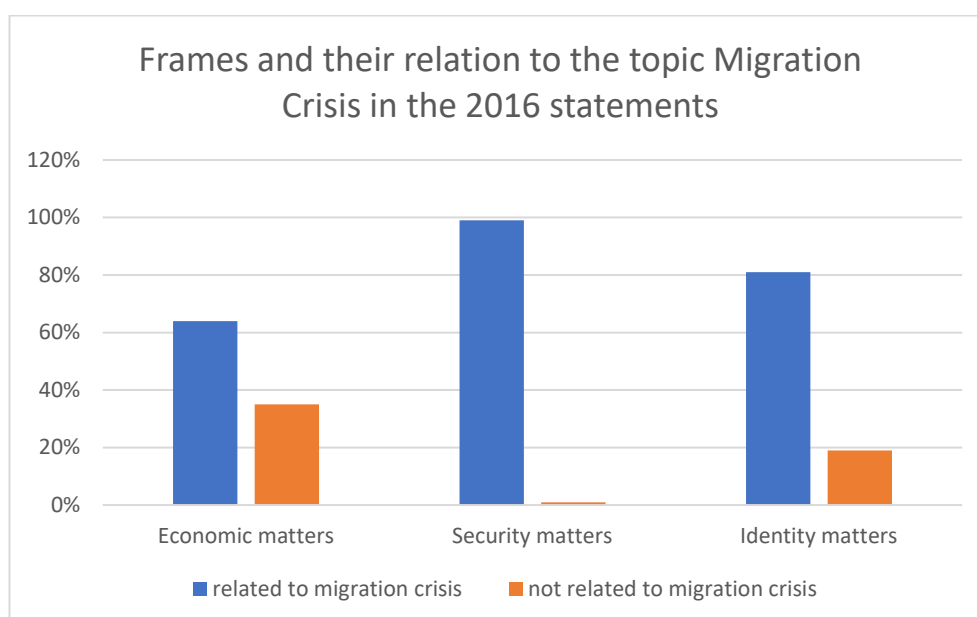latter category (security matters), only a slim 1% was identified as not related to the migration crisis.

Table 3. *Use of frames related to the topic Migration Crisis in the 2016 statements*. Source: the author.

In order to examine to what extent the Intergovernmentalism and Postfunctionalism can explain the position of the Visegrad Group during the migration crisis, it is also necessary to give a closer look at the subthemes correlated to the each of the three main frame. The analysis indicates the following. For economic matters, all direct and indirect references to Schengen, its integrity and preservation could be related to the migration crisis. A closer look at the arguments expressed by the V4 in their statements during 2016, a time when economic matters related to the migration crisis raised in popularity (i.e. from 20% to 64%) seems to confirm a link between the migration crisis as an economic problem and the maintenance of the Schengen system.

"The V4 Ministers of the Interior agreed that the functioning of the Schengen Area is directly linked to the proper functioning of common European policies in the field of migration and internal security and expressed a joint interest in stabilisation of the common European management of migration, including protection of the external borders of the EU. At the same time, the V4 Ministers of the Interior expressed agreement on the interest to maintain free movement of

persons and goods within the Schengen Area as one of the key achievements of European integration and to reject any attempts to restrict free movement that go beyond the EU legal framework" (Visegrad Group 2016a)". On the other hand, the relation between direct and indirect references to Free movement and Labour market and the migration crisis is much less significative. More interesting was the relation between economic migrants and the migration crisis. While the term *economic migrant* was only recorded twice, it seemed clear during the analysis that the term *illegal migrant or immigrant* were often used by the V4 to indicate immigrants with both economic and reasons, - other than asylum backgrounds. For the purpose of this analysis, and in order to avoid self-interpretation while collecting the data, I decided to only use *economic migrant* when talking about the economic matters´ frames, thus excluding the terms *illegal migrant or immigrant*. Despite the fact that economic matters do not present as strong numbers as one could expect from the Liberal Intergovernmentalism theory, the findings from the subthemes indicate that the Visegrad four expressed clear economic concerns in their statements, particularly regarding the protection of the Schengen system- and that references to migration also corresponded to references to economic concerns. In line with Liberal Intergovernmentalism and Biermann´s claim (Biermann 2017, p.21), the V4´s statements aim to secure the economic benefits provided by the Schengen system, in particular the maintenance of the workers´ free movement, and reject the temporary suspension of the Schengen system. As the V4 Prime Ministers stated in December 2015 "We reaffirm our determination to preserve Schengen so that European citizens and businesses continue to fully enjoy its benefits. (…). Any opportunistic proposals for revolutionary transformation of the current Schengen into the so-called "mini-Schengens", in whatever possible forms and extents, are not acceptable and so would be any open or hidden attempts to limit free movement that would go beyond the legal framework and endanger the major achievements of European integration" (Visegrad Group, 2015o). For security matters, 46 of 51 direct and indirect references to European borders, and their protection- could be related to the migration crisis. The high correlation between the subtheme *borders* to the migration crisis is in line with Biermann according to whom Transit States will act in order to strengthen external border controls and protection. A closer look at the subtheme *borders* shows that the

migration crisis was conceived as a security problem in relation to the protection of the European borders only by Maj 2015. Before that period, the V4 were more interested in the Ukraine's internationally recognized borders and called for European cooperation in order to preserve the Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity against the Russian interests in the Region. In the middle of 2015, the V4 suggested finding adequate solution to the crisis from and via the Western Balkan route which appears to become strategically important to counter the migration pressure. "Appropriate focus on other dimensions of migration challenges – given the dynamic nature of migration flows, the EU approach should not be reduced to the Mediterranean region only but must adequately reflect the Western Balkans as well as the Eastern migration routes, which includes also a more balanced distribution of EU financial support. The functioning of border control measures in the Mediterranean region must be improved so as to eliminate negative impacts on the Western Balkans route" (Visegrad Group 2015m). The important role of the Western Balkans in countering the migration crisis is clear in the V4´s statements. The Region is mentioned a total of 34 times between 2015 and 2016, 33 of which are related to the migration crisis. It is remarkable how the Visegrad Group regularly brought up the protection of the Balkan route (and therefore of the European borders) linking it with the Western Balkan moving closer to EU membership. In their statements, the V4 clearly showed how they committed themselves to promote the Balkans´ EU membership "Looking at the map, it is clear that without you Europe is incomplete. One can never fully understand European history without knowing the rich history of your region (…). We offer you our helping hand and our experience on the road that is still ahead of you, but it is always up to you to make the first step. We are glad to reassure you that we remain your supporters and staunch advocates" (Visegrad Group, 2015m). Such declarations point towards what previously noticed in this work. That is, the V4 (and in particular Poland and Hungary) were determined to build a regional coalition to counter balance the Western European´s vision of integration, and by doing that, they aim to re-establish a central European identity as opposed to the western-oriented manifestation of the European Union, within which the Visegrad countries increasingly feel marginalized both politically and culturally (Nič 2016, p.287).

When it comes to identity matters, according to the Postfunctionalist interpretation of the European migration crisis, identity politics are on the spotlight (Hooghe and Marks 2019, p.1122). This seems to be confirmed by the high ratio of frames referring to identity matters in both the 2015 and 2016 statements, as previously showed. The use of subthemes such as cooperation, common, and European values when related to migration crisis, seem to be in line with Postfunctionalism, since a strong politicization of the migration crisis was made possible by mobilizing ideas that recalled the common values, history and unity of Europe: "In the spirit of shared European values of humanism, solidarity and responsibility, the countries of the Visegrad Group have continuously taken an active part in defining and implementing many measures in response to the migration challenges" (Visegrad Group 2015m). Apparently, the statements do not highlight a conflictual position between the EU and the Visegrad group. At this point of the crisis, there are no clear indications whether the Visegrad countries saw themselves as belonging exclusively to a national community or as Europeans, as Postfunctionalism would instead suggest: "This is why we actively work to keep the European Union dynamic and flexible based on its traditional quality of "unity in diversity". This is why we continuously advocate preserving our common achievements which contribute to the further economic development of our countries and to the increase of the well-being of our citizens" (Visegrad Group 2016b). However, it is also clear that the V4 tried to emerge as a winning brand before the migration crisis reached its peak: "We appreciate the importance and the hitherto progress of the Visegrad cooperation, which is entering its 25th year of existence and which has become an established trademark and an expression of the historic need for regional cooperation in the Central European region" (Visegrad Group 2015d). After examining to what extent, the Visegrad Group made use of the frames, it is now time to look at *how* these frames have been used in the official statements of the V4 and if they have been changed. The aim of this part of the analysis is to test my second hypothesis: issues of national, regional, and European identity will not only result relevant but will also play a functional role in shaping the common response of the Visegrad countries.

References to migration crisis started to be mentioned in the V4´s statements during mid-March 2015. Initially, these references corresponded with references to

security matters. In particular, security matters within the migration crisis, were linked to the threat of terrorism and radicalization, to the link between migration and terrorism, and to the need of implementing a common EU strategy in Syria: "The Ministers agreed that this complex issue required a systematic and comprehensive approach as well as long-term commitment covering various areas such as military means, fight against terrorism and radicalization, migration, stabilisation efforts as well as humanitarian assistance" (Visegrad Group 2015d). The evidence presented in Table 4 suggests that from September 2015, the number of references to both security and identity matters related to migration crisis started to increase in the Visegrad Group´s statements. Economic matters became also more visible, however with lower rates.

2015 Statements	Security matters	Economic matters	Identity matters
25 Feb	—	—	—
26 Feb	—	—	—
12-13 Mar	9	—	—
19-20 Mar	—	—	—
23 Apr	—	—	—
12 Maj	3	—	—
14-15 Maj	—	—	—
Not dated June	8	—	2
19 June 1	5	—	4
19 June 2	7	—	2
4 Sep	42	4	18
11 Nov	15	4	9
3 Dec	21	11	8
17 Dec	13	5	3

Table 4. *Use of frames related to Migration Crisis in 2015 by statements*. Source: the author.

So, how can that be explained? During Autumn 2015, several key events occurred. In September of that year, the EU approved the second Relocation scheme Decision and several Schengen countries - Germany, Austria, Slovenia, Hungary, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Belgium - reintroduced internal border controls due to an alleged big flow of people seeking international protection. Furthermore, the EU signed a joint action plan with Turkey to support the country in coping

with the challenge represented by the presence of Syrians under temporary protection, the terrorist attacks in Paris strengthened the importance of securing both external and internal borders, and the Third Implementation Package was implemented by the EU. It is clear that, the Visegrad Group highlighted in their statements, the external and internal challenges posed by the massive flow of migrants, and the related security threats, calling for an effective management of the root causes of migration flows, such as EU external border protection, cooperation with third countries and countries of origin, and for common efforts to tackle trafficker, smugglers, and terrorist organisations (Visegrad Group 2015m). In this context, the increasing number of references to identity matters becomes functional to the goals of the V4. The common action against these threats is possible *only* if the Member States act together in the name of their common identity and their shared values and roots: "In the spirit of shared European values of humanism, solidarity and responsibility, the countries of the Visegrad Group have continuously taken an active part in defining and implementing many measures in response to the migration challenges. The countries of the Visegrad Group have continuously pointed out that an effective management of the root causes of migration flows is the key element" (Visegrad Group 2015m). During 2016, as Table 5 shows, while there was an increase in references to economic matters related to migration crisis, yet security and identity matters related to migration crisis were predominant in the V4´s statements.

2016 Statements	Security matters	Economic matters	Identity matters
19 Jan	52	5	7
15 Feb	2	1	5
Not dated	47	5	9
28 Jun	3	8	17
16 Sep	30	21	18
21 Nov	36	1	17
15 Dec	18	1	2

Table 5. *Use of frames related to Migration Crisis in 2016 by statements*. Source: the author.

The rise of economic matters in the statements suggests that the Visegrad Group intended to repristinate an operative Schengen "on the interest to maintain free movements of persons and gods within the Schengen Area" (Visegrad Group, January 2016a), which is in line with the EC calling for a return to a functioning Schengen system by reconciling the reintroduction of internal border controls with existing legal frameworks governing Schengen in March 2016. As Table 6 illustrates, the highest rates of references to identity matters related to migration crisis appear between June and November 2016. A closer look at the events occurred during that period suggests that in the statements released during that period, identity matters were not only linked to security matters, but they were also used as reasons against the mandatory relocation of asylum seekers and the proposed sanctioning of the reluctant Members States. In May 2016 the EU adopted the Council Implementing Decision of the Schengen system, which allowed the additional six-month extension of checks in Germany, Austria, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway. Against this backdrop, and in order to avoid deeper divisions within the Member States, the V4´s statements released between June and November 2016 stressed consistently the idea of the "Union of Trust" (Visegrad Group 2016d), which was based on mutual cooperation between Member States and had its roots on common values, principles, and priorities (Ibid). Whilst acknowledging that "a united Europe is the best option" (Ibid), the V4 also pointed out the importance of diversity, since working on common objectives "will deliver a Union of trust and action only if all 27 Member States are at the table in their diversity and provide their unique inputs" (Ibid). The concept of diversity was further elaborated in September 2016, as a consequence of the EC´s proposal to fine the Member States if they did not take their quota of asylum seekers. The Heads of Governments of the Visegrad countries began then to refer to the need to apply the principle of "flexible solidarity". According to this concept, the Member States should be able "to decide on specific forms of contribution taking into account their experience and potential. Furthermore, any distribution mechanism should be voluntary" (Visegrad Group 2016e).

7 Conclusions

The question underlying this work was whether and to what degree possible Post-functionalism and Intergovernmentalism could provide some explanations for the Visegrad Group´s response to the 2015-2016 European migration crisis. The aim was not to shape the analysis as a competitive approach between the two herein considered theories, but rather as a complementary one. I could link both theories to the Visegrad Group´s response to the migration crisis. However, my findings partially contradict hypothesis 1, according to which security and economic matters prevailed in the analysis, as Intergovernmentalism suggests. While it was clear that security matters related to migration crisis had a direct link between security and migration and consisted in the lion´s share in the statements, economic reasons did not. Despite the fact that economic matters were highly represented in the statements, they were not exclusive to V4´s the continuous rejection of immigrants. Whenever not related to the migration crisis, economic matters showed the clear intent of the Visegrad countries to emerge as a new international actor aiming to gain a strategical role in Eastern Europe. When related to migration crisis, economic matters were used to proclaim the preservation of the Schengen acquis and the maintenance of workers´ free movement, and consequently to boost the economic progress of the Visegrad´s Region.

Therefore, the previous proposed logic chain: States act according to functional interests (economic and/or security)> The migration crisis is seen as a threat to the V4 and their functional interests (economic and/or security)> The higher the threat to the economic and/or security interests, the higher the ratio of frames related to these topics in the V4´s statements, can be partially confirmed. As the political events during the 2015-2016 migration crisis emerged in the statements as a threat to the stability and security of the EU, the ratio of frames related to security matters became clearly dominant in the statements. When it comes to Postfunctionalism and identity matters, according to hypothesis 2- the findings in the analysis show that not only identity matters emerged as the second most important topic in relation to migration crisis, but also – and more importantly-that they were used in connection with security matters, with the aim to forge a

common European response to the crisis and to justify the partisan reaction of the Visegrad Group (such as expressed by the concept of flexible solidarity. On the other hand, when not related to the migration crisis, identity matters clearly indicated that the Visegrad countries tried to both propose themselves as a role model for countries seeking the European membership (as the Balkan countries) as well as to promote at EU level their specific type of partnership which, as proclaimed in the statements, was grounded on trust, mutual respect and solidarity. Therefore, the previous proposed logic chain: States act according to preserve their sovereignty and national identity> The migration crisis is seen as a treat to the V4 and their sovereignty and national identity> The higher the threat to sovereignty and national identity, the higher the ratio of frames related to these topics in the V4´s statements, can be confirmed. As the political events that occurred during the 2015-2016 migration crisis emerged in the statements as a threat to the identity of the EU and of the Visegrad countries, the ratio of frames related to identity matters became a greater in the statements.

Considering that both Intergovernmentalism and Post-functionalism can together provide a comprehensive picture of the Visegrad countries´ response, there are still some questions left. Structurally, the Visegrad Group is a diplomatic framework for regional cooperation, without formal structures, apart from the International Visegrad Fund. Despite the frequent interaction between state officials, this partnership's strength is its noninstitutionalized flexibility. Ideologically, the governments in charge in each of the four countries during the 2015-2016 migration crisis were different. Moreover, among the four countries, only Hungary experienced significant immigrants´ flows, while other like the Czech Republic were not affected by the number of refugees. Therefore, it is legitimate to ask oneself how the Visegrad Group managed to organize itself so to become a loud political actor at EU level. Considering that it is also reasonable to think that during the years of their EU membership the Visegrad Group´s countries might have experienced similar situations of conflict with the EU, it is also legitimate to ask why was just the 2015-2016 migration crisis that caused such striking spark. Additionally, when looking at the phenomenon from a comparative perspective, it is particularly interesting to notice that the Baltic States did not adopted an organised and distinctive stance such as the one of the Visegrad Group, despite

that fact that these States shared historical, cultural, political and geostrategic similarities with the Visegrad countries, and despite the loud protests raised against the Relocation Scheme .

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Appendix I (attached below)

APPENDIX I.docx