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**The Visegrád group and the refugee crisis:
How the spark in Euroscepticism impacted the community's participation in the European Union**

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List of Abbreviations

AS	Affected State
ASEAN	The Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CEAS	Common European Asylum System
CEE	Central-Eastern Europe
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
DI	Differentiated Integration
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
EURODAC	European Dactyloscopy
FIDESZ	Hungarian Civil Alliance Party
GAL	Green, Alternative, Liberal
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IR	International Relations
Jobbik	The Movement for a Better Hungary (party)
LI	Liberal Intergovernmentalism
MEP	Member of European Parliament
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NAS	Non-Affected State
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NF	Neofunctionalism
NWE	North-Western Europe
OL'ANO	Slovak Ordinary People and Independent Personalities party
PF	Postfunctionalism
PiS	Law and Justice party in Poland
PM	Prime Minister
PO	Polish Civic Platform party
SE	Southern Europe
SMER	Slovak Social Democratic party
TAN	Traditional, Authoritarian, Nationalistic
UK	United Kingdom
USMCA	United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement
V4	Visegrad group

Introduction

The European Union has had fluctuated success regarding cooperation, integration, and unity (the three “ladder” stages of community building) among its member states and the non-participants of the project in the period between the formation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1957, and up until the EU’s battle with COVID-19 at the turn of 2020. Numerous political scientists and politicians have already delved into the European Integration Project¹, while analyzing its costs and benefits, predicting further integration potential through two common “schools of thought” (Intergovernmentalism and Supranationalism)², and comparing it to multiple other community-building initiatives around the world (NAFTA, USMCA, ASEAN, MERCOSUR)³, as well as internal group formations within Europe (the V4, the Austerlitz alliance, the Nordic Council, the Mediterranean Club)⁴. The rising interest in this field with the ever-growing spheres for integration potential, polycleavage influence, as well as the desire to untangle the “European spaghetti bowl”⁵ of institutions and responsibilities, have brought about various frameworks and divided opinions into political science.

After the adoption of the Paris and Rome Treaties and the subsequent foundation of the European Economic Community in 1958, the orthodox idea of preemptory integration into European community projects gradually diminished, giving way for novel ideas and concepts, incorporating various differentiated integration (DI) approaches, and inspiring the rise of “challenger parties” to the original left/right political cleavage of Europe⁶. DI became even more prominent in political science following the Maastricht (1992) and Amsterdam (1999) Treaties and the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991), which eradicated the constant

¹ Zapletalova, V., and Kominkova, M., Who is fighting against the EU’s energy and climate policy in the European Parliament? The contribution of the Visegrad Group. *Energy Policy*. Vol. 139. 2020. P. 3.

² Schimmelfenning, F., and Rittberger, B., Theories of European Integration: assumptions and hypotheses in Richardson, J., *European Union: Power and Policy-Making*. Routledge. 2006. P. 73-95.

³ See for example:

1) Mallaris, G., *The Global Monetary System: Its Weaknesses and the Role of the IMF, the EU, and NAFTA*. 2007. Retrieved from: (PDF) *The Global Monetary System: Its Weaknesses and the Role of the IMF, the EU and NAFTA* (researchgate.net). Accessed: 17.05.2021

2) Ates, I., and Sanli, O., The EU, APEC, and ASEAN; A Comparison in the Framework of Economic Integration. *The Annals of the University of Oradea. Economic Sciences*. Vol. 15. N. 1. P. 84-93. 2016. Retrieved from: (PDF) *THE EU, APEC AND ASEAN; A COMPARISON IN THE FRAMEWORK OF ECONOMIC INTEGRATION* (researchgate.net). Accessed: 17.05.2021

⁴ See, for example, Cabada, L., The Visegrad Cooperation in the Context of Other Central European Cooperation Formats. *Politics in Central Europe*. Vol. 14. N. 2. P. 165-179.

⁵ By “spaghetti bowl” I imply the numerous overlapping “concentric circle” arrangements among Western European States and Eastern European states that were established in addition to the common EU agreements, as well as the various interaction models for the states that have resorted to Differentiated Integration by opting out from deepening integration initiatives, such as the Eurozone. This issue was touched upon by PM David Cameron in his Bloomberg speech in 2013. Source URL: Dervis, K., David Cameron’s European Spaghetti Bowl. *Brookings*. 2013. Retrieved from: David Cameron’s European Spaghetti Bowl (brookings.edu). Accessed: 17.05.2021.

For a more thorough analysis of the Spaghetti Bowl see Baldwin, R., *Lessons from the European Spaghetti Bowl*. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. 2013.

⁶ Gyori, G., The Political Communication of the Refugee Crisis in Central and Eastern Europe. *Policy Solutions*. 2016. P. 8.

communist threat imposed on European states. These events not only created a gateway for negotiating opt-outs for laggards and skeptical participants, as well as non-members of the EU, but also shifted the attention of researchers to explaining and categorizing the various forms of integration on the continent. Consequently, influential politicians from both Western and Eastern European states immediately grasped the benefits of excluding the “others”⁷ through their own integration methods⁸ and politicization tactics and have called for DI on numerous occasions throughout the 1990s and 2000s to further promote their national agendas. This has been exacerbated by the Euro and Schengen crises:

With the recent escalation of Euroscepticism on the continent, primarily sparked by the tension build-up in the interim of the refugee crisis (ongoing since 2014-2015), as well as the Euro debt crisis (ongoing since 2009), “the notion of DI is increasingly being embraced as a sensible and pragmatic way to revive the integration process not only among European politicians, but also among EU institutions themselves”⁹. Both Eurosceptics and Eurooptimists have continuously disputed their ideas for DI, including the mechanisms of cooperation that exist between the current EU members, and, consequently, have called for new forms of participation in EU’s diverse policy areas. While Western European states have tended to base their cooperation arguments on sturdy legal and economic concepts, Eastern European countries have taken a more culturally legitimized approach to integration.¹⁰

The Visegrad group – a sturdy subregional union in Central Europe consisting of 4 states (Slovakia, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Poland) serves as an explicit example of a community that forms their bargaining positions on cultural-historic aspects. In turn, the organization has turned out to be the most influenced by the spark in Eurosceptic views on the continent, with populist right wing and radical right wing parties gaining ground in their battle for power in each of the 4 countries. Enhanced cooperation within the Visegrad group has not only influenced EU decision making on migration and economic issues, but has also brought about new terminology (e.g. “Fortress Europe”) and integration models (e.g. Postfunctionalism, Cleavage Theory) for political scientists to consider while observing and making

⁷ By “others” I refer to the individual perceptions of national, regional, and European identity. In some cases, politicians sought to demarcate their state with Europe, with Western European states, and with Muslim countries outside the EU, referring to them as “the others” or “different nations”. This was best portrayed by Ratkovic, M., *Migrant Crisis and the Strengthening of the Right Wing in the European Union*. *Megatrend revija*. Vol. 14. N. 3. 2017. P. 48-53.

See also: Stojarova, V., *Populist, Radical and Extremist Political Parties in Visegrad Countries vis a vis the migration crisis*. In the name of the people and the nation in Central Europe. *Open Political Science*. Vol. 1. 2018. P. 41.

⁸ See: Braun, M., *Postfunctionalism, Identity and the Visegrad Group*. *JCMS*. Vol. 58. N. 4. 2019. P 935.

⁹ Pirozzi N., Tortola P.D., and Vai L., *Differentiated Integration: A Way Forward for Europe*. *Instituto Affari Internazionali*. 2017. P. 2.

¹⁰ See Baureova, H., *Migration Policy of the V4 in the Context of Migration Crisis*. *Politics in Central Europe*. Vol. 14. N. 2. 2018. P. 99-120.

predictions on West-East intragovernmental interaction and the probabilities of any shifts from supranational regulation to intergovernmental governance.

It is important to note that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, shocking and devastating the world at the turn of 2020, and continuing to prevail a year later, the ongoing European migration and Euro crises have been shifted to the background of EU politics. The uncertainty of the situation, especially considering the million novel coronavirus cases reported daily on the continent¹¹, ensures that the illness will remain Europe's paramount conundrum for a lengthy period. Nonetheless, despite the fact that the pandemic has not only sparked tensions within the EU, but has also deviated support levels for national governments and the integration project itself, it has not generated as much political change as the still-to-be-resolved Euro and Migration cleavages— at least not yet. Due to a lack of information on the impacts of the Covid cleavage on the Visegrad group, as well as the path dependencies for European integration initiatives, this essay will not consider the virus outbreak upon conducting a multilevel analysis of the impact of the Immigration conundrum on the following socio-political areas¹² before and after 2015:

- Changes in V4 voting, EU Parliament Voting/ Elections and EU Public Support in Central Eastern Europe (CEE)
- Visegrad interaction, consolidation, and intragroup public relations
- The shift in migration and integration narratives within the V4

Methodologically, this paper will incorporate the most prominent crisis-related European integration theories (identified as such by political scientists Frank Schimelfenning¹³, Desmond Dinan, Neil Nugent¹⁴, Tanja Borzel,¹⁵ and Liesbet Hooghe¹⁶) that (a) focus on the consequences of exogenous shocks on (dis)integration path dependencies and (b) relate to both the Intergovernmentalist and Supranationalist schools of thought,¹⁷ allowing to tackle the conundrum through multiple perspectives. The three theories —

¹¹ Source URL: Coronavirus: Europe cases reach 1 million as Spain sees drop in infections | News | DW | 19.04.2020. Accessed: 02.02.2021.

¹² The identified areas are believed to provide a thorough understanding of how refugees impacted the political, economic, and social spheres of the Visegrad countries.

¹³ Schimelfenning, F., European Integration (Theory) in Times of Crisis: A Comparison of the Euro and Schengen crises. *Journal of European Public Policy*. Vol.25. N. 7. P. 969-989.

¹⁴ Dinan, D., et al. Theorizing Crisis in European Integration in Kyriakos N., *The European Union in Crisis*. Palgrave Macmillan. 2017. P 316-335.

¹⁵ Tanja Borzel refers to the three theories as “mainstream” while carrying out her analysis of the Euro and Schengen crises. Source: Borzel, T., and Risse, T., From the euro to the Schengen crises: European integration theories, politicization, and identity politics. *Journal of European Public Policy*. 2017. P. 86.

¹⁶ YouTube. (18.06.2018). Re-engaging Grand Theory: European Integration in the 21st Century | Liesbet Hooghe. The Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies. [Video file]. Retrieved from: https://youtu.be/Z3N_WN-dTNQ. Accessed: 15.01.2021.

¹⁷ Postfunctionalism and Neofunctionalism relate to the Supranationalist school, whereas Liberal Intergovernmentalism relates to the Intergovernmentalist school. See: Schimelfenning, F., and Rittberger, B., Theories of European Integration: assumptions and hypotheses in Richardson, J., *European Union: Power and Policy-Making*. Routledge. 2006. P. 73-95.

Neofunctionalism, Liberal Intergovernmentalism, and Postfunctionalism+ Cleavage Theory¹⁸ — will be used as “prisms” for observing the 3 aforementioned socio-political areas impacted by the crisis. By conducting the following theoretical analysis, this essay will propose an adjustment to the independent theoretical evaluation of the Schengen issue, commonly implemented by political scientists in their research of the topic¹⁹, and argue that the migration crisis resembles a combined Postfunctionalist (PF) and Liberal Intergovernmentalism (LI) moment. Hence the research question (RQ):

RQ. Can a combination of the integration theories better explain the effects of the migration crisis on intraVisegrad and V4-EU cooperation?

Surprisingly, little effort has been made in terms of providing a coherent and structured picture of the impact of the refugee crisis on the updated perception of DI, politicization, and the right-wing movement within the Visegrád member states, all factors which continue to threaten the “rollback of the benefits of the EU’s major policy accomplishment: the single market, which Schengen’s free movement of people facilitates.”²⁰ It is only by delving into this issue that may allow for the attainment of a broader comprehension of the European community building project and its deepening dimensions of integration processes.

The Structure of the Essay

For the reader to attain a full understanding of the research topic, this paper will be divided into three chapters. The first chapter will consist of three sections, providing a brief depiction of (a) the development of EU’s legal asylum framework and agenda, (b) the history of intragovernmental interaction within the Visegrad group, as well as the interunion cooperation between the V4 and the EU, and (c), the events of the migration crisis and the policies undertaken by the two groups in combating the predicament.

¹⁸ The addition of Cleavage theory to Postfunctionalism is my initiative as the former elaborates on the original Postfunctionalist framework, while also delving into voting behavior and the shifts in party electoral systems. This provides PF with additional analytical potential and a more comprehensive viewpoint (demonstrated in Chapter 2).

¹⁹ See, for example: 1) Schimmelfennig, F., Liberal Intergovernmentalism and the Crises of the European Union: LI and the EU Crises. *JCMS Journal of Common Market Studies*. Vol. 56. N. 4. 2018. P. 1-29.

2) Schimmelfennig, F., European Integration in the Euro Crisis: The Limits of Postfunctionalism. *Journal of European Integration*. Routledge. 2014.

3) Borzel, T., and Risse, T., From the euro to the Schengen crises: European integration theories, politicization, and identity politics. *Journal of European Public Policy*. 2017. P. 83-108.

4) Biermann, F., Political (non-reform) in the euro crisis and the refugee crisis: a liberal intergovernmentalist explanation. *Journal of European Public Policy*. Vol. 26. N. 3. 2017. P. 1-21.

²⁰ Buonanno, L., et al. The European Migration Crisis in Kyriakos N., *The European Union in Crisis*. Palgrave Macmillan. 2017. P 121.

In chapter two, this essay will move on to explaining the three integration theories on European shock-related cooperation. By doing so, it will be able to highlight the advantages and drawbacks of each framework for interpreting the socio-political changes brought about by the migrant crisis. While incorporating the data from chapter one, this paper will argue that the refugee issue resembles a coupled PF and LI moment, and, ergo, a dual theory approach should be used to untangle the socio-political consequences of the conundrum.

Finally, in chapter three, this work will implement the dual-theory prism to analyze the transformations in the 3 socio-political areas of the EU mentioned above, as well as answer the posed research question.

Chapter 1

Asylum and Immigration Law in the EU prior to the migrant crisis

Based on the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights, and the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 6 European states managed to ratify the Paris Treaty of 1951, establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). The ECSC would ultimately become the first gateway for an open market, as well as the free movement of workers within the two industries mentioned in the abbreviation. Having proven to be a successful experiment, France, Italy, West Germany, and the Benelux countries would go on to sign several other treaties²¹, intensifying economic cooperation, and facilitating the intragovernmental movement of people. This would ultimately lead to the Schengen agreement of 1985 and the Dublin Convention of 1990, obligating asylum seekers “to make an asylum claim in the EU state where she or he arrived”²².

Following 1985, European states would take greater interest in developing a legal framework for migrants and asylum seekers. The first asylum-seeker crisis related to the fleeing of Yugoslavian citizens in 1992 would bolster the ratification of the Amsterdam Treaty in 1999, making the Schengen Agreement and the Dublin Convention, along with the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) (ratified in 2003) part of EU law. Here, it is vital to note that the V4 countries would ultimately have to accept these agreements in order to adjoin to the EU (this will be discussed below).

Regarding the CEAS, with a coherently observable increasing trend of European asylum applications since 2000²³ (especially due to the 2008 Euro crisis and heavy migration desire to prospering

²¹ Here I imply the Paris Treaty of 1952, the Treaty of Rome in 1958, the Meger Treaty in 1967.

²² Kob, M., Seville, A., Politicized Transnationalism: The Visegrad Countries in the Refugee Crisis. *Politics and Governance*. Vol.8, N.1. P. 96.

²³ Buonanno, L., et al. The European Migration Crisis in Kyriakos N., *The European Union in Crisis*. Palgrave Macmillan. 2017. P 106.

EU countries), the initial laws aimed at (a) covering asylum, (b) “the return and expulsion of third country nationals, family migration, the rights of migrants who are long-term residents, (c) highly qualified migrant workers, seasonal migrant workers”²⁴ would be reformed with additional amendments between 2011 and 2014, and reinforced by the Lisbon Treaty of 2009, introducing Qualified Majority Voting, preventive measures against “asylum shopping”, and devoting full jurisdiction to the European Court of Justice on asylum issues, punishing those countries, who would break EU law.²⁵ According to the novel amendments (Dublin III Regulation, EURODAC Regulation, Reception Conditions Directive, Asylum Procedure Directive, Qualification Directive, European Asylum Support Office, and European Migration Network)²⁶ border surveillance, migration control, and asylum policies would become even more clarified, eradicating the room for disobedience, and enhancing information sharing among member states.

By observing these changes, it can be seen that the EU Asylum Policies before 2014 had never been aimed at establishing an unjust system of burden-sharing. Their goal was to promote integrated government efforts through communication, information sharing, and strong border protection for “Entry” States and “Destination” states, especially after the Euro crisis (2008). Moreover, in accordance with Laurie Buonanno, it is highly unlikely that the EU could have done anything more to prevent the upcoming migrant crisis,²⁷ as it is believed to be nearly impossible to legally cover all European entry points, and have all EU members, unaffected and affected by the upsurge in immigration in the beginning of the 21st century, ratify the EU amendments. Lastly, it also becomes transparent that most EU interaction around asylum and migration in the period from 1950-2015 brought about deepening integration initiatives by member states, predominantly driven by Neofunctionalism narratives (see Chapter 2).

Intergovernmental interaction within the Visegrad group before the Migrant Crisis

For one to understand the conservative narrative of the Visegrad group during the Euro and Migrant crises, it is vital to briefly look at the history of interaction and cooperation between the V4 countries. The group itself has had fluctuated success following the fall of the Soviet Union, which allowed the independent counties to strive away from Soviet dependency: On the one hand, the V4 is believed to have remained as the only “true” subregional group on the continent, with the advantage of collectively

²⁴ Kob, M., Seville, A., *Politicized Transnationalism: The Visegrad Countries in the Refugee Crisis*. Politics and Governance. Vol.8, N.1. P. 96.

²⁵ Source URL: Common European Asylum System (europa.eu)

²⁶ Buonanno, L., et al. *The European Migration Crisis in Kyriakos N., The European Union in Crisis*. Palgrave Macmillan. 2017. P. 106.

²⁷ Ibid. P 105.

promoting its regional agenda, as well as its distinct civil identity, “cultivated from the ground up”²⁸ and “developed over time at all societal and institutional levels”²⁹. On the other hand, however, numerous scholars have argued that the partnership resembles more of a “coalition of the unwilling”³⁰, an unstable group with strong potential to dissolve once all interests are met, hence the common 2+2 and 3+1 divides on intergroup issues.³¹ The latter claim can be reinforced by the multiple occasions of tension escalation, diverging visions of regional cooperation and prioritization initiatives, with reoccurring efforts of one or several members attempting to dominate the group’s agenda (this will be illustrated below).³²

History of formation

The Visegrad group was formed as a circumvention to Austria’s negligence for cooperation³³ in aiding the democratization and integration of, initially, 3 Eastern European countries into the EU (as Czechoslovakia remained a unified country until 1993). Here, it is widely accepted by scholars to divide the development of V4 cooperation into 4 periods: 1990-1992, 1993-1998, 1998-2004, and 2004-present day.³⁴

In February 1991, leaders of the three states met in Visegrad, where they arranged to gather annually to discuss regional and integration issues. The primary objectives, laid out by the heads of governments, were the following:

- To accede to the EU and NATO
- To dissolve the Soviet security threat

It is here that the group established its sole institution—the Visegrad fund, devoting a mere €5 million budget to strengthening intergovernmental relationships with post-soviet countries through endorsing educational, cultural, and scientific projects.³⁵

In 1993, Czechoslovakia split into two distinct countries: Slovakia and the Czech Republic. This, coupled with the fact that Slovakia was striving further away from a democratic system of governance,

²⁸ Cabada, L., Visegrad Cooperation in the Context of Other Central European Cooperation Formats. *Politics in Central Europe*. Vol. 14. N. 2. 2018. P. 166.

²⁹ Ibid. P. 166.

³⁰ Stepper, P., The Visegrad Group and the EU agenda on migration: A coalition of the unwilling? *COJOURN*. Vol. 1. N. 1. 2016. P. 62.

³¹ Cabada, L., Visegrad Cooperation in the Context of Other Central European Cooperation Formats. *Politics in Central Europe*. Vol. 14. N. 2. 2018. P. 174.

³² See: Cabada, L., Visegrad Cooperation in the Context of Other Central European Cooperation Formats. *Politics in Central Europe*. Vol. 14. N. 2. 2018. P. 165- 179.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ See: 1) Bauerova, H., The V4 and European Integration. *Politics in Central Europe*. Vol. 14. N. 2. 2018.

2) Kob, M., Seville, A., Politicized Transnationalism: The Visegrad Countries in the Refugee Crisis. *Politics and Governance*. Vol. 8. N.1.

³⁵ Kob, M., Seville, A., Politicized Transnationalism: The Visegrad Countries in the Refugee Crisis. *Politics and Governance*. Vol.8, N.1. P. 98.

placed group summits on hold, culminating the stalemate period. In 1998, however, having observed the success of Western European economic cooperation, and once the dust had settled regarding Slovakia's political regime, the group assembled once again and promoted a common strategy to consort with Western Europe (fixed under what is known as the "Contents of Visegrad Cooperation")³⁶. Yet again, under the influence of Neofunctionalist narratives, the V4 would seek further integration, establishing (a) two annual meetings of Prime ministers, (b) two annual meetings of foreign ministers, (c) meetings of other ministers and presidents, and (d) the Visegrad V4+ formula, enabling the community to interact with outside partners as a solid unit.³⁷ In 1999, following the changes in government in both Slovakia and the Czech Republic (although remaining nationalistic and authoritarian, ruling parties in both states were rapidly losing popularity), more accession talks started to prevail. From this moment on, while turning a blind eye on the several tension build-ups among its members³⁸, the Visegrad group was able to accomplish its objective of acceding to the EU in 2004.³⁹ However, with the rapid inflow of migrants into the continent, and the atrocity of 9/11, the V4 was quick to establish novel mutual goals, reinforced by the 2002 amendment to the "Contents of Visegrad Cooperation"⁴⁰:

- Attain access to the EU cohesion funds
- Become members of the Schengen agreement
- Overcome energy dependency on Russia⁴¹
- Combat illegal migration and terrorism
- Strengthen military maneuvering with NATO
- Promote a Common Security and Defense policy with the EU (CFSP)
- Negotiate the V4+ European Neighborhood Policy (primarily addressed at Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia)

The formulation and pursuit of the clear targets marked the beginning of the modern cooperation period of the V4.⁴² It is these objectives (primarily made up of economic and security concerns) which would strengthen the interdependence among the states in the years to come.

³⁶ Source URL: The Visegrad Group: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia | Contents of Visegrad Cooperation 1999

³⁷ Kob, M., Seville, A., Politicized Transnationalism: The Visegrad Countries in the Refugee Crisis. *Politics and Governance*. Vol.8, N.1. P. 97.

³⁸ By tension build-ups I imply the conflict between Slovakia and Hungary on the Bernes Decrees, and Poland refusing from a EU \$1 billion payment for agricultural spending that was supported by all Visegrad members.

Source: Bauerova, H., The V4 and European Integration. *Politics in Central Europe*. Vol. 14. N. 2. 2018. P. 123.

³⁹ Source URL: The Visegrad Group: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia | Whither V4? EU Entry as a Turning Point in Visegrad Cooperation

⁴⁰ Bauerova, H., The V4 and European Integration. *Politics in Central Europe*. Vol. 14. N. 2. 2018. P. 123.

⁴¹ Ibid. P. 129. See also: Zapletalova, V., and Kominkova, M., Who is fighting against the EU's energy and climate policy in the European Parliament? The contribution of the Visegrad Group. *Energy Policy*. Vol. 139. 2020. P. 2.

⁴² Cabada, L., and Waisova, S., The Visegrad Group as an Ambitious Actor of (Central-) European Foreign and Security Policy. *Politics in Central Europe*. Vol. 14. N. 2. 2018. P. 12.

In 2007, the first two aims from the list were achieved, with all airport checks cancelled for EU citizens in Visegrad countries in 2008. It is also here that the countries start to address their views on the joint Eastern Partnership policy⁴³, which were heavily promoted during the Czech (2007), Hungarian (2011), Polish (2011), and Slovakian (2016) EU presidencies. Yet again, despite sparks in tension build-up considering the gas crisis in 2008, Hungary's consolidation with Russia on pipeline placements in 2011, the Ukraine crisis and Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, as well as the poor historic relations between the Czech Republic and Slovakia (comprising novel 2+2 and 3+1 issue divides⁴⁴), the V4 endures on as a rather stable subregional organization, fueled by common national interests and the absence of any obligation to commit to a certain agreement before one another. It is due to these factors that the group was not only successful in achieving its main objectives following its formation in 1991 (including the neutralization of emission regulations of the Paris Climate Accord in 2014)⁴⁵, but also managed to swing the Migration narrative and the adopted EU policies around the issue in its favor during the Schengen crisis.

The refugee crisis: EU policy and Visegrad migration narratives

As demonstrated above, coming into the migrant crisis, the EU and Visegrad group had had little to no experience (apart from the Yugoslavian upsurge) with managing large inflows of asylum seekers. This is why, in 2014-2015, the Migrant crisis would become the second Eurooptemist affliction to the European integration project, following the Euro crisis in 2008. With the increase in casualties and vast human rights abuses in Syria, civil unrest in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and several African countries⁴⁶, Europe found itself unable to cope with the 1,5 million illegal border crossings in 2015, amounting to a 4-fold increase of the 2013 number of refugee applications.⁴⁷

With panic, havoc, and copious statistical gaps (leading to numerous false narratives about the nature of migration) prevailing on the continent,⁴⁸ the asylum systems in Greece, Italy, and Hungary (the three "Entry States") witnessed rapid collapses⁴⁹. This, in turn, immediately sparked (a) the rise of

⁴³ Bauerova, H., The V4 and European Integration. *Politics in Central Europe*. Vol. 14. N. 2. 2018. P. 126.

The Eastern Partnership itself is a joint EU policy, adopted in 2008 and aimed at bolstering economic cooperation with 6 post-soviet states. Source URL: Eastern Partnership | European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (europa.eu)

⁴⁴ Ibid. P. 130. See also: Cabada, L., and Waisova, S., The Visegrad Group as an Ambitious Actor of (Central-) European Foreign and Security Policy. *Politics in Central Europe*. Vol. 14. N. 2. 2018. P. 14E.

⁴⁵ Bauerova, H., The V4 and European Integration. *Politics in Central Europe*. Vol. 14. N. 2. 2018. P. 130-131.

⁴⁶ Biermann, F., et al. Political (non-) reform in the euro crisis and the refugee crisis: a liberal intergovernmentalist explanation. *Journal of European Public Policy*. 2017. P. 12.

See also: Karolewski, P., and Benedikter, R., Europe's refugee and migrant crisis: Political responses to asymmetrical pressures. *Politique Europeene*. 2018. P. 99.

⁴⁷ Source URL: Asylum statistics - Statistics Explained (europa.eu)

⁴⁸ Source URL: Brief 9 Migration statistics.pdf (europa.eu)

⁴⁹ Biermann, F., et al. Political (non-) reform in the euro crisis and the refugee crisis: a liberal intergovernmentalist explanation. *Journal of European Public Policy*. 2017. P. 3.

challenger right-wing populist parties, polling record support numbers, (b) intense issue politicization, and (c) uncovered and fueled the strong North-Western (NWE) South (SE) and Central Eastern European (CEE) cleavage.

With Greece's and Italy's "wave-through" approaches, reluctant to register all the illegal border crossings, a clear route was established for refugees to reach their desired destinations ("Destination States"⁵⁰).⁵¹ On the other hand, Germany's "open-door" policy quickly put a bounty-burden on EU's leaders and all of North-Western Europe⁵². This coupled with the resistance of CEE countries to adopt EU institutional and regulation reforms, as well as amendments to set up a quota-based burden-sharing scheme⁵³, had NWE states taking on drastic measures to combat the crisis. This included Germany placing restrictions on its border with Austria⁵⁴ and demanding a EU-wide solution to the conundrum⁵⁵. Germany's costly signaling, as noted by Michael Kob, "caused a domino effect, unleashing a wave of unilateral border closings and caps for asylum seekers throughout Europe."⁵⁶

Even though, in 2015, the European Council would propose a three-step plan to lower the pressure on "Entry States" by (a) adopting a quota-based scheme, (b) establishing a permanent relocation mechanism under the Dublin convention, and (c) institutionalizing the European Border and Coast Guard, all proposals would fail to be met, primarily due to the fact that the V4 would collectively veto all relocation initiatives in 2015-2016 under their "flexible solidarity" narrative.⁵⁷ Hungary would even take a step further and construct a fence at its borders with Croatia and Serbia, thus, *de facto*, additionally suspending the Geneva Convention.⁵⁸ It does not come as a surprise that Germany, the Netherlands, and Austria started to promote their "Schengen land" idea⁵⁹ (excluding "problematic" states, which fail to continuously enforce previous EU agreements), to which, in response, the V4 countries would encourage a "Friends of

⁵⁰Ibid. P. 15.

⁵¹ Source URL: [first_report_on_relocation_and_resettlement_en.pdf](#) (europa.eu) The Destination States are considered to be the countries, most migrated to in 2015: France, Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, the UK, Sweden.) Source URL: [International Migration Outlook 2019 | OECD iLibrary](#) (oecd-ilibrary.org)

⁵² Source: Reyes, V., German Open Door Refugee Policy. 2019. Retrieved from: GERMAN OPEN DOOR REFUGEE POLICY | Request PDF (researchgate.net). Accessed: 21.04.2021.

⁵³ Baubock, R., Refugee Protection and Burden-Sharing in the European Union. *JCMS Journal of Common Market Studies*. Vol. 56. N. 1. 2017.

⁵⁴ Kob, M., Seville, A., Politicized Transnationalism: The Visegrad Countries in the Refugee Crisis. *Politics and Governance*. Vol. 8. N. 1. P. 97.

⁵⁵ Source URL: German Migration Policy: The EU Is The Solution, Not The Problem! (socialeurope.eu).

⁵⁶ Kob, M., Seville, A., Politicized Transnationalism: The Visegrad Countries in the Refugee Crisis. *Politics and Governance*. Vol.8, N.1. P. 97.

⁵⁷ Sources: 1) Braun, M., Postfunctionalism, Identity and the Visegrad Group. *JCMS*. Vol. 58. N. 4. 2019. P 9.

2) Biermann, F., et al. Political (non-) reform in the euro crisis and the refugee crisis: a liberal intergovernmentalist explanation. *Journal of European Public Policy*. 2017. P. 12.

The notion of "flexible (effective) solidarity" originated during the Slovakian EU Presidency in 2016.

Source URL: Neilsen, N., Slovak Presidency proposes "effective solidarity" on migration. *Euobserver*. 2016. Retrieved from: [Slovak presidency proposes 'effective solidarity' on migration](#) (euobserver.com). Accessed: 20.02.2021.

⁵⁸ Source URL: Hungarian prisoners rush to finish fence along Serbian border amid refugee crisis (VIDEOS) — RT World News

⁵⁹ Kob, M., Seville, A., Politicized Transnationalism: The Visegrad Countries in the Refugee Crisis. *Politics and Governance*. Vol. 8. N. 1. P. 103.

Schengen” cooperative (aimed at preserving the *status quo*), grasping on to all the economic benefits the Schengen Agreement brings the CEE states.⁶⁰

The stalemate between the West and the East, between the Affected and Non-affected countries, saw no resolution in sight. Nonetheless, the EU was still able to come to the adoption of a temporary fix for the issue: the desperate Union agreed upon externalizing asylum control by turning to a third-country, Turkey, and striking a one-for-one migrant resettlement deal with the Muslim state. The agreement, devoting €6 billion to Turkey, ensured that for each Syrian refugee Greece resettled from Turkey, the latter would take back one “illegal border crosser” and enforce tougher border restrictions.⁶¹ The deal also committed EU countries “to liberalize visa restrictions for Turkish citizens. In exchange, the Turkish government promised to open up its labor market to Syrians and to increase security efforts ‘to prevent new sea or land routes for illegal migration opening from Turkey to the EU’.”⁶² Although this agreement (facing executive and legislative problems since its ratification)⁶³, continues to receive immense backlash from North American and European countries due to (a) the unfairness of the conditions under which the deal was signed (referring to Turkey’s dominant bargaining position in relation to that of the struggling EU)⁶⁴, as well as (b) the fact that both sides had failed to deliver on several of the established provisions,⁶⁵ it was this deal, however, that had not only halved the number of EU asylum applications by 2017 (the figure which fluctuated from then on in the 600 000 to 700 000 range)⁶⁶ but had also, possibly, prevented the collapse of the Union. Regardless however, approximately just under a million refugees continue to seek asylum in Europe every year, and, with signs of Turkey being intentionally reluctant to commit to its responsibilities established in the deal at the outbreak of Covid-19⁶⁷, the refugee issue remains far from resolved.

The Visegrad migrant narrative (Non-Affected State Position)

The ruling and challenging parties in all 4 Visegrad states have grown heavily Eurosceptic following the Euro debt crisis in 2009. The fact that bailouts were in order for the poorly ran economies of

⁶⁰ Source URL: The Visegrad Group: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia | V4 Statement on the Future of Europe (2015d)

⁶¹ Akdeniz, D., EU-Turkey agreement on refugees; assessment of the deal. *Universite Libre de Bruxelles*. 2017. Retrieved from: (PDF) EU- Turkey agreement on refugees; assessment of the deal. (researchgate.net). Accessed: 03.03.2021.

⁶² Rygiel, K., Baban, F., and Ilcan, S., The Syrian Refugee Crisis: The EU-Turkey 'Deal and Temporary Protection. *Global Social Policy*. Vol. 16. N. 3. P. 315–20. 2016.

⁶³ Source URL: Turkey’s Erdogan leaves EU talks without agreement on migrants (france24.com) and Turkey will cancel agreements on migrants if EU doesn't keep its word: foreign minister (yahoo.com)

⁶⁴ See, for example 1) Dagi, D., The EU-Turkey Migration Deal: Performance and Prospects. *European Foreign Affairs Review*. Vol. 25. N. 2. P. 197-216.

2) Gogou, K., The EU-Turkey deal: Europe's year of shame. AMNESTY International. 2017. Retrieved from: The EU-Turkey deal: Europe's year of shame | Amnesty International. Accessed: 15.01.2020.

⁶⁵ Source URL: 1) Sharing the Burden: Revisiting the EU-Turkey Migration Deal | Crisis Group

2) EU-Turkey migration deal is 'dead,' warns Greek PM | News | DW | 07.03.2020

⁶⁶ Source URL: Asylum statistics - Statistics Explained (europa.eu)

⁶⁷ Source URL: EU-Turkey migration deal is 'dead,' warns Greek PM Kyriakos Mitsotakis | Euronews

Southern European states in return for economic structural reforms⁶⁸ quickly led to issue politicization in the CEE, with populist right-wing parties in Poland (Law and Justice- Pis) and Hungary (FIDESZ) polling record support numbers by reinforcing the position that the Euro Integration Project leads to declining wages and unemployment, whereas the goal of the EU must remain the protection of its past economic achievements.⁶⁹ It was later demonstrated by Gilles Ivaldi that this conservative intergovernmental position would heavily influence voter behavior in the 2014 and 2019 EU Parliament elections.⁷⁰

In 2015 the conservative narrative would prevail once again, this time in all 4 countries, including Slovakia and the Czech Republic, as the two states had not only been struggling with asylum applications since 2001⁷¹ (both countries granted asylum, on average, to less than 0,01% of the received applications in the period from 2001 to 2011)⁷², but had also had no previous experience in dealing with mass influxes of refugees. Despite predominant public support within the 4 states of welcoming and accommodating those, fleeing from oppression in the Middle East (according to Eurobarometer and “Trends of Visegrad” surveys)⁷³, the reluctance of the V4 elites to carry the economic burden of financially endorsing the residing of refugees, referring to the crisis as an “invasion” of “parasites”, made up of predominantly “economic migrants” , deteriorating the “Christian culture and way of life”,⁷⁴ allowed the 4 countries to agree upon and issue a joint veto on any relocation plans promoted by the EU Council, as well as adopt the following objectives:

- Remain unaffected and buck pass responsibility of crisis resolution to “Entrance” and “Destination” states⁷⁵
- Establish full control of external borders and contribute to the resolution of the crisis through the EU emergency trust fund⁷⁶
- Counter any reforms to the existing CEAS⁷⁷

⁶⁸ Jones, E., Failing Forward? The Euro Crisis and the Incomplete Nature of European Integration. *Comparative Political Studies*. 2015. P. 1-25.

⁶⁹ Source URL: Orbán: The achievements of the past 8 years are at risk in the April election – Daily News Hungary

⁷⁰ Ivaldi, G., Populist Voting in the 2019 European Elections. *Totalitarismus und Demokratie*. Vol. 17. 2020. P. 67-96.

⁷¹ Regarding the western Balkans migration route. Source: Cocco, E., Where is the European Frontier? The Balkan Migration Crisis and its Impact on Relations between the EU and the Western Balkans. *European View*. Vol. 16. N. 3. 2017. P. 2.

⁷² The calculations were conducted manually on the basis of the information, provided by: Stepper, P., The Visegrad Group and the EU agenda on migration: A coalition of the unwilling? *COJOURN*. Vol. 1. N. 1. 2016. P. 60-96.

⁷³ See: 1) Dostal, V., Vegh, Z., Trends of Visegrad Foreign Policy. *AMO*. 2017.

2) Dostal, V., Trends of Visegrad Foreign Policy. *AMO*. 2015.

3) Janebova, P., Vegh, Z., Trends of Visegrad Foreign Policy. *AMO*. 2019.

⁷⁴ Source URL: The Visegrad Group: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia | Orban calls for protecting future of Europe

⁷⁵ Biermann, F., et al. Political (non-) reform in the euro crisis and the refugee crisis: a liberal intergovernmentalist explanation. *Journal of European Public Policy*. 2017. P. 17.

⁷⁶ Braun, M., Postfunctionalism, Identity and the Visegrad Group. *JCMS*. Vol. 58. N. 4. 2019. P 934.

⁷⁷ Biermann, F., et al. Political (non-) reform in the euro crisis and the refugee crisis: a liberal intergovernmentalist explanation. *Journal of European Public Policy*. 2017. P. 17.

The right-wing policy would later be strengthened by the terrorist attacks in Paris, Brussels, and Cologne in 2016,⁷⁸ which, in turn, would increase the number of annual V4 PM meetings (from an average of 3.4 meetings to 6.6 meetings a year)⁷⁹, as well as the migration related Economic and Security talks during these meetings (this saw a three-fold increase since 2014)⁸⁰, allowing the V4 to adopt a joint Migration Crisis Response Mechanism⁸¹ and completely legitimize the mere 8769 asylum spots pledged during the 5-year crisis period by the group, compared to the 66 000 refugees accepted by all other EU countries.⁸²

All in all, the V4 migration narrative of “Protecting past achievements”⁸³ through enhancing security, border control, deportation, and transit zones, remains a strong framework for leaders of Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Hungary to appeal to when the issue arises in the EU Parliament⁸⁴. Looking ahead, it also clearly demonstrates the incompetence of the Postfunctionalist theory (considering public perception of the crisis to be the main force of national agenda-setting) in describing the unequivocal economically driven actions taken by the Visegrad group to create stumbling blocks for their foreign partners to resolve the Schengen intricacy, hence the 2-way rift between NWE and SE (Affected States) on one side, and CEE (Non-Affected States) on the other (see chapters 2 and 3).

Forward looking statement

The objective of the first chapter was to gather the scattered information on the migration crisis and the diverse policies and positions adopted within both the EU and the V4 regarding crisis-resolution, heavily contributing to the failure of the 27 EU countries to deal with the large inflow of migrants and come to a responsibility-sharing agreement. The new cleavage in positions sparked intergroup and national issue-politicization with the rise of diverse Eurosceptic parties, which had a direct consequence on the number of seats gained by right wing populist parties (161) in the 2019 EU Parliament elections, compared to the results of the 2014 elections (118).⁸⁵ It is also believed that the Schengen crisis contributed to the development of the V4 as an anti-establishment “brand”⁸⁶, demonstrating the effectiveness of group-policy

⁷⁸ Source URL: A year of terror: Timeline of attacks in Europe during 2016 — RT Viral.

⁷⁹ Kob, M., Seville, A., Politicized Transnationalism: The Visegrad Countries in the Refugee Crisis. *Politics and Governance*. Vol.8, N.1. P. 100.

⁸⁰ Ibid. P. 100.

⁸¹ Braun, M., Postfunctionalism, Identity and the Visegrad Group. *JCMS*. Vol. 58. N. 4. 2019. P 934.

⁸² Stepper, P., The Visegrad Group and the EU agenda on migration: A coalition of the unwilling? *COJOURN*. Vol. 1. N. 1. 2016. P. 77.

⁸³ Braun, M., Postfunctionalism, Identity and the Visegrad Group. *JCMS*. Vol. 58. N. 4. 2019. P 935.

⁸⁴ Source URL: The Visegrad Group: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia | V4 Statement on the Future of Europe (2016-2018)

⁸⁵ Ivaldi, G., Populist Voting in the 2019 European Elections. *Aufsätze*. P.72

⁸⁶ Kob, M., Seville, A., Politicized Transnationalism: The Visegrad Countries in the Refugee Crisis. *Politics and Governance*. Vol.8, N.1. P. 101.

promotion within the Union. This, in turn, sparked the initiatives of other EU members to adjoin and form various subregional organizations, including the Austerlitz group and the Three-Seas Initiative.⁸⁷

In the field of political science, the Migrant crisis was quick to encourage heated debates on the theoretical approaches to depicting the actions taking place on the continent. Scholars sought to implement contrasting theories in order to analyze the crisis. The researchers who adopted a Neofunctionalist or Liberal intergovernmentalist approach⁸⁸ focused heavily on economic policy drivers to explain the consequences of the actions taken by the governments (provided the success of the theories for analyzing the Euro crisis), yet failed to assume that an increase in integration could also lead to issue politicization and a rise in public issue awareness, heavily limiting the elite's room for maneuver. Likewise, the political scientists that referred to the Postfunctionalist framework were reluctant to consider any economic motivations to explaining the non-integrative path dependencies around the issue.

In the following chapters, this paper will strive to demonstrate that a combination of PF and LI (or, more broadly, a combination of the two “schools of thought”: Intergovernmentalism and Supranationalism) would allow for an enhanced understanding as to how and why political actors deviated with their policies in one case or another. In order to reinforce this argument, in Chapter 2, I will commence by depicting each of the three commonly utilized frameworks for analyzing European Integration and intragroup behavior patterns. Then, with the aid of the information from Chapter 1, I will demonstrate the failure of each of the three theories of addressing the 3 socio-political fields considered by the paper, all of which had been diversely impacted by the crisis. Next, I will combine Liberal Intergovernmentalism and Postfunctionalism, thus creating a unique framework, which will then be implemented to analyze the three fields and help answer the posed research question.

Chapter 2. EU Crisis Integration Theories

Since all 3 crisis-centered European Integration theories, devoting their attention primarily to the consequences of exogenous shocks: Neofunctionalism, Liberal Intergovernmentalism, and Postfunctionalism, are founded, developed upon, and, in some respects, rival Emile Durkheim's adaptation of the classic functionalist theory⁸⁹ on the “causes, processes, and outcomes of integration crises”⁹⁰ (the

⁸⁷ Cabada, L., Visegrad Cooperation in the Context of Other Central European Cooperation Formats. *Politics in Central Europe*. Vol. 14. N. 2. 2018. P. 169-175.

⁸⁸ See: Biermann, F., et al. Political (non-) reform in the euro crisis and the refugee crisis: a liberal Intergovernmentalist explanation. *Journal of European Public Policy*. 2017

⁸⁹ Thompson, K., Emile Durkheim. *Routledge*. 2002. P.133 and Rosamond, B., Theories of European Integration. *St. Martin's Press*. 2000. P. 31.

⁹⁰ Schimmelfenning, F., European integration (theory) in times of crisis. A comparison of the euro and Schengen crises. *Journal of European Public Policy*. 2018. P. 5.

rationale of which is considered to have been implemented by Robert Schumann and Jean Monnet into the design of the ECSC)⁹¹, it is most appropriate to commence the analysis with the observation of the Functionalist framework, which “opened... a novel theoretical landscape for scholars in political science and IR.”⁹²

It is also worth mentioning that this essay will not consider other international relation theories, including Neorealism, Neoliberal Institutionalism, and Social Constructivism, as I believe they are rather broad and are not aimed at comprehending changes in the political arena brought about by exogenous shocks, as well as crisis impacts on integration processes, which, in turn, are the research objects of this paper. Regarding Social Constructivism, although this framework has been successfully implemented by political scientists to analyze the Migrant crisis⁹³, considering, in line with Postfunctionalism, the impact of historical, political, and social factors on the formation and shifts of nationalist identities within specific countries, leading to a spark in anti-immigrant and/ or Eurocentric rhetoric (thus focusing on domestic/ internal policy formation), it will not be utilized in this essay as it does not examine (a) intergovernmental bargaining (the main predictor of negative or positive integration path dependencies) and (b) the effects of issue politicization on identity politics and how they shift domestic party systems.⁹⁴ These areas, in turn, are considered crucial to cover all 3 socio-political research fields considered by the paper (see Chapter 1).

Functionalism: The Basis for Integration

In *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals*, Emile Durkheim focuses on historical institutionalism and considers society to be made up of institutions (modifiable) and social facts (non-modifiable).⁹⁵ Institutions are believed to be formed by people to meet their socio-economic needs (security, finance, health, education), whereas social facts are historically structured patterns of thinking and acting within a society, which have a coercive effect on people once they are broken.⁹⁶ Both institutions and social facts are interlinked with one another and help maintain the functioning of society. As population grows, members of one community become more dependent on one another to meet their social and economic needs. They

⁹¹ Kurt,U., Europe of Monnet, Schumann and Mitrany: A Historical Glance to the EU from the Functionalist Perspective. *European Journal of Economic and Political Studies*. 2009. P. 51.

⁹² Ibid. P. 42.

⁹³ See: Karacan, D., The Effects of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on the EU Through the Lens of Social Constructivism: The cases of Germany and Hungary. *Alternatif Politika*. Vol. 11. N. 1. 2019. P. 142-167.

⁹⁴ Ibid. P. 148.

⁹⁵ YouTube. (17.09.2013). Functionalism | Society and Culture | MCAT | Khan Academy. [khanacademymedicine](https://www.khanacademy.com/functionalism) [Video file]. https://youtu.be/-83vVeSC2_g. Accessed: 15.01.2021.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

refer to a division of power and labor distribution, bringing about social change, which, in turn, forces other members of a given society to adapt to the novel social facts and institutions.⁹⁷

Emile Durkheim's model can also be implemented on a macro-level, obliging nation states to integrate and adapt to social change in order for their ever-expanding and interlinked societies to continue to function. However, since this sociological theory is solely based on preserving an ideal relationship within and between societies, Emile Durkheim's theory fails to touch upon various conflicts (disintegration motives) brought about by social change, as well as elaborate on the political functions and capabilities of the individual in a society — both areas which will be expanded upon in the further development of the framework.

The ideas of classical functionalism arose in the political sphere following WWII. David Mitrany, one of the main proponents of the theory (presented as an alternative to realism)⁹⁸ considered governments to be at fault for the dangers and conflicts around them. Through cooperation, he claimed that the nation state could solve all the ever-growing necessities and problems of its citizens,⁹⁹ as well as achieve a Working Peace System¹⁰⁰. With a collective resolution approach to less problematic fields and sectors, it was assumed that states would develop a set of intragovernmental institutions and bodies to direct their cooperation, thus establishing a system of complex interdependence and diffusing potential conflict in other spheres “by means of an ‘invisible hand’ of integration.”¹⁰¹ In turn, the benefits of enhanced cooperation would lead to a “spill-over” effect, incentivizing other nations to participate in the “integration” processes. Finally, in order to “maximize public welfare”, David Mitrany believed that “the form of intergovernmental organizations should follow their functions and must adapt to economic development and technological change in society.”¹⁰²

Notably, these functionalist viewpoints can be traced to the Monnet plan, the Schumann Declaration and the development of the ECSC.¹⁰³ Both Robert Schumann and Jean Monnet saw the pitfalls of nationalism and believed that common European problems require common solutions. In their view, the ECSC “would be the foundation of the European federation that would evolve only slowly to engage national elites in a process of mutual economic interest.”¹⁰⁴ As a result, the ECSC became the catalyst for

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Rosamond, B., *Theories of European Integration*. St. Martin's Press. 2000. P. 31.

⁹⁹ Dinan, D., *Ever Closer Union: An Introduction to European Integration*. Lynne Rienner. 2005. P. 1-8.

¹⁰⁰ Rosamond, B., *Theories of European Integration*. St. Martin's Press. 2000. P. 37.

¹⁰¹ Kurt, U., *Europe of Monnet, Schumann and Mitrany: A Historical Glance to the EU from the Functionalist Perspective*. *European Journal of Economic and Political Studies*. 2009. P. 45.

¹⁰² Ibid. P. 46.

¹⁰³ Rosamond, B., *Theories of European Integration*. St. Martin's Press. 2000. P. 38.

¹⁰⁴ Kurt, U., *Europe of Monnet, Schumann and Mitrany: A Historical Glance to the EU from the Functionalist Perspective*. *European Journal of Economic and Political Studies*. 2009. P. 56.

further European integration and would lay the “the foundations for the neofunctionalist integration theory.”¹⁰⁵

Neofunctionalism

In the 1950s, Ernest Haas would elaborate upon the classical functionalist *mantra* in his university dissertation on the ECSC.¹⁰⁶ In it, Haas questioned the rationality of nation states behind establishing the Community, which contradicted the ideas of the dominant realist international relation theory of the period.¹⁰⁷ With time, Haas would come to a discrete theory for European integration, considering the outcomes and reasons for integration in his works “The Uniting of Europe” and “Beyond the Nation State”. Apart from centering his framework around elite-centered/ transnational group economic interests (rather than identities and public opinion as will be done in Postfunctionalism¹⁰⁸), Haas believed that both the secretariats of the institutions involved in an integration process, as well as interest groups, lobbying for more collaboration, all have an influence on the extent the integration process will be carried out to.¹⁰⁹ By observing the European community building project, Haas found that the more economic interests transnational actors have in common, the further they choose to integrate, and, because this integration usually happens under pressure or in times of crises,¹¹⁰ it does not permit nation states to, prudently and anticipatory, delve into all the possible setbacks their novel interdependencies may have.¹¹¹

Nonetheless, regardless of the initial drawbacks for cooperation (including instability and deficiency)¹¹², Neofunctionalism, in line with classical functionalism, considers that any primary economic-based and elite-centered integration will eventually create a “spill-over” effect, resulting in positive “path-dependencies”, which, in turn, would lead to further integration.¹¹³ The institutions the nation-states establish to fixate the terms of integration will then shape the transitional interdependence.¹¹⁴

It is vital to note that, although Neofunctionalism does provide the necessary conditions for further integration in critical situations, it is reluctant to consider and observe the potential for disintegration flows

¹⁰⁵ Rosamond, B., *Theories of European Integration*. St. Martin's Press. 2000. P. 38.

¹⁰⁶ Schmitter, P., Ernest B. Haas and the legacy of neofunctionalism. *Journal of European Public Policy*. Vol. 12. N. 2. 2005.

¹⁰⁷ Hooghe, L., et al. A Postfunctionalist Theory of European Integration: From Permissive Consensus to Constraining Dissensus. *British Journal of Political Science*. 2009. P. 3.

¹⁰⁸ Hooghe, L., et al. A Postfunctionalist Theory of European Integration: From Permissive Consensus to Constraining Dissensus. *British Journal of Political Science*. 2009. P. 3.

¹⁰⁹ Schmitter, P., Ernest B. Haas and the legacy of neofunctionalism. *Journal of European Public Policy*. Vol. 12. No. 2. 2005. P. 257.

¹¹⁰ Schmitter, P. Three Neo-Functional Hypotheses About International Integration. *International Organization*. Vol. 23. N. 1. 1969. P. 163.

¹¹¹ Niemann, A., and Ioannou, D., European Economic Integration in Times of Crisis: A Case of Neo-Functionalism? *Journal of European Public Policy*. Vol. 22. N. 2. P. 4

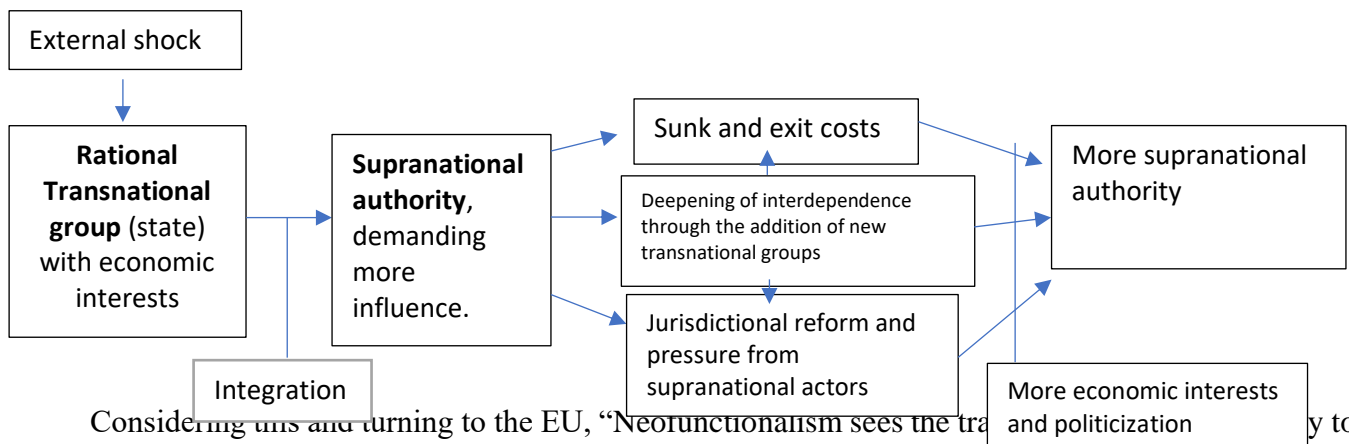
¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Schmitter, P. Three Neo-Functional Hypotheses About International Integration. *International Organization*. Vol. 23. N. 1. 1969. P. 162.

¹¹⁴ Schimmelfenning, F., European integration (theory) in times of crisis. A comparison of the euro and Schengen crises. *Journal of European Public Policy*. 2018. P. 5.

almost in its entirety. Supporters of the given theory, however, double down on the statement and claim that a strengthening in interlinkage breeds (a) high sunk (investments made into the institutions) and (b) exit costs, (c) endogenous interdependence (deepening of interdependence), (d) the autonomy of supranational actors (providing them with more influence), and (e) decision-making hurdles, making it arduous to stop the integration process for member states once it has begun (see Diagram 1).¹¹⁵

Diagram 1. Neofunctionalist scheme.



Considering this and turning to the EU, “Neofunctionalism sees the transition to the EU level as a means for transnationally organized élites and supranational bureaucrats to circumvent domestic resistance against the loss of national sovereignty necessary to open up national markets.”¹¹⁶ However, if the 2008 Euro crisis resembles a perfect case for the Neofunctionalism framework to be applicable (as most governments had a common material interest of recovering their economies, boosting further integration with the aim of finding a common solution), the same cannot be stated about the 2015-2016 Schengen predicament. “Neo-functionalists did not expect that the increased attention paid to integration by the broader masses would lead to a “moment” when a popular constraining dissensus would limit the political elites’ room to maneuver, which in turn would cause ‘a mismatch of functionally efficient and politically feasible solutions.’”¹¹⁷ Up until now, this “moment” has been considered by political scientists predominantly under the Postfunctionalist prism.¹¹⁸

Now, since the Schengen crisis has yet to breed any “substantial deepening of integration”¹¹⁹, and, because Neofunctionalism (a) does not delve into intergovernmental distributive bargaining in cases of

¹¹⁵ Ibid. P. 5.

¹¹⁶ Borzel, T., and Risse, T., From the euro to the Schengen crises: European integration theories, politicization, and identity politics. *Journal of European Public Policy*. 2017. P. 91.

¹¹⁷ Hooghe, L., A Postfunctionalist Theory of European Integration: From Permissive Consensus to Constraining Dissensus. *British Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 39. N. 1. 2009. P. 94.

¹¹⁸ Hooghe, L., A Postfunctionalist Theory of European Integration: From Permissive Consensus to Constraining Dissensus. *British Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 39. N. 1. 2009. P. 91-195.

¹¹⁹ Schimmelfenning, F., European integration (theory) in times of crisis. A comparison of the euro and Schengen crises. *Journal of European Public Policy*. 2018. P. 15.

differential affectedness, which is exactly what took place in the period from 2015-2020 (see Chapter 1), and (b) is reluctant to regard the advent of any negative politicization processes¹²⁰, causing disintegration and producing little positive feedback (no path-dependencies) despite the mutual economic goal of preserving the Schengen agreement¹²¹, it is considered that Liberal Intergovernmentalism and Postfunctionalism would better suit the depiction of the causes and consequences of the European Migrant conundrum in this essay.

Liberal Intergovernmentalism

Tantamount to Neofunctionalism, Liberal Intergovernmentalism considers external shocks to be drivers of (dis)integration for rational nation state actors, as exogenous crises lead to an increase in interdependence costs, affecting economic elite-driven interests¹²². However, in contrast to NF, LI focuses primarily on intergovernmental bargaining and its outcomes (not on institutionalizing spill-over integration effects), as well as on the likelihood of attaining political reformation, with the option for states to avoid engaging in a deepening cooperation process if needed (negative path dependency). This, in turn, is believed to better resemble the results of EU negotiations on the mutual asylum policies following 2014. Therefore, LI will be used as one of the frameworks for analyzing the rapid inflow of migrants and the hardships it brought along.

During a crisis, according to the LI framework, two sets of actors must be established - “Affected” states (AS) and “Non-affected” States (NAS) - in order to analyze the bargaining positions of the players. NAS usually bear the lowest costs of non-cooperation, giving them more influence over any questions of political reformation, regardless of their economic position (as can be observed by the dominant bargaining position the V4 had over the Union’s economic leaders – Germany and France).¹²³ Since Germany, France, and Sweden were, predominantly, the desired “destination states” for migrants in the period from 2015-2020, the ball was in their court to persuade the Union’s Central European members to engage in a burden sharing scheme (see Diagram 2).

¹²⁰ Braun, M., Postfunctionalism, Identity and the Visegrad Group. *JCMS*. Vol. 58. N. 4. 2019. P 929.

¹²¹ Borzel, T., and Risse, T., From the euro to the Schengen crises: European integration theories, politicization, and identity politics. *Journal of European Public Policy*. 2017. P. 90.

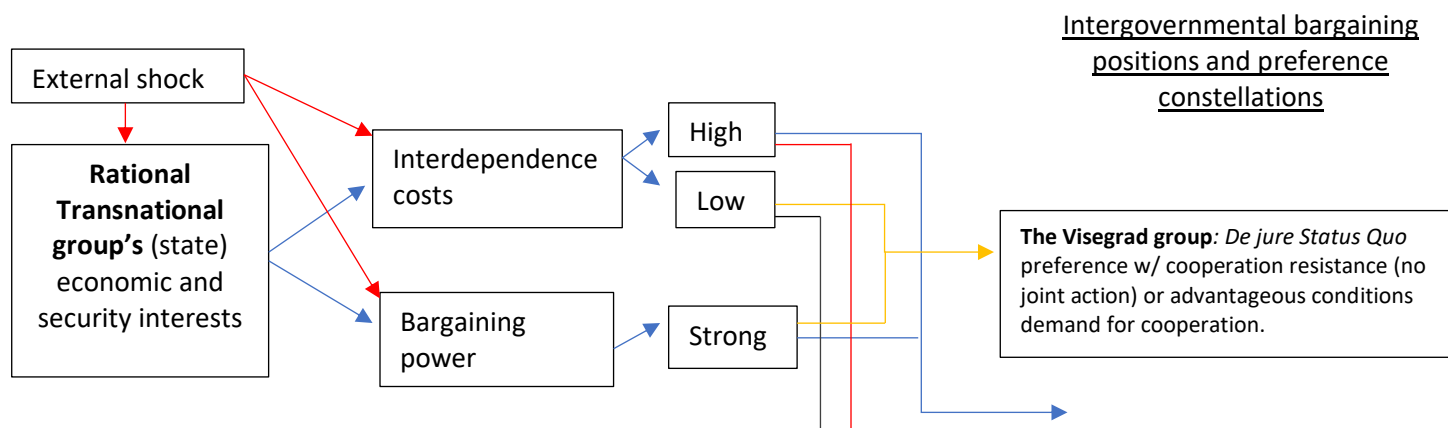
¹²² Moravcsik, A., *The Choices for Europe*. Routledge. 1999. P. 20-23.

¹²³ Schimmelfennig, F., Liberal Intergovernmentalism and the Crises of the European Union: LI and the EU crises. *Journal of a Common Market Studies*. 2018. P. 6. and Source URL: Data for European Union, Germany, Hungary | Data (worldbank.org)

This situation, in contrast to the Euro crisis (revolving around a clear “common bad”¹²⁴), has led to several political scientists claiming that the migrant crisis resembles more of a “Rambo game”¹²⁵- a coordination predicament, where one actor is considered to be a “free-rider”, and the other must cooperate in order to avoid the potential worsened outcomes of non-collaboration. This is why it is not surprising that Germany would rapidly strive-off its “open-door” policy and target the Schengen Agreement in its transnational bargaining approach, thus bringing the vulnerable and favorable zones (preserving the Schengen Agreement) for CEE countries into the scope of negotiations in order to increase pressure for collaboration, implying a distribution-type resolution.¹²⁶

Additionally, in line with territorial constituted coalitions theory, claiming that governments of a particular subregion, with similar economic potential and preferences, tend to vote similarly on union matters¹²⁷, LI demonstrates why the Visegrád group was able to orientate their policy position to a more desirable option in its negotiations with the EU through group policy promotion and hard intergovernmental bargaining, basing their stance on security concerns rather than economic issues¹²⁸.

Diagram 2. LI scheme.



¹²⁴ By “common bad” I refer to the views held by governments and the respective publics towards financial transfers and bailouts to underleveraged European states, which, in turn, had caused a massive spark in Right-Wing popularity on the continent. The Euro crisis also resembled a time when the EU leaders held a relatively NAS position (although still heavily affected by the crisis) in comparison to Greece and Italy. Source: Borzel, T., and Risse, T., From the euro to the Schengen crises: European integration theories, politicization, and identity politics. *Journal of European Public Policy*. 2017. P. 100.

¹²⁵ See: 1) Martin, L. Interests, power, and multilateralism. *International Organization*. Vol. 46. N. 4. 1992. P. 756-792.

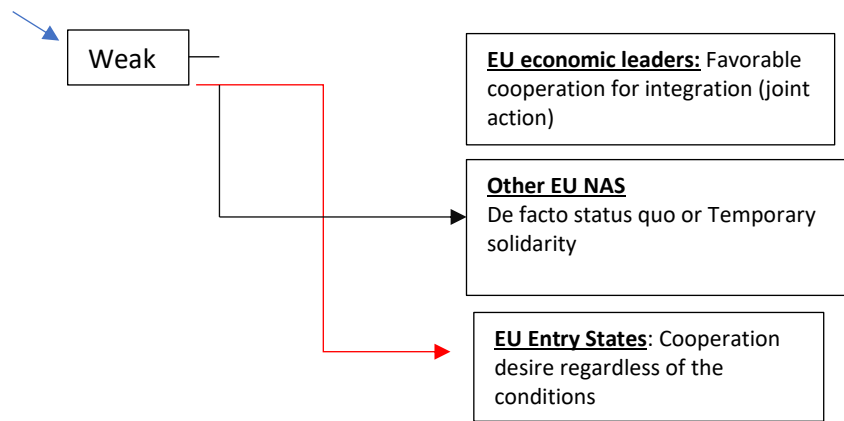
2) Biermann, F., Political (non-reform) in the euro crisis and the refugee crisis: a liberal intergovernmentalist explanation. *Journal of European Public Policy*. Vol. 26. N. 3. 2017. P. 1-21.

3) Hasenclever, A., et al. Theories of international regimes. *Cambridge: Cambridge University Press*. 1997.

¹²⁶ Biermann, F., et al. Political (non-)reform in the euro crisis and the refugee crisis: a liberal intergovernmentalist explanation. *Journal of European Public Policy*. 2017. P. 13.

¹²⁷ See: Anderson, G., and Choudhry, S., Constitutional Transitions and Territorial Cleavages. *International IDEA*. 2015. P. 5-28. Retrieved from: (PDF) Constitutional Transitions and Territorial Cleavages | Sujit Choudhry - Academia.edu. Accessed: 05.03.2021.

¹²⁸ Moravcsik, A., The Choices for Europe. *Routledge*. 1999. P. 26.



With this being stated, it is vital to note that LI fails to consider the impact of issue politicization on the strengthening of identity politics, leading to an increase in voter and Eurosceptic party pressure on elite-decision making (LI considers that exogenous shocks force “governments to cooperate with each other in crises to shield their integrated policies from domestic pressures”¹²⁹ and “avoid welfare losses caused by negative interdependence”¹³⁰). However, it was this very strain, placed on ruling parties, which disallowed the accommodation of European partners and complicated the process of reaching an agreement.¹³¹ In essence, LI doesn’t completely depict why, despite the common interest of preserving the economic benefits brought by the Schengen Agreement, the crisis did not result in economic (dis)integration, creating positive or negative geopolitical externalities¹³²(regarding the NWE, SE, and CEE cleavage and excluding Brexit), although hardline bargaining and domestic political pressures were clearly present. This will be addressed by Postfunctionalism.

Postfunctionalism

Rivaling LI with a largely pessimistic view on integration, the Postfunctionalist integration theory devotes its attention to the concepts of “national” and “group” identity, the changes in meaning external shocks bring to them, as well as their usage in political party rhetoric. Since Postfunctionalism considers the EU to be a multi-level governance system, driven by identity politics on the one hand, and functional and distributional pressures on the other, identity, here, is thus believed to be a crucial factor for integration. Under the PF prism, citizens of nation states carry the role of rational actors, who take considerable interest

¹²⁹ Schimmelfennig, F., Liberal Intergovernmentalism and the Crises of the European Union: LI and the EU crises. *Journal of a Common Market Studies*. 2018. P. 7.

¹³⁰ Borzel, T., and Risse, T., From the euro to the Schengen crises: European integration theories, politicization, and identity politics. *Journal of European Public Policy*. 2017. P. 93.

¹³¹ Schimmelfennig, F., European integration (theory) in times of crisis. A comparison of the euro and Schengen crises. *Journal of European Public Policy*. 2018. P. 14.

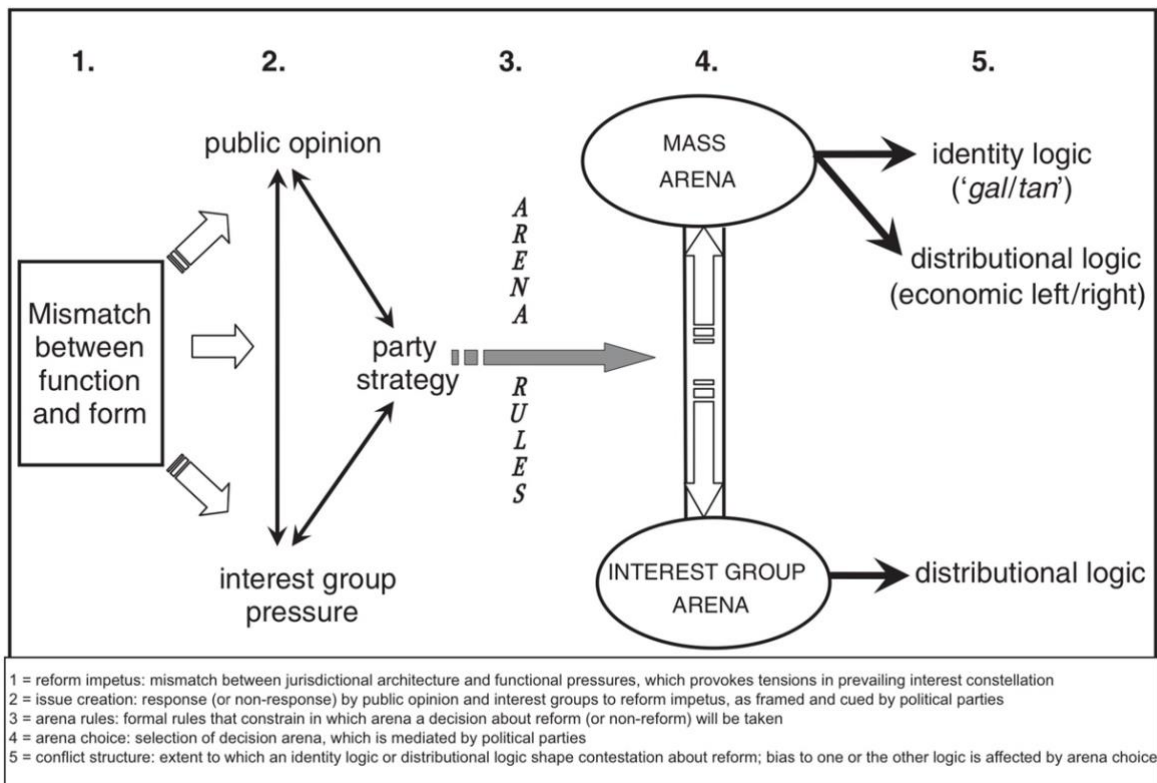
¹³² Moravcsik, A., *The Choices for Europe*. Routledge. 1999. P. 29.

in their governance (“the means of achieving collective benefits by coordinating human activity”¹³³). Therefore, when an integration issue affects a group’s perceived identity, domestic politicization increases (influencing public perception), and integration capacity diminishes.

Regarding the notion of “identity”, PF bases its assumptions on social-identity theory¹³⁴, which, in turn, considers that group identifications shape individual self-perception, leading to a sense of “favoritism”. Under this rhetoric, identity is presumed to be politically constructed, and, ergo, the more individuals lean to “exclusive” identities, the more they are predisposed to support Eurosceptic parties. These parties, in turn, take advantage of such an identification and resort to issue politicization to attain electoral advantage. Finally, when these parties achieve superiority and/or ample bargaining positions within their competitive environment, they commence to heavily influence elite-driven decision making. Such a process can be observed within the V4, where radical right-wing and populist parties have taken over and have been enforcing their policies since the Euro crisis. Although, with all aspects considered, the “CEE” Euroscepticism is still considered to be rather “soft” (as ruling parties within the V4 do not call for an exit from the EU), it was able, nonetheless, to uncover the deficiencies of the European Integration Project, whilst promoting a more conservative policy on both the intragroup and supranational levels (in the EU Parliament).

¹³³ Hooghe, L., et al. A Postfunctionalist Theory of European Integration: From Permissive Consensus to Constraining Dissensus. *British Journal of Political Science*. 2009. P. 3.

¹³⁴ Ibid. P. 12.



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(Table 2 is fully integrated from Hooghe, L., et al. A Postfunctionalist Theory of European Integration: From Permissive Consensus to Constraining Dissensus. *British Journal of Political Science*. 2009. P. 9. (Fig. 2. A model of domestic politicization).

From an initial standpoint, PF appears to be the most suitable framework for analyzing the negative integration consequences of the Migrant crisis and the stumbling blocks it established for integration initiatives. However, importantly, the 5-year dilemma has also brought about instances, where Postfunctionalism fails to explain why (a) national governments acted in clear contradiction to the predominant public opinion (“identity of governance”), which, according to Eurobarometer data and contradicting the postfunctionalist narrative, maintained high support levels for the acceptance of asylum seekers throughout the entire period¹³⁶ (e.g. Hungary’s fence with Serbia and Croatia and its reluctance to accept a single asylum application — see chapter 1), and why (b) issue politicization triggered divergent institutional and domestic responses from the 3 EU “coalitions”¹³⁷, all of which mostly promoted ideas of preserving the *status quo* or engaging in a deepened integration, while not heavily considering any serious

¹³⁵ Hooghe, L., et al. A Postfunctionalist Theory of European Integration: From Permissive Consensus to Constraining Dissensus. *British Journal of Political Science*. 2009. P. 9. (Fig. 2. A model of domestic politicization).

¹³⁶ More than 2/3 of EU citizens opted for a common EU policy-solution on migration. This was not achieved however, as less economically developed states were reluctant to bear the high economic costs of settling migrants within their borders.

¹³⁷ Under coalitions I mean NWE, SE, and CEE.

disintegration motives (apart from the UK)¹³⁸, despite the strong influence of Euroscepticism on the continent. This, coupled with the fact that, Postfunctionalism disregards intergovernmental bargaining to have a severe influence on path-dependencies, whether they be negative or positive, leaves room for Liberal Intergovernmentalism to fill the explanatory gaps. Therefore, I believe it will be more suitable to carry out a dual-theory synthesis analysis to explain this complex case in international relations. This will be elaborated upon below.

Transnational Cleavage theory

Prior to developing the analytical model for the subsequential socio-political analysis, it is considered necessary to provide a brief overview of a novel external shock-effect explanatory model, proposed by Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks, which is strongly intertwined with and expands upon the PF paradigm, aimed at analyzing (a) political party behavior during an external shock, (b) the reasons for new political parties to form around such crises, and (c) the struggles of traditional parties to adapt to the ever-shifting competitive political arena.

The two scholars base their explanatory model on the traditional cleavage framework, which also encompasses party-competition theory. According to this theory, a national party system expresses the social conflicts in a given society¹³⁹ and establishes “in-groups” and “out-groups”.¹⁴⁰ A strong division in a society and between the two groups forms “cleavages that structure party competition”.¹⁴¹ It is then that these cleavages create a voter divide, influencing party commitments and shifting the party system, while bringing about new challenger parties to the arena (see Diagram 4).

In their paper, Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks took one step further and applied the domestically orientated framework onto the transnational arena. By doing so, they found that as EU policies became more open to the public (primarily following the Maastricht Treaty of 1993 and the establishment of the WTO in 1994), they started to affect individuals to a larger degree, luring them into forming political positions, interests, and striving to influence national and transnational governance. With more parties (primarily of social democratic origin) appealing to public interests for electoral advantage, the classic elite-

¹³⁸ Biermann, F., et al. Political (non-)reform in the euro crisis and the refugee crisis: a liberal intergovernmentalist explanation. *Journal of European Public Policy*. 2017. P. 4.

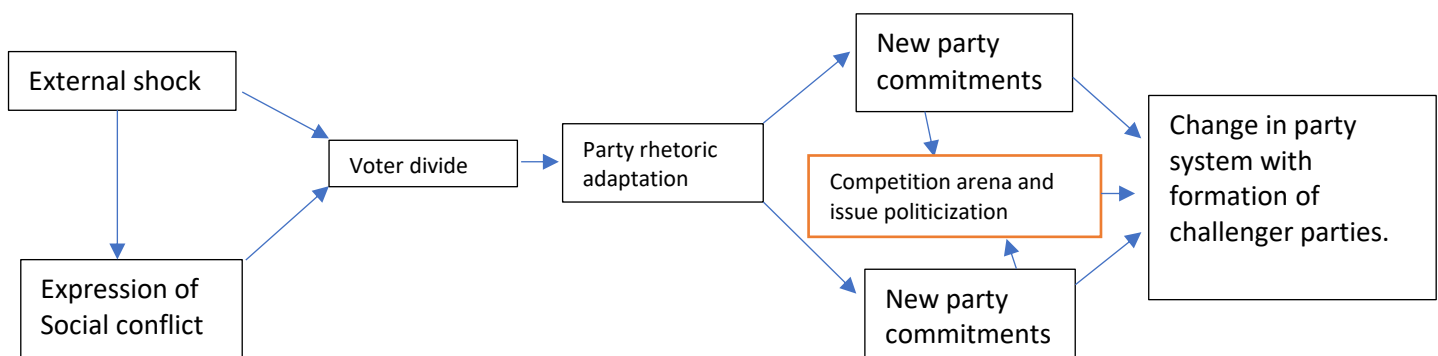
¹³⁹ Lipset, S. and Rokkan, S., Cleavage structures, party systems, and voter alignments: an introduction, in Lipset, S., and Rokkan, S., *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives*, Toronto: The Free Press. 1967. P. 10-20.

¹⁴⁰ Hooghe, L., Marks, G., Cleavage Theory meets Europe's crises: Lipset, Rokkan, and the transnational cleavage. *Journal of European Public Policy*. Vol. 25. N. 1. P.111

¹⁴¹ Ibid. P. 112.

centered economic left-right / West-East cleavage¹⁴² quickly gave way to the novel GAL/ TAN¹⁴³ divide. However, over time, parties also started highlighting national identity and migration/expansion issues in order to gain more support, whilst moving economic questions to the background. This, in turn, led to the formation of the contemporary left GAL and right TAN cleavage. This voter divide can now be observed in Central and Eastern Europe¹⁴⁴, as well as in the EU Parliament, with its new political landscape following the 2019 elections (where the traditional European People’s Party and Socialists and Democrats Party lost their majority for the first time since 1979)¹⁴⁵.

Diagram 4. Transnational Cleavage Theory scheme



By analyzing the Euro and Migrant crises, the two political scientists established that traditional parties are mostly reluctant to shift their political ideologies on issues that contradict their party rhetoric. In the period from 2006 and 2014, only 3 out of the leading 140 European parties saw a slight shift in their stance on immigration.¹⁴⁶ This explains the heavy rise in populist voting and spark in radical parties, the latter of which tend to gain credibility by claiming to avert a severe threat posed by the “constraining” EU policies (see Chapters 1 and 3).

Now, because international cleavage theory goes hand-in hand with PF as both are (a) formed around social-identity theory and (b) observe the impact of exogenous shocks on domestic and transnational politicization, I have decided to couple PF and Transnational Cleavage theory and view it as one framework

¹⁴² Meaning the conflict between labour and capital. Source: Zapletalova, V., and Kominkova, M., Who is fighting against the EU’s energy and climate policy in the European Parliament? The contribution of the Visegrad Group. *Energy Policy*. Vol. 139. 2020. P. 5.

¹⁴³ GAL – Green Alternative Liberal, TAN- Traditional – Authoritarian Nationalistic. The new cleavage is based on culturally identity views. Source: Ibid. P. 5.

¹⁴⁴ Baureova, H., Migration Policy of the V4 in the Context of Migration Crisis. *Politics in Central Europe*. Vol. 14. N. 2. 2018. P. 103.

¹⁴⁵ Henning, B., European Parliament Elections 2019. *Political Insight*. 2019. P. 20-21.

¹⁴⁶ Hooghe, L., Marks, G., Cleavage Theory meets Europe’s crises: Lipset, Rokkan, and the transnational cleavage. *Journal of European Public Policy*. Vol. 25. N. 1. P. 120.

in the proposed synthesis. It is believed that Transnational Cleavage Theory will aid to observe the changes in Eurooptimism and Euroscepticism, party voter rhetoric, migration narratives, and voting results, all of which are necessary to attain answers to the posed research question in Chapter 1.

The analytical model

By briefly delving into the 4 theories for European Integration, this paper has demonstrated that three out of the four frameworks (as Neofunctionalism will not be considered in the observation of the migrant crisis) all possess certain explanatory gaps, which, in turn, can be eradicated with the aid of a theory synthesis. This dual prism set-up will enable the investigation of (a) the impacts of the exogenous shock on intragovernmental and national policies, as well as (b) the effects of politicization on voting outcomes and shifts in “national identities” and state migration narratives, while (c) demonstrating that the poor crisis response and the severe consequences that followed were due to both the external and unexpected origin of the crisis, as well as the inadequate institutional pattern of policy responses. Such an approach has been recommended by political scientists¹⁴⁷, but has yet to be conducted (based on all examined research literature for this essay).

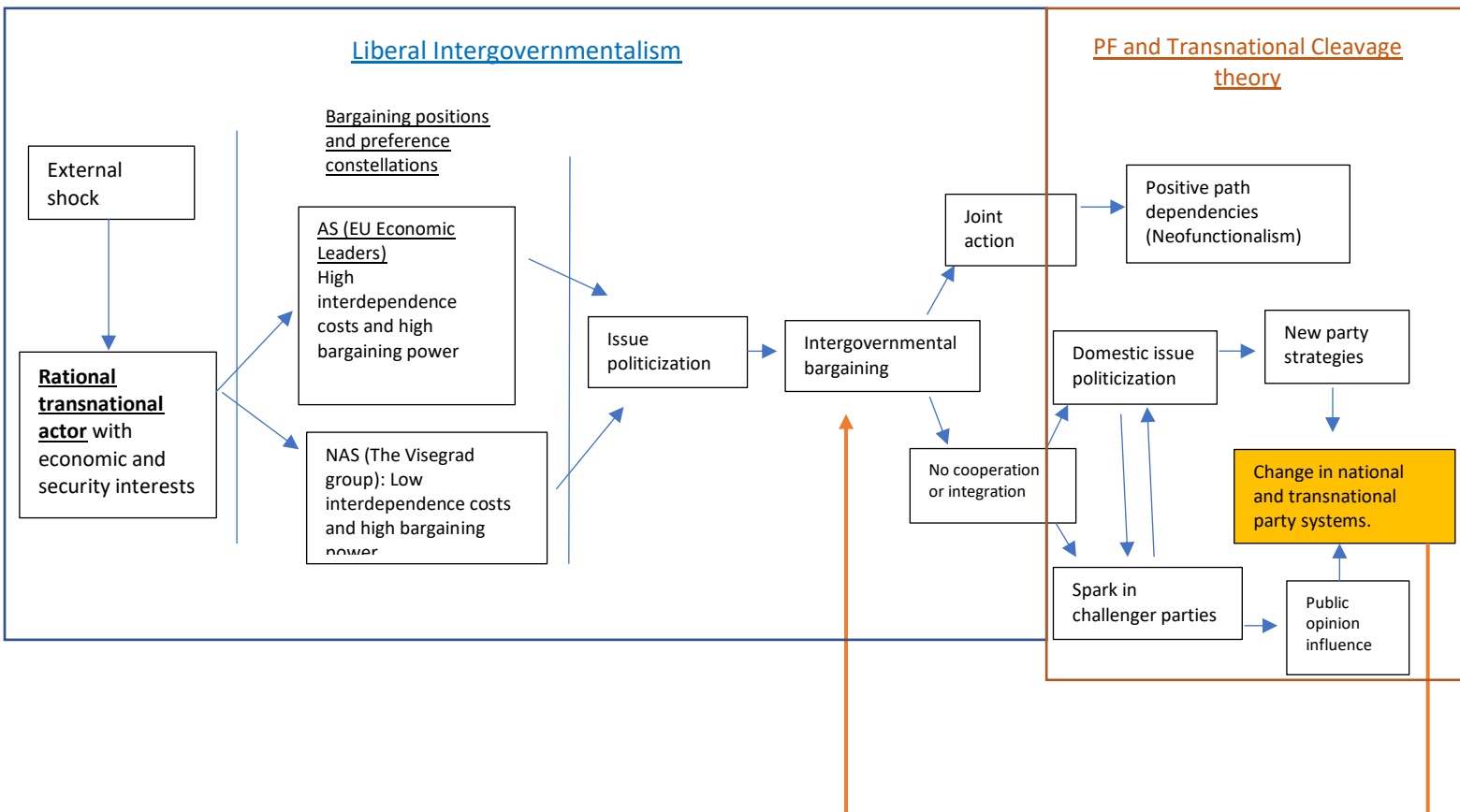
My framework will commence with Liberal Intergovernmentalism, which will allow to observe the divergent ruling-elite and interest group bargaining positions on an intergovernmental level (the cleavage between the V4 and the EU), which led to “institutional incompleteness because it forced settlement on lowest common denominator solutions.”¹⁴⁸ This incompleteness of problem-resolution would ultimately lead to a spark in Postfunctionalist forces, introducing (a) challenger parties, (b) issue politicization, and (c) shifts in national identities into the framework. Since the migrant cleavage is believed to have stimulated the rise of populist right wing parties, and since the ruling parties in both Poland and Hungary had already been extremely nationalistic, the proposed synthesis, on this “domestic” level, will be aimed at analyzing the transformational dynamic of right-wing challenger parties only in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Then, with the aid of Transnational Cleavage theory, the dual-prism model will adopt an outward looking approach and investigate how illegal migration has led to diverging voting results and V4 public opinion changes on a supranational level (the EU Parliament) (see Diagram 5). Finally, the model will observe how these changes in voting patterns and novel national and transnational party systems impacted elite-centered bargaining. By conducting the following analysis, this essay will attain a complete understanding of the

¹⁴⁷ Schimmelfennig, F., Liberal Intergovernmentalism and the Crises of the European Union: LI and the EU crises. *Journal of a Common Market Studies*. 2018. P. 26.

¹⁴⁸ Jones, E., Failing Forward? The Euro Crisis and the Incomplete Nature of European Integration. *Comparative Political Studies*. 2015. P. 18.

consequences of the Refugee crisis on the migration narratives within the Visegrad group, as well as the changes in relations between the V4 and the EU.

Diagram 5. Theory synthesis



Chapter 3

The final chapter of this dissertation will focus on implementing the dual-theory developed in Chapter 2 to analyze the 3 socio-political areas (identified in Chapter 1) related to the Visegrad group and

the changes in its immigration policies, narratives on refugees, intragroup interaction, and communication with the EU, all brought about by the Schengen crisis. It is assumed that by conducting the following, it will be possible to establish that each of the three fields require a discrete theoretical model that best describes the policies adopted by government officials, parties, and subregional organizations as the crisis progressed. It is assumed that in some cases, a single framework approach will be most appropriate, whilst in other situations, a combination of Postfunctionalism and Liberal Intergovernmentalism will deliver a more thorough understanding.

Now, prior to commencing the analysis, it is vital to note that maintaining illegal immigrants, processing their asylum applications, providing refugees with subsidiary protection and social welfare benefits, while, simultaneously, integrating them into the labor market, is an extremely costly task for nation states. Sebastian Dullien estimated that the EU would have to devote approximately 0.5% of its GDP to bear the cost of the refugee crisis.¹⁴⁹ By adding 0.5% to the public debt to GDP ratio of each member state (while also factoring in the total asylum applications received by each country), it turns out that the frontline states (Greece, Italy, Spain) and several destination countries (France, Belgium) ultimately exceed their 100% budget deficit rates.¹⁵⁰ This, *de facto*, ties the crisis to, primarily, the respective economic and national interests of each union member. It also explains why political elites initially focused on their regional and domestic agendas while ignoring the “economic and political ambivalences, as well as the structural asymmetries ... imposed on [Affected] countries with diverging economic positions”¹⁵¹.

Regarding the long-term economic benefits of investing into refugee integration, political scientists continue to dispute the (dis)advantages to the limitless acceptance of immigrants. In the case of Germany (following Angela Merkel’s renowned “we can handle this” position¹⁵², which, coincidentally, was perceived by Eastern European States and scholars to have encouraged migrants to flee to Europe and placed a burden on less economically-developed Italy, Greece, and Hungary¹⁵³), several political scientists have claimed that refugees would be able to fill the country’s employment gaps and increase tax revenue in the long-haul¹⁵⁴, while other scholars and politicians have focused on the socio-political aspects of the crisis, stating that illegal immigrants would deteriorate cultural traditions, eradicate religious identities, and

¹⁴⁹ Dullien, S., *Paying the Price: The Cost of Europe’s Refugee Crisis*. European Council on Foreign Relations. 2016. P. 2.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* P. 4.

¹⁵¹ Karolewski, P., and Benedikter, R., *Europe’s refugee and migrant crisis: Political responses to asymmetrical pressures*. *Politique Europeene*. 2018. P. 101.

¹⁵² Source URL: “We can do this!” Merkel and the Refugees | DW News - latest news and breaking stories | DW | 27.08.2016.

¹⁵³ See, for example, Karolewski, P., and Benedikter, R., *Europe’s refugee and migrant crisis: Political responses to asymmetrical pressures*. *Politique Europeene*. 2018. P. 102.

As well as the statements made by Hungary’s PM Victor Orban. Source URL: Hungary’s Orban tells Germany: ‘You wanted the migrants, we didn’t’ | News | DW | 08.01.2018.

See: Baureova, H., *Migration Policy of the V4 in the Context of Migration Crisis*. *Politics in Central Europe*. Vol. 14. N. 2. 2018. P. 107-110.

¹⁵⁴ Karolewski, P., and Benedikter, R., *Europe’s refugee and migrant crisis: Political responses to asymmetrical pressures*. *Politique Europeene*. 2018. P. 102-103.

spark radicalism and violence.¹⁵⁵ It can thus be concluded that the asymmetrical nature of the crisis carries obscure long-term consequences, while short-term migrant maintenance costs are considered to be clearly unappealing to countries with “faltering” economies¹⁵⁶, in particular, the Visegrad group. This creates the basis for the crisis to be initially regarded under a Liberal Institutionalist prism, as (a) the primary economic-based reactions to the crisis by the CEE, SE and NWE were closely related to the elite interests of the respective groups, and (b) the diverse affectedness and diverging economic positions established the initial bargaining conditions for the 3 European coalitions¹⁵⁷.

1) The shift in migration and integration narratives within the V4

In this section I will side with Helena Bauerova and perform an analysis of the shifts in migration rhetoric first within each of the 4 Visegrad member states individually, and then within the V4 group as a consolidated-interest unit. However, to conduct this observation, it is vital to first demonstrate the migration attitudes of the V4 countries before 2015. This will allow the examination of the exact changes the refugee rhetoric underwent under the impact of politicization forces once the issue became a matter of public concern.

Pre-crisis period

On the macro-level, prior to the spark of the migrant crisis, the V4 had been constantly addressing the Mediterranean Migration route and the ineffective policies the EU had implemented towards it for dealing with illegal immigration.¹⁵⁸ Being at the frontline for Ukrainian, Russian, Belarusian, and Mediterranean refugees since its formation¹⁵⁹, the Visegrad group was mostly reluctant to accept any significant amount of asylum applications prior to 2015. Moreover, not a single member over the course of the accession to the organization had had any experience with large influxes of migrants. In his study, Peter Stepper found that Slovakia never accepted more than 80 annual asylum applications in the period from 1993-2011, despite the spikes in refugee filings in the period from 2001-2004 (amounting to a 7-8-fold

¹⁵⁵ See: 1) Milton, D., *Radicalism of the Hopeless: Refugee Flows and Transnational Terrorism*. International Interactions. Vol. 39. N. 5. 2013.

2) Source URL: [Germany warns of growing right-wing radicalism amid refugee crisis \(yahoo.com\)](http://www.yahoo.com).

3) Source URL: [‘All the terrorists are migrants’ – POLITICO](http://www.politico.com)

¹⁵⁶ By “faltering economies” I imply the countries that are relatively underdeveloped when compared to EU’s leaders: Germany and France, have a risky debt to GDP ratio, poor credit ratings, and take loans from the IMF. Source URL: [GDP - Countries - List | Europe \(tradingeconomics.com\)](http://www.tradingeconomics.com).

¹⁵⁷ Here I imply the NWE, SE, and CEE groups.

¹⁵⁸ See, for example, source URL 1): [Joint Statement of the Visegrad Group and Slovenia on the Western Balkans](http://www.v4group.eu).

2) [The Visegrad Group: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia | Visegrad Group Ministerial Statement on the Western Balkans](http://www.v4group.eu)

¹⁵⁹ Source URL: [Refugees in Poland: Figures and development \(worlddata.info\)](http://www.worlddata.info)

increase).¹⁶⁰ As noted by the author, the country remained passive on CEAS issues up until 2014.¹⁶¹ Poland, the economic leader of the V4¹⁶², accepted a total of 2067 applications in the period from 1992-2003.¹⁶³ The Czech Republic, striving to Europeanize and adjoin to the EU acquis, granted less than 1000 applications in the period from 1996 to 2004.¹⁶⁴ Finally, Hungary, which, in contrary to the other V4 members, is a direct arrival and, in some cases, a destination state for Mediterranean refugees, had rejection rates of over 85% in the period from 1996-2004, accepting, on average, less than 200 applications annually¹⁶⁵. Although Peter Stepper's study ends with the 2004 data on asylum applications, I persisted with the analysis and found that the refugee acceptance rates in all V4 countries mirrored the 1996-2004 statistics in the period from 2011 to 2015 (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1. Total Asylum Application Granted¹⁶⁶/ Total Applications Received. 2011-2015

Year	Poland	Slovakia	Hungary	Czech Republic
2011	273/ 6885	5/490	43/ 1690	108/ 750
2012	99/10750	25/730	61/ 2155	50/ 740
2013	187/ 15 240	10/440	168 / 18 895	91/695
2014	260/ 8 020	10/330	229/ 42 775	60/1145
2015	339/ 12 190	5/330	142/ 177 135	69/1515

("Total asylum applications" data taken from Eurostat. Source URL: [Statistics | Eurostat \(europa.eu\)](#), "total asylum acceptance" from Source URL: [UNHCR - Refugee Statistics](#))

By observing the Table, it can be concluded that until 2015, Slovakia and the Czech Republic were rather immune to large rates of asylum applications. Nonetheless, both states were still reluctant to grant asylum in large quantities. On the other hand, Poland and Hungary attained double digit application rates in 2012 and 2013 respectively. Although these figures are meager compared to the net asylum applications received by major European states¹⁶⁷, it is clear that both the Polish and Hungarian governments, coupled

¹⁶⁰ Stepper, P., The Visegrad Group and the EU agenda on migration: A coalition of the unwilling? *COJOURN*. Vol. 1. N. 1. 2016. P. 66.

¹⁶¹ Ibid. P. 66.

¹⁶² According to the GDP figure and its comparison to that of Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. Source URL: [GDP - Countries - List | Europe \(tradingeconomics.com\)](#).

¹⁶³ Stepper, P., The Visegrad Group and the EU agenda on migration: A coalition of the unwilling? *COJOURN*. Vol. 1. N. 1. 2016. P. 67-68.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. P. 69-70.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. P. 71.

¹⁶⁶ This figure does not account for the decisions on recognizing refugees, providing subsidiary protection status and granting humanitarian protection. However, with these rates, the final numbers do not change significantly.

¹⁶⁷ Here I consider the statistics for Germany. Source URL: [Germany Asylum Applications | 2008-2020 Data | 2021-2023 Forecast | Historical | Chart \(tradingeconomics.com\)](#).

with their underdeveloped immigrant infrastructure and policies¹⁶⁸, were extremely ill-prepared to handle any mass influx of immigrants. Also, based on the statistics, we can identify Poland and Hungary as local crisis Affected States in regard to the V4 group (as they received 15-600x more applications than Slovakia and the Czech Republic), whereas on a more broadened European scale, only Hungary may be qualified to be considered “Affected” (as it had the highest largest number of asylum applications per 100 000 citizens within the EU)¹⁶⁹. However, several scholars have argued that Hungary is a strong NAS as it rejected the majority of its asylum applications and prevented refugees from sheltering in the country.¹⁷⁰ This allows me to categorize and view all 4 Visegrad members as NAS.

From a theoretical perspective, pre-crisis asylum actions taken by the V4 countries can be purely considered through a Liberal Intergovernmentalism and, even, a Neofunctionalist lens as (a) issue salience and public awareness of migration issues in all V4 states was at an extreme low, (b) intergovernmental bargaining produced both negative and positive path dependencies, and (c) most domestic party rhetoric was circled around unemployment, economic problems, and corruption following the aftermath of the 2009 Euro crisis. To reinforce the latter claim, I will compare the attitudes of the public towards two issues: unemployment and migration (both labor connected and forced) in the period from 2012-2016 (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2. Public awareness and issue salience of the immigration problem compared to unemployment distress.

Most important national issue according to public opinion:					
<u>Immigration (%) / Unemployment (%)</u>					
Year	Poland	Slovakia	Hungary	Czech Republic	EU average
2012	7% / 35%	5% / 30%	7% / 33%	9% / 30%	8% / 36%
2013	3% / 69%	0% / 59%	2% / 60%	3% / 44%	10% / 51%
2014	7% / 54%	1% / 57%	3% / 50%	8% / 40%	18% / 45%
2015	9% / 53%	4% / 57%	13% / 45%	18% / 29%	23% / 42%

And France. Source URL: France Asylum Applications | 2009-2020 Data | 2021-2023 Forecast | Historical | Chart (tradingeconomics.com).

¹⁶⁸ Baureova, H., Migration Policy of the V4 in the Context of Migration Crisis. *Politics in Central Europe*. Vol. 14. N. 2. 2018. P. 106.

¹⁶⁹ Biermann, F., Political (non-reform) in the euro crisis and the refugee crisis: a liberal intergovernmentalist explanation. *Journal of European Public Policy*. Vol. 26. N. 3. 2017. P. 16.

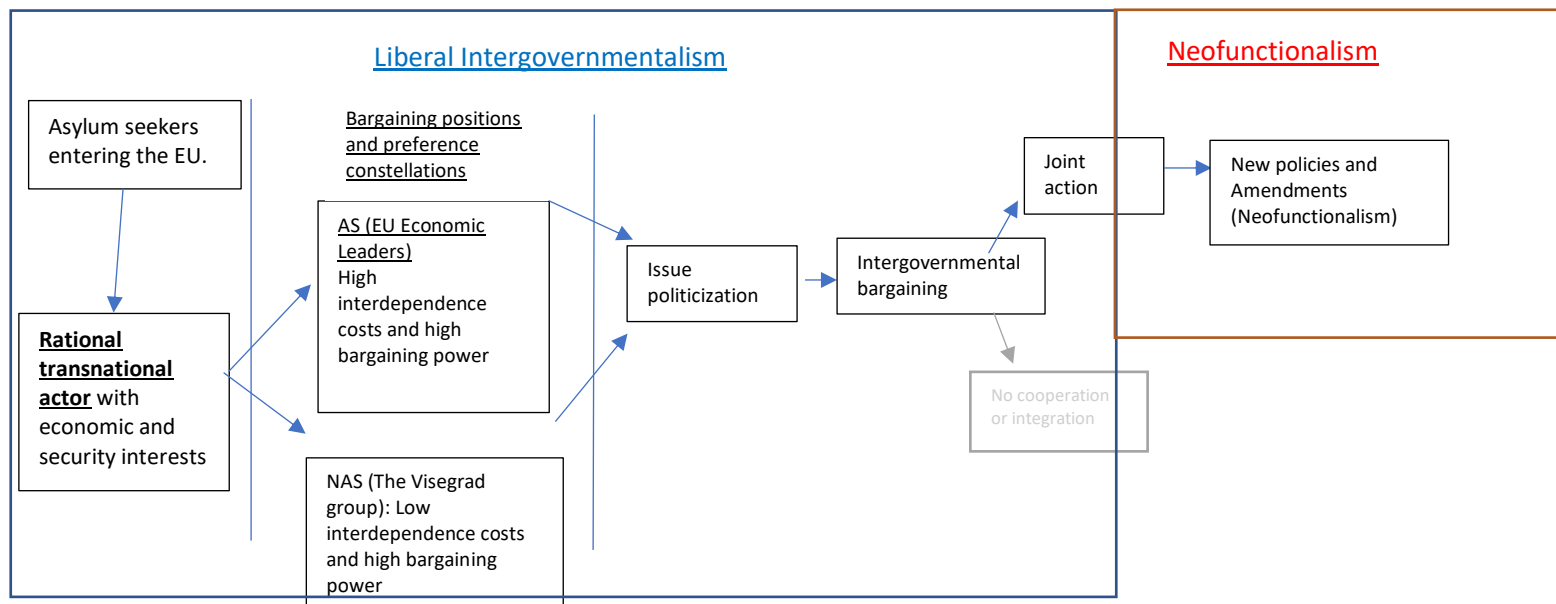
¹⁷⁰ Ibid. P. 17.

2016	50% / 7%	51% / 10%	65% / 8%	63% / 7%	45% / 16%
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(Data collected from Eurobarometer surveys 2012-2016)¹⁷¹

Table 3.2 demonstrates that the question of handling asylum applications was totally left to ruling elite groups, which acted in line with their economic interests upon choosing to accept migrants and negotiating EU immigration policies – the CEAS amendments and the Lisbon Treaty of 2009 (see Chapter 1). Therefore, it is possible to exclude Postfunctionalism from the theoretical model aimed at analyzing the shifts in migration narratives in the pre-crisis period, as the theory itself operates in an environment of increased public awareness, where politicization forces usually come into play (see Diagram 3.1). However, it should be noted that Postfunctionalist forces will become relevant in 2015-2016, as the immigration issue started to predominate over unemployment distress during these years.

Diagram 3.1 (Visegrad and EU interaction on immigration policies prior to the Schengen crisis)



Crisis period

As a subregional unit, regardless of the diverse local affectedness to the refugee surge and the fluctuating relationships prior to 2015, the V4 countries were quick to realize the burden placed on Hungary as a frontline state at the start of the crisis. This led to the advent of “securitizing speech acts” ... in every

¹⁷¹ Source URL 1: Microsoft Word - ReportST78COMMvolume1EN_2 (europa.eu) Microsoft Word - FirstResultsEB793COMMstandardEN_final (europa.eu)

Source URL 2: Microsoft Word - FirstResultsEB833COMMstandardEN_final.docx (europa.eu)

Source URL 3: Microsoft Word - FirstResultsEB823COMMstandardEN_final3 (europa.eu)

single country in the V4¹⁷², joining in on the harsh anti-immigrant position initially promoted by Hungary's PM Victor Orban: Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia would jump to portray Brussels pro-migration policies as violations of national sovereignty, while also playing the "religion" card to draw in public support and further legitimize their antagonist Eurosceptic positions.¹⁷³ In the summer of 2015, migration rhetoric started to radicalize through the various controversial and misleading claims made by the leaders of the V4 against the acceptance of refugees.

Slovakia

As demonstrated above, Slovakia, like all other V4 countries, held to a heavy anti-immigrant policy over the course of its existence. This is why it is no surprise that, as the rates of asylum applications and public issue awareness increased, Slovakian authorities solidified their hardline rhetoric: In 2015, Slovakian Prime Minister Robert Fico would highlight that all illegal immigrants were economic migrants and not refugees, who pose a threat to the economy and welfare of Slovakia.¹⁷⁴ In August, the spokesman for Slovakia's Interior Ministry Ivan Metik attempted to buck pass all responsibility to Western Europe by referring to the possibility of cultural deterioration, claiming that Slovakia was unsuitable for the integration of Muslims as it had no mosques, and underlining the fact that any action to improve migration facilities and conditions would be useless as the state resembles predominantly a transit country for illegal immigrants.¹⁷⁵

Slovakia's rather light anti-immigrant position would turn even more radical after the November terrorist attacks in Paris. In a brief following the atrocity, Robert Fico would claim that Slovakian "Security is more important than immigrant's rights."¹⁷⁶ This statement would be followed up by the PM reassuring his citizens that all Muslims were being monitored in the country.¹⁷⁷ He also "announced that Slovakia will impose tighter security measures in detention and asylum facilities and immediately deport every migrant who enters the country illegally,"¹⁷⁸ thus further signaling that Slovakia will not support any EU relocation schemes. In light of the proximity of the Parliamentary elections, Robert Fico would ramp up his radical anti-immigrant narrative. This came as a surprise as (a) SMER was a Left-Wing pro-European party, and (b) public attitude towards cooperation with the EU remained fairly positive during the period (see Table 3.2). These actions strictly contradict the main rationale assumptions of Postfunctionalism. Regardless of whether this Left-Wing hardline stance was economically motivated or aimed towards consolidating with

¹⁷² Stepper, P., The Visegrad Group and the EU agenda on migration: A coalition of the unwilling? *COJOURN*. Vol. 1. N. 1. 2016. P. 64.

¹⁷³ Baureova, H., Migration Policy of the V4 in the Context of Migration Crisis. *Politics in Central Europe*. Vol. 14. N. 2. 2018. P. 112.

See also Source URL: Orbán says migrants threaten 'Christian' Europe – POLITICO.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. P. 112.

¹⁷⁵ Source URL: Slovakia 'will only accept Christian refugees' | News | DW | 20.08.2015

¹⁷⁶ Source URL: Fico: Security more important than migrants' rights - spectator.sme.sk

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Stepper, P., The Visegrad Group and the EU agenda on migration: A coalition of the unwilling? *COJOURN*. Vol. 1. N. 1. 2016. P. 67.

the V4, it definitely had a negative toll on the election outcome for Fico's SMER party in 2016, experiencing a loss of 34 Parliamentary seats.¹⁷⁹

Hungary

In Hungary's case, the immediate hard anti-refugee rhetoric adopted by PM Victor Orban, considering the fact that Hungary's migration system was unable to handle the large influx of migrants, is believed to have halted the decline in popularity Orban's party FIDESZ had been experiencing.¹⁸⁰ To stop the refugees, the government decided to (a) construct a 175-km fence on its borders with Serbia and Croatia, suspending the Geneva and Dublin conventions, (b) carry out a nation-wide anti-immigrant billboard campaign,¹⁸¹ and (c) hold a biased plebiscite, encouraging citizens to take to a negative position towards the migrants.¹⁸²

As soon as the handling of asylum applications got out of control, Victor Orban was quick to place the blame for the crisis on EU's misleading immigration policies, supported by those (hinting Angela Merkel) who hold "out the promise of a better life to immigrants and encourages them to leave everything behind and risk their lives in setting out for Europe."¹⁸³ He then pursued to elaborate on his position: "This [crisis] is not a European problem, it's a German problem."¹⁸⁴ Politicizing the migration issue was believed to devote the public's attention off of governmental corruption — an idea which was played upon by opposing parties and had taken a serious toll on FIDESZ's ratings¹⁸⁵. As soon as the radical rhetoric, however, turned out to be heavily supported by the public (see Table 3.2), Victor Orban doubled down on his extremist statements, with the government, simultaneously, issuing amendments to the criminal code to facilitate refugee detainment.¹⁸⁶ By October 2015, in the view of Victor Orban, migrants had become "an army"¹⁸⁷ of "foreign fighters"¹⁸⁸, who should be immediately deported back from all Entry states¹⁸⁹ as they pose a threat to Christian Europe.¹⁹⁰

¹⁷⁹ Source URL: POLITICO Poll of Polls — Slovak polls, trends, and election news for Slovakia – POLITICO

¹⁸⁰ Source URL: POLITICO Poll of Polls — Hungarian polls, trends and election news for Hungary – POLITICO

¹⁸¹ Source URL: Hungary's poster war on immigration - BBC News

¹⁸² Source URL: Migration questionnaire exposes the 'illiberal state' of Hungary (newsweek.com)

¹⁸³ Source URL: Migration crisis: Hungary PM says Europe in grip of madness | Migration | The Guardian

¹⁸⁴ Source URL: Orban: Refugee crisis is 'a German problem' | News | DW | 03.09.2015

¹⁸⁵ Baureova, H., Migration Policy of the V4 in the Context of Migration Crisis. *Politics in Central Europe*. Vol. 14. N. 2. 2018. P. 107.

¹⁸⁶ Stepper, P., The Visegrad Group and the EU agenda on migration: A coalition of the unwilling? *COJOURN*. Vol. 1. N. 1. 2016. P. 64.

¹⁸⁷ Source URL: Refugees 'look like an army', says Hungarian PM Viktor Orban | Refugees | The Guardian

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Source URL: Orbán says migrants threaten 'Christian' Europe – POLITICO

As asylum claims sky-rocketed in 2015 and 2016¹⁹¹, the radical position aided FIDESZ to gain approximately 10 percentage points in support levels over the first year of the crisis, while second favorite far-right “Jobbik” party’s rather odd moderate position on migration¹⁹² and the left-wing MSZP party’s decision not to take part in any debates on the issue had both groups witness 5-10 percentage point decreases in their ratings.¹⁹³ Nowadays, FIDESZ continues to stick to its hardline rhetoric, with Victor Orban encouraging Western European States to address the root of the problem, which continues to allow “Muslim invaders”¹⁹⁴ to enter into Europe.¹⁹⁵

Poland

Prior to the 2015 Polish Parliamentary elections, ruling party Civic Platform (PO) was divided between adopting a “zero-acceptance” policy and an “acceptance under pressure” position. On the one hand, the President of the European Council at the time was a former Polish President with close connections to PO, which is why Poland was unwilling to contradict Western Europe in their strategies of dealing with the refugees¹⁹⁶. On the other hand, pressure from Far-Right opposition parties and negative public opinion was on a steady increase.¹⁹⁷ In the end, the Polish government decided to pledge only 7000 asylum spots.

Interestingly, despite the initial non-friendly economically motivated attitude towards immigration, Poland’s reaction to the crisis best builds a case for the implementation of the Postfunctionalist framework: PO’s rather moderate “solidarity in line with the country’s capabilities” position¹⁹⁸, aimed at preserving its warm relationship with Western Europe, was quickly aggravated upon by the populist right-wing Law and Justice party (PiS). Siding with Hungary, PiS radicalized the migration rhetoric, claiming that “Migrants bring parasites and protozoa” and built awareness of the rumored 100 000 resettlement plan, portraying it as if it was “undergoing heavy consideration by the ruling party” at that time.¹⁹⁹ Although such radical claims were not based on any facts and/or scientific evidence, heavy issue politicization enabled PiS not only to surpass PO in popularity in June of 2015, but had the former organization continue to witness an

¹⁹¹ Source URL: Asylum statistics - Statistics Explained (europa.eu)

¹⁹² By “odd” I mean the fact that the far-right organization took to a rather moderate stance when the large inflow of migrants began. This was best portrayed by Ratkovic, M., Migrant Crisis and the Strengthening of the Right Wing in the European Union. *Megatrend revija*. Vol. 14. N. 3. 2017. P. 53.

¹⁹³ Gyori, G., The Political Communication of the Refugee Crisis in Central and Eastern Europe. *Policy Solutions*. 2016. P. 24-26.

¹⁹⁴ Source URL: Viktor Orbán: Hungary doesn’t want ‘Muslim invaders’ – POLITICO

¹⁹⁵ Source URL: Hungary’s Viktor Orban pushes for anti-migrant bloc to counter France and Germany | News | DW | 10.01.2019

¹⁹⁶ Baureova, H., Migration Policy of the V4 in the Context of Migration Crisis. *Politics in Central Europe*. Vol. 14. N. 2. 2018. P. 110.

¹⁹⁷ Gyori, G., The Political Communication of the Refugee Crisis in Central and Eastern Europe. *Policy Solutions*. 2016. P. 52.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. P. 50.

¹⁹⁹ Source URL: Migrants carry ‘parasites and protozoa,’ warns Polish opposition leader – POLITICO

upward trend in ratings up until the general election (October 2015). PO, on the other hand, had collapsed by roughly 25 percentage points by October of 2015 and became Poland's third most popular party by the start of 2016.²⁰⁰ After its electoral victory, PiS would not only cancel the pledged quotas, but also enhance its hardline migration rhetoric following the Paris attacks, when Polish PM Beata Szydlo even resorted to taking down the EU flag in her press conference while stating that the Polish government was “going to pursue a policy that, while appreciating [our] EU membership, secures maximum benefit for [our] Polish citizens, for Poland's economy and for [our] homeland.”²⁰¹

The Czech Republic

With a history of accepting less than 200 refugees annually, the Czech Republic was also not eager to adjoin to a burden-sharing scheme proposed by the EU. Prior to the rise in public awareness, the Czech government had demonstrated a clear anti-immigrant position before the first EU meetings on migration, with PM Bohuslav Sobotka claiming that “[the Czech Republic] will strictly reject any attempt to introduce some permanent mechanism of redistributing refugees.”²⁰² Following the Paris attacks, in line with all other V4 members, the Czech Republic adopted a rather hardline position, with Czech President Milos Zeman stating that the country was “facing an organized invasion and not a spontaneous movement of refugees.”²⁰³ In support of Hungary's position, Milos Zeman also proposed to address the root of the crisis, establish “safe countries”, and implement stricter border protection measures.²⁰⁴

The V4

Prior to the crisis, the V4 group as a regional organization carried out joint neutral policy proposals for the EU in 2013, and then shifted its attention to the Ukraine dilemma in 2014, with almost all joint statements of the given year being aimed at supporting the hardline EU position towards Russia.²⁰⁵ The first joint declarations released on migration appeared in September of 2015 and directly after the Paris attacks in November 2015, with calls for securing the external border. In them, the Group expressed (a) its disagreement with the quota proposals, (b) its willingness to “provide practical assistance to the countries under significant pressure, especially to countries of the Western Balkans”²⁰⁶, (c) carry out a constructive

²⁰⁰ Gyori, G., The Political Communication of the Refugee Crisis in Central and Eastern Europe. *Policy Solutions*. 2016. P. 55.

²⁰¹ Source URL: Polish PM Beata Szydlo refuses EU refugee quota over Paris attack security fears | Daily Mail Online

²⁰² Source URL: Czech PM says will insist on rejecting migrant quotas | Reuters

²⁰³ Source URL: Czech Leader Calls Migrant Wave in Europe an 'Organized Invasion' (businessinsider.com)

²⁰⁴ Stepper, P., The Visegrad Group and the EU agenda on migration: A coalition of the unwilling? *COJOURN*. Vol. 1. N. 1. 2016. P. 70.

²⁰⁵ Source URL: The Visegrad Group: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia | Official Statements and Communiqués

²⁰⁶ Source URL: The Visegrad Group: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia | Joint Statement of the Visegrad Group Countries

dialogue “leading to effective common action”²⁰⁷, as well as (d) preserve all the benefits of the Schengen agreement.²⁰⁸ These proposals were put forward without any of the radical domestic terminology utilized for categorizing migrants as “invaders” and “foreign fighters”.

It is also vital to highlight that, although the first joint Statement was released in September, discussions over the redistribution of over 40 000 migrants from Greece and Italy, proposed by the European Council, had commenced in the summer of 2015, where it was made clear that none of the 4 members would tolerate a burden-sharing scheme.²⁰⁹ It was approximately at this moment that the domestic migrant rhetoric in 3/4 V4 countries started to radicalize (Poland would adjoin to the common position after its General Election in October 2015). This united standpoint on migration, providing conservative European states an alternative to Brussel’s common-line refugee policy, formed a cleavage between Western and Eastern Europe. As tension built up, issue politicization increased. The V4 was portrayed as a “negative coalition” by Western European states²¹⁰, while the Visegrad group itself (being part of the NAS category) aimed to buck pass all responsibility to the countries it seemed were encouraging migration. To counter the threats of Schengen disintegration, in December 2015, the Visegrad group introduced its “Friends of Schengen” initiative, targeted at like-minded nations whose national preferences were to preserve the economic benefits of the Schengen agreement and not comply with any relocation schemes.²¹¹ This demonstrates that the V4 considered its economic and security agendas whilst engaging in negotiations with the EU.

Overall, although joint rhetoric on migration remained not as radical as it was domestically in each of the V4 states, the Visegrad group kept to its hardline stance, despite the fact that, with the advent of the Turkey-EU migrant deal (supported by the organization), it became evident that “the relationship between the EU and V4 in relation to the migration crisis had calmed”²¹². In 2016, having the EU presidency, Slovakia was able to promote their notion of “flexible solidarity”, as well as their idea of a Migration Crisis

²⁰⁷ Source URL: The Visegrad Group: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia | Joint Statement of the Heads of Government of the Visegrad Group Countries

²⁰⁸ Source URL: The Visegrad Group: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia | Joint Statement of the Visegrad Group Countries

²⁰⁹ Baureova, H., Migration Policy of the V4 in the Context of Migration Crisis. *Politics in Central Europe*. Vol. 14. N. 2. 2018. P. 102.

²¹⁰ Cabada, L., and Waisova, S., The Visegrad Group as an Ambitious Actor of (Central-) European Foreign and Security Policy. *Politics in Central Europe*. Vol. 14. N. 2. 2018. P. 11.

²¹¹ Source URL: The Visegrad Group: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia | Joint Statement of the Visegrad Group Countries

²¹² Baureova, H., Migration Policy of the V4 in the Context of Migration Crisis. *Politics in Central Europe*. Vol. 14. N. 2. 2018. P. 104.

Response Mechanism²¹³, basing their arguments on mutual “trust”.²¹⁴ The hardline rhetoric is still being held as of April 2021.

Theory implementation

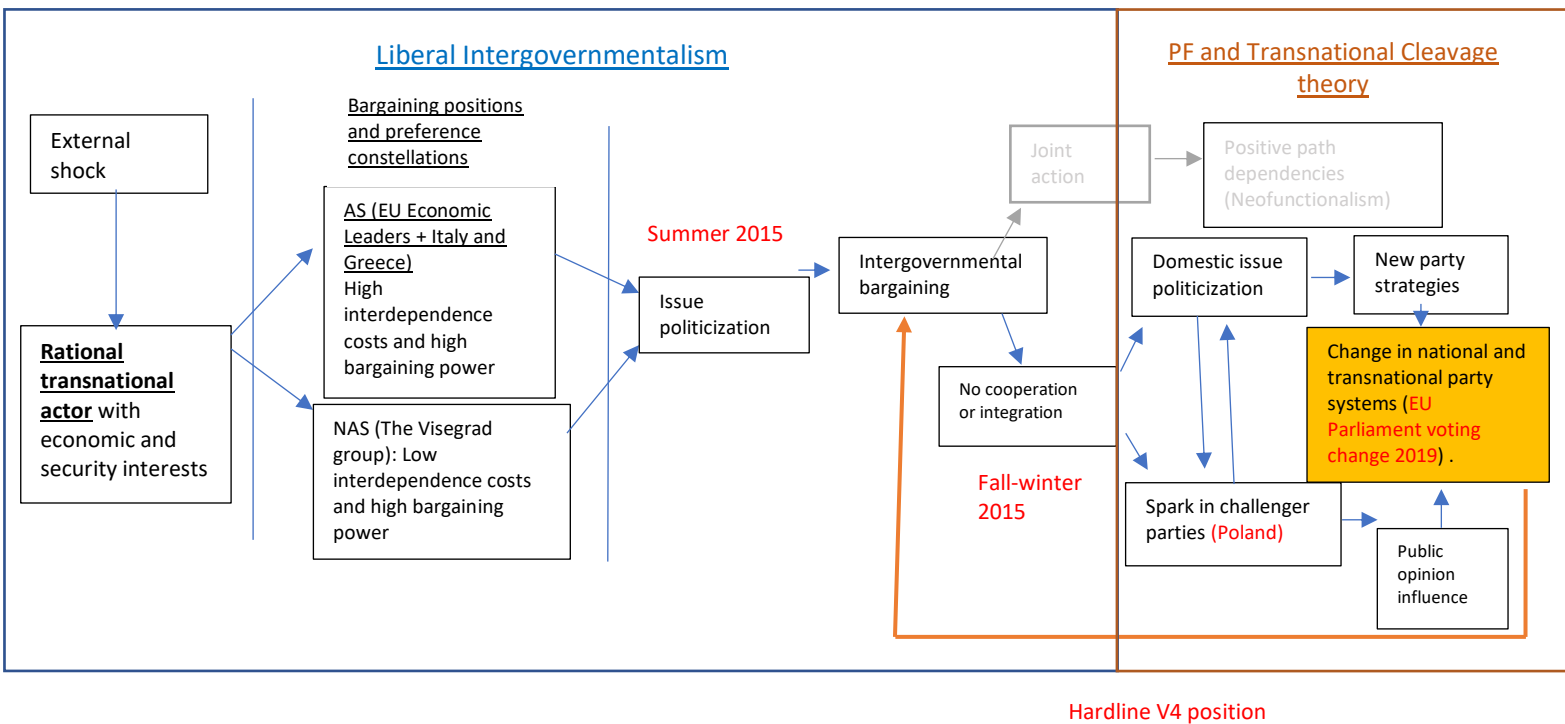
The shifts in migration narratives brought about by the refugee crisis serve as a satisfying example for the implementation of the dual-theory approach. By analyzing the stances on migration of the V4 group as a unit, as well as the individual positions of each member state before and after 2015, it can be concluded that in the period from 1993-2014, the Visegrad countries kept to a fairly quiet anti-immigrant position—accepting a certain minimum of refugees in order to satisfy Western EU members and preserve the favorable integration inclinations (see Chapter 1). It is believed that the large number of declined asylum applications in each country during this period was strongly connected to the national economic (high costs of maintenance) and security concerns (cultural preservation and safety issues) of each country. As demonstrated above, public perception of migration was almost absent, hence the non-existent development in issue politicization and crisis salience. The V4 as a unit, on the other hand, had aims of adjoining the EU after its formation, and, then, after this was achieved, began to deal with various other economic and security issues, while avoiding to touch upon problematic issues where disagreement with the EU was possible (up until 2015). With everything considered, it is safe to claim that the pre-crisis period can only be considered through a Liberal Intergovernmentalist or Neofunctionalist framework.

However, if we view the development of the crisis from a progressive-linear perspective, it can be seen that as soon as migration rates skyrocketed, the EU was not able to come to any cooperation or integration through intergovernmental bargaining. This negative path dependency allowed governments to justify their respective agendas through a more polarized rhetoric, allowing the public to become aware of the “intensity” of the conundrum. This, in turn, led to domestic opposition/ruling parties rapidly politicizing the issue by exaggerating the probable consequences of the crisis to attain an electoral advantage. After the domestic elections in Poland and Slovakia, the unified hardline rhetoric adopted by the ruling parties in each of the V4 members started to impact the intergovernmental bargaining stance of the subregional group (this is best viewed on Poland’s example as the country was initially against the radical stance on migration until the shift in its party system due to domestic politicization). As a result, LI forces were able to spark PF processes (see Diagram 3.2).

²¹³ Source URL: The Visegrad Group: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia | Joint Statement of V4 Interior Ministers on the Establishment of the Migration Crisis Response Mechanism Enhanced cooperation on border sharing data.

²¹⁴ Source URL: The Visegrad Group: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia | Joint Statement of the Heads of Governments of the Visegrad Group Countries: Towards Union of Trust and Action The word “trust” appears 9 times in the statement.

Diagram 3.2 Theory synthesis on the V4 immigration narrative



2) Visegrad interaction and consolidation. Changes in public attitude towards the V4 group

In order to coordinate and enhance their bargaining position, the V4 states resorted to increasing the regularity of their meetings and summits on multiple levels – a theoretically predictable act, as all the

countries possessed relatively similar regional, security, and economic goals. Despite the fluctuations in relationships (see Chapter 1), the Visegrad group has been statuelike in its hardline anti-immigration stance since 2015, regardless of the NWE and SE threats to abolish the Schengen agreement. Since, in 2015, public awareness of the existence and activity of the subregional group was low²¹⁵, it is arguable that their consolidation should be considered under a LI or NF approach.

However, as demonstrated in Chapter 1, the unified politicization of the crisis conducted by the group also resulted in increased public perception of the organization. Although public opinion had little influence on the interaction of the members, it did reinforce the rhetoric in each state, which indirectly effused into the confidence politicians possessed during their 2015-2016 negotiations with the EU. PF forces come into play when analyzing how the promoted “territorial identity” rhetoric acted as a “powerful source of mass political mobilization”²¹⁶, exacerbating the GAL/ TAN, West/ East cleavage.

Now, regarding V4 interaction, Michael Kob found that the frequency of annual V4 PM meetings increased from 3.4 to 6.6 following 2015,²¹⁷ with 2016 witnessing the largest number in press statements on economic, security, and migration issue.²¹⁸ It can be assumed that with the unchanged rhetoric, and the call for “Friends of Schengen”, the Visegrad group sought to aim its policy at finding like-minded states in its disputes with the EU in order to preserve the economic benefits of the Schengen while sidestepping the calamities of the enforced policies. This can be supported by the joint statements the V4 had carried out with Slovenia, Serbia, and Macedonia in 2016²¹⁹, with Austria, Croatia, and Slovenia in 2017²²⁰, and with Austria in 2018,²²¹ the latter of which was also experiencing significant difficulties in accommodating migrants.²²² Overall, the exogenous shock led to positive path dependencies and integration for the subregional organization.

Considering public opinion, in 2015, according to the Trends of Visegrad group questionnaires, over 99% of people surveyed in the V4 countries regarded Germany as their main foreign partner.²²³ In the same research, illegal migration was thought to be the third largest problem of the V4²²⁴, 60% of voters believed

²¹⁵ Gyarfasova, O., and Meseznikov, G., 25 Years of the V4 as Seen by the Public. Institute of Public Affairs. 2016. P. 10.

²¹⁶ Hooghe, L., and Marks, G., Cleavage theory meets Europe’s crises: Lipset, Rokkan, and the transnational cleavage. *Journal of European Public Policy*. Vol. 25. N. 1. 2018. P. 113.

²¹⁷ Kob, M., and Seville, A., Politicized Transnationalism: The Visegrad Countries in the Refugee Crisis. *Politics and Governance*. Vol. 8. N. 1. 2020. P. 100.

²¹⁸ Ibid. P. 101.

²¹⁹ Source URL: [The Visegrad Group: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia | Official Statements and Communiqués](#)

²²⁰ Source URL: [The Visegrad Group: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia | Official Statements and Communiqués](#)

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Gyori, G., The Political Communication of the Refugee Crisis in Central and Eastern Europe. *Policy Solutions*. 2016. P. 27-38.

²²³ Dostal, V., Trends of Visegrad European Policy. *AMO*. 2015. P. 22.

²²⁴ Ibid. P. 28.

the EU will grow in significance²²⁵, and an average of 86% considered the participation of their country in the V4 to be important. These numbers go in line with the 2015 Eurobarometer data.

In 2017, the Visegrad survey contained a novel set of questions. Germany remained a crucial ally for all countries but was now ranked 5th in importance.²²⁶ Most of the respondents still viewed the EU to be crucial for their national country and believed that the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary should adjoin to the Eurozone by 2025,²²⁷ although, at the same time, they did consider that their nation does not play a constructive role in the organization (an average of 43%)²²⁸ Importantly, although the heads of governments were strictly against the acceptance of refugees, “Except for Hungary, the majority of all countries’ respondents agreed at least somewhat that they should take part in some form of relocation”²²⁹ (with an average of 55%). It is also surprising that asylum (“social policy”) was ranked as the second most crucial question for the EU at this time.²³⁰

Finally, in 2019, the survey found that Germany remained a crucial partner for all nations, while intragroup attitudes declined. Tantamount to the results of the 2017 survey, immigration was considered a second-tier issue after cybersecurity by all 4 countries. An average of 82% believed that participation in the V4 was important,²³¹ and 99% advocated for his/her country to remain in the EU. All the data will now be summarized in the table below (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3 Changes of public perception of the Visegrad group’s foreign policy

	Number of people surveyed	Partnership with Germany (Western Europe)	Main problem for the V4 group	Migration problem in significance	Support for country to be part of V4	Benefit of being in the EU	Visegrad is an influential actor in the EU	Support for acceptance of immigrants from outside the EU
2015	1711	99%	Energy security	3 rd (72.4%)	99%	77%	45%	N/A
2017	451	92% (as ally- 39%)	Cyber policy	2 nd	73% (data on support)	98%	49%	55%- V4 survey

²²⁵ Ibid. P. 32.

²²⁶ Dostal, V., and Vegh, Z., Trends of Visegrad European Policy. AMO. 2017. P. 12.

²²⁷ Ibid. P. 21.

²²⁸ Ibid. P. 31.

²²⁹ Ibid. P. 28.

²³⁰ Ibid. P. 25.

²³¹ Janebova, P., and Vegh, Z., Trends of Visegrad European Policy. AMO. 2019. P. 26.

					for joint strategies)			16,7% - 232
2019	451	99%	Cyber security	2 nd (80%)	82%	99%	45%	16,5% ²³³

By analyzing the surveys conducted on regional public awareness of the Visegrad group, as well as the increased frequency of interaction among V4 government officials, it can be concluded that, surprisingly, the public endorsed its countries partnership with the West and membership in the EU more than they were concerned about the migration crisis, the politicization of which was meant to bolster the anti-asylum stance of the V4. Despite the strong national campaigns against refugees, the public was not affected to such a degree as to make the migration issue its top-priority. From 2015 to 2017, support for the EU membership had increased regardless of the tension escalations between the V4 and the EU. At the same time, almost half of the respondents in 2017 considered that the V4 plays a crucial role in the EU, a 4-percentage point increase from 2015 which might be due to the stumbling block Western Europe had encountered upon enforcing their liberal asylum policies onto the CEE.

In all fairness, AMO's surveys did have a rather limited number of respondents. Nonetheless, the questionnaires are still able to demonstrate the general tendencies of public attitude towards the V4 since the results, for the most part, are in line with Eurobarometer and Reliefweb data. The only disputable point, however, was the introduction of the "support for asylum question" in 2017, which, suspiciously, differed by almost 40 percentage points when compared to the data presented by Reliefweb. Despite this aberration, it is clear that there is heavy support for EU membership within the Visegrad group, while migration does not appear to be the most important domestic issue for the subregional organization (although it was paramount on the EU level as demonstrated above). Herein, it is possible to conclude that domestic issue politicization and PF processes created a basis for rather positive path dependencies for the deepening of Visegrad's integration into the EU: the public was, by in large, pro-European, heavily limiting the extent of disintegration flows the V4 could have resorted to during negotiations.

From a theoretical perspective, LI predominates over PF in regards to the changes in public perception of the V4, as well as the group's integration processes. However, issue politicization did affect the extent of disintegration the V4 group could have resorted to in intergovernmental bargaining, highlighting the effect of PF forces. Moreover, PF was also able to uncover and depict the East-West

²³² Source URL: [v4niem-repot-cz-hu-pl-sk-complete_0.pdf \(reliefweb.int\)](#) Here I took an average of the results of the V4 countries for each year.

²³³ Ibid.

transnational cleavage and its role in intergovernmental bargaining. Therefore, a dual-theory framework is also applicable in this case.

3) Changes in domestic and Union voting in the Visegrad group.

In this section I will first delve into the delineations in voting behavior in each of the 4 Visegrad countries throughout the period from 2014-2019 (to attain an understanding of pre and post-crisis voting) and then observe the 2014 and 2019 European Parliament election outcomes. At first glance, the issue of voting outcomes fits the PF narrative. However, as noted by Tanya Borzel, “it is very difficult to disentangle economic interests and social identities in these cases, since economic framings of the issues at stake inevitably contain identity arguments about what kind of community a polity ought to be.”²³⁴ Therefore, the LI acknowledgment of top-down issue politicization should also be taken into account in the analysis.

Prior to commencing the observation, I would like to highlight the influence the ruling elites in each of the countries had had on public awareness and public perception of the crisis. As noted by Sara Hobolt and Catherine de Vries, the new European political environment was created not only due to Eurosceptic policy promotion, but also thanks to the enhancement of identity politics, utilizing us/them and ingroup/outgroup identification.²³⁵ Several scholars have also found that the more personally affected voters were from the crisis, the more likely they were to vote for Left Wing Populist groups²³⁶ whereas those who were against financial transfers and to liberal immigration policies were likely to cast their ballots for right-wing populist parties.²³⁷ Moreover, it has been found that unemployment and anti-immigrant support have a strong correlation.²³⁸ Now, since the V4 is made up of NAS, we can comprehend the rise and retention of the positions Right Wing organizations had experienced in the CEE, bolstered first by the unemployment issues following the 2009 crash, and then by identity issues following the migrant crisis. Although the tendency of the European Parliament turning right had already been noticed back in 2009 by

²³⁴ Borzel, T., and Risse, T., From the euro to the Schengen crises: European integration theories, politicization, and identity politics. *Journal of European Public Policy*. 2017. P. 100.

²³⁵ Hobolt, S., and de Vries, C., Turning against the union? The impact of the crisis on the Eurosceptic vote in the 2014 European Parliament elections. *Electoral Studies*. Vol. 44. 2016. P. 500-510.

²³⁶ Hobolt, S., and Tilley, J., Fleeing the centre: the rise of the challenger parties in the aftermath of the Euro crisis. *West European Politics*. 2016. P. 3.

²³⁷ Hobolt, S., and de Vries, C., Turning against the union? The impact of the crisis on the Eurosceptic vote in the 2014 European Parliament elections. *Electoral Studies*. Vol. 44. 2016. P. 510.

²³⁸ *Ibid.* P. 508.

Milijana Ratkovic upon observing the European Parliament elections,²³⁹ it would not be until 2014 when Radical Right-Wing and Right-Wing Populist parties really make their voices heard.

On the European level, the divide of 2 diverging political ideologies has constantly been widening following the monetary economic bailouts of the Euro crisis. By 2012, 8/28 European Union (EU) member states had received some form of financial bailout (the V4 not included), and unemployment had hit record post-war highs. This led to voters resorting to “pocketbook” voting, where they chose specified policies aimed at improving their economic welfare state over general party ideology.²⁴⁰ Such policies, in turn, were mostly promoted by populist parties, since, as demonstrated by Liesbet Hooghe, traditional parties find it arduous to shift their political stances during crises.²⁴¹ Due to this, the Populist Radical Right organization in Poland (PiS) was able to overtake the Centre-right party Civic Platform in the 2015 domestic Parliamentary elections. The “voter preference” trend reversal would continue into the 2019 elections where PiS’s popularity would see a 6-percentage point increase from 38% to 44% in comparison with the 2015 results.²⁴²

In Hungary, Populist Radical Right FIDESZ would find itself on an upward trend in popularity following the Euro crisis, leading it to attain 51% of all votes in the 2014 Hungarian Parliamentary elections. Although it did witness an insignificant dip following the election, a strong correlation is still noticeable between the start of utilizing hardline rhetoric and the regaining of popularity by the organization: at the start of the refugee crisis, the party scored 43% on the polls, a number which saw a steady increase up until the 2018 Parliamentary elections, where the group received 49% of all votes.²⁴³

In Slovakia, former ruling Left-Wing Populist party remained dominant in the polls following the Euro crisis, as it was able to adjoin to the anti-immigrant rhetoric promoted by the V4. However, by the 2016 General elections, as voters came to understand their low affectedness to the crisis, a shift in voting behavior was noticed: SMER lost approximately 7 percentage points — a gap downward in ratings — the trend of which would continue downwards into 2020, yielding first place to Populist Right Wing OL’ANO.

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²³⁹ Ratkovic, M., Migrant Crisis and the Strengthening of the Right Wing in the European Union. *Megatrend revija*. Vol. 14. N. 3. 2017. P. 47-60.

²⁴⁰ Hobolt, S., and de Vries, C., Turning against the union? The impact of the crisis on the Eurosceptic vote in the 2014 European Parliament elections. *Electoral Studies*. Vol. 44. 2016. P. 505.

²⁴¹ Hooghe, L., and Marks, G., Cleavage theory meets Europe’s crises: Lipset, Rokkan, and the transnational cleavage. *Journal of European Public Policy*. Vol. 25. N. 1. 2018. P. 109-135.

²⁴² Source URL: POLITICO Poll of Polls — Polish polls, trends and election news for Poland – POLITICO

²⁴³ Source URL: POLITICO Poll of Polls — Hungarian polls, trends and election news for Hungary – POLITICO

²⁴⁴ Source URL: POLITICO Poll of Polls — Slovak polls, trends and election news for Slovakia – POLITICO

In the Czech Republic, Centre-Populist ANO, formed in 2011 as an anti-establishment brand, was able to lead in the polls straightly after conceding the 2013 elections, and into the 2017 Legislative elections. Being a Centrist party with a hardline anti-immigrant position, it did witness a slight increase in popularity from 2015 to 2017 (roughly 2-3 percentage points), yet it did not have the same growth in popularity as other Right-Wing parties in CEE. However, notably, Left-Wing S&D fell by 10 percentage points after its narrow victory in 2013 during the same period,²⁴⁵ supporting the claim that the NAS status took a toll on Left-Wing organizations.

Overall, although anti-Muslim rhetoric has been found to have no correlation with voter preference²⁴⁶, a strong mutual three-way dependency among anti-immigrant sentiment, top-down issue politicization, and personal crisis affectedness rates is noticed: as more people leaned towards a “more socially inclusive notion... against the economic elites”²⁴⁷ following the Euro crisis and the record unemployment figures it brought along, Left-wing and Centrist parties were able to gain advantage in 3 out of the 4 Visegrad member states (excluding Hungary). However, by 2015, the wave of Left-wing Populism had practically diminished, as “unemployment and inflation remained relatively low across much of Europe.”²⁴⁸ As demonstrated above, the advent of identity politics into the political environment enabled the usage of populist mobilization techniques for Right Wing organizations, which promoted anti-EU establishment solutions to the refugee crisis. Since in all 4 Visegrad states anti-immigrant sentiment was relatively high prior to the mobilization, Right-wing parties were able to gain significant ground over left-wing ideologies. This claim can be supported by the trends in voting behavior in each of the 4 countries.

Visegrad European Parliament voting

As there is an abundance of studies reflecting on EP voting and the increase in Populist Right seats²⁴⁹, in this section this essay will focus specifically on the impact of the refugee crisis on Visegrad EU Parliamentary voting.

In Poland, the largest EP parliament member among the V4, 38/ 51 seats were split evenly among the left-wing PO party and Right-wing PiS, with Pro-EU MEP’s predominating over Eurosceptic members after the 2014 vote. In 2019, EP voting took a drastic shift in line with the general support for PiS during the period, handing the party 26/ 51 seats. The supremacy of the Right-Wing party was so strong, that all

²⁴⁵ Source URL: POLITICO Poll of Polls — Czech polls, trends and election news for Czech Republic – POLITICO

²⁴⁶ Hobolt, S., and Tilley, J., *Fleeing the centre: the rise of the challenger parties in the aftermath of the Euro crisis*. West European Politics. 2016. P. 5-10.

²⁴⁷ Ivaldi, G., *Populist Voting in the 2019 European Elections*. *Totalitarismus und Demokratie*. Vol. 17. 2020. P. 70.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.* P. 71.

²⁴⁹ Ratkovic, M., *Migrant Crisis and the Strengthening of the Right Wing in the European Union*. *Megatrend revija*. Vol. 14. N. 3. 2017. P. 48-52.

other Centrist and Left-wing organizations were forced to form a “European Coalition”, consisting of 12 diverse parties. Surprisingly, the Coalition still received a minority of seats (only 22). Moreover, although general support for the EU increased in Poland during the period (according to Eurobarometer data) the 22% larger voter turnout selected more Eurosceptic MEP’s than pro-European representatives (26 over 25).

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In Hungary, the FIDESZ and KDNP alliance gained one seat in comparison with the 2014 election, while the number of Eurosceptic MEPs decreased by one seat. This goes in line with the steady increase in EU support on the one hand, as well as the anti-immigrant sentiment on the other.

In Slovakia, the Left-Wing Smer party, predictably, lost a seat in 2019 when compared to the 2014 elections (4 to 3), and, although OL’ANO would only see a drastic rise in popularity in 2020, the diminishing of left-wing MEP’s became evident by the rise of Eurosceptic MEPs in 2019 (from 1 to 4). Regardless, since Slovakia is the most EU integrated member of the Visegrad group (as it is the only country that accepted the Euro as its currency), Eurooptimism still predominates in the state.²⁵¹

In the Czech Republic, EP voting strongly correlated with domestic party selection, with ANO attaining the majority of seats in both the 2014 and 2019 elections (4 and 6 respectively). Moreover, the number of Eurosceptic MEPs increased by 3 seats, attaining majority.²⁵²

As a result, Visegrad EP voting behavior practically corresponds to not only the domestic Election outcomes promoted by intense issue politicization following the migrant crisis in all 4 member states, but also to the general European trend of the rising Right-Wing popularity, and receding Left-wing and Centrist support.

Theory implementation

Theoretically, PF alone provides a sufficient explanation for the rise of Right-wing parties to power in all 4 Visegrad states, as well as the sequential shifts in polling data for Left-wing, Right-wing, and Centrist parties as the framework heavily focuses on how crises impact cultural identification and public attitudes. Nonetheless, the theory does not elaborate on how the novel national political environment impacted macro-level intergovernmental bargaining in the period between the domestic elections. It also does not account for the top-down economically motivated politicization techniques utilized by the heads

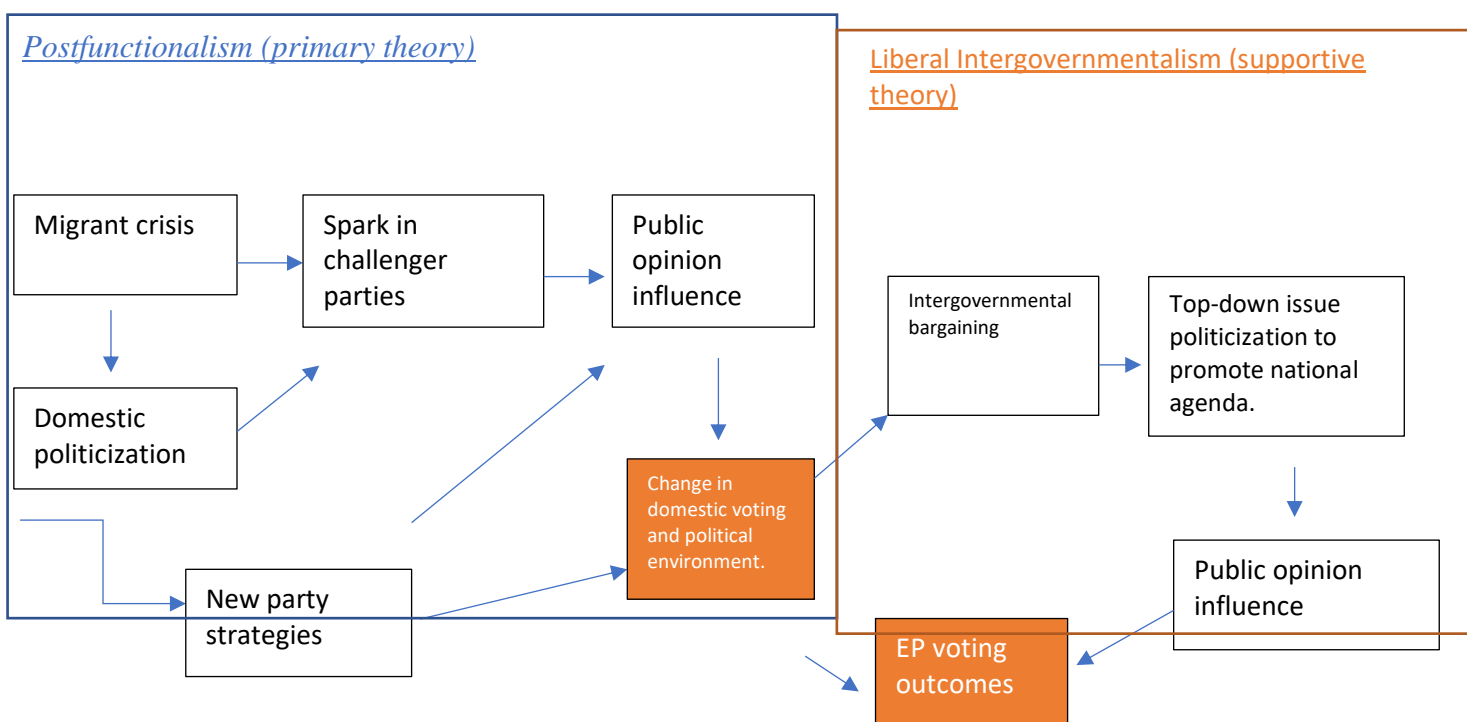
²⁵⁰ Ivaldi, G., Populist Voting in the 2019 European Elections. *Totalitarismus und Demokratie*. Vol. 17. 2020. P. 72. and Source URL: [POLITICO Poll of Polls — Polish polls, trends and election news for Poland – POLITICO](#)

²⁵¹ Source URL: [POLITICO Poll of Polls — Slovak polls, trends and election news for Slovakia – POLITICO](#)

²⁵² Source URL: [POLITICO Poll of Polls — Czech polls, trends and election news for Czech Republic – POLITICO](#)

of governments to promote their national agendas, which could have severely affected EP voting and MEP policies. Scholar Veronica Zapletalova found that apart from the refugee accommodation issue, Central Eastern European countries deliberately encouraged Euroscepticism to bolster their positions in debates on EU energy, climate, and security policies, which, coincidentally, were also the public's main concerns from 2015-2020 in every Visegrad state (even at its peak, the migration issue remained a second-tier concern within the V4). This is why LI must act as a supporting theory in this field, elaborating on the PF prism, in order to analyze the changes in voting behavior following the Schengen crisis (see Diagram 3.3).

Diagram 3.3 Theory implementation for the shifts in Voting behavior



Conclusion

The goal of this dissertation was to analyze the socio-political affects the migrant crisis has had so far on the Visegrad group. Upon observing the literature on this topic, it became clear that the 3 predominant crisis integration theories, taken individually, do not elaborate on how shifts in one political/ social sphere affected other policy areas— in this case, how public perception and politicization techniques influenced macro/elite-level interests, intergovernmental bargaining, and integration path dependencies. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, LI fails to analyze the influence of politicization on identity politics, whereas PF does not seem to focus on economically driven elite actions taken to preserve a country's national interests, as well as the top-down issue politicization methods used by elites to support their hardline policies. To solve this issue, I argued that a new analytical model, engrossing PF and LI, must be utilized to observe the refugee crisis outcomes.

By delving into the fluctuations in migrant rhetoric, the shifts in Visegrad interaction and consolidation, as well as the transformations in party strategies with the novel voting patterns in Chapter 3, this paper has demonstrated that a dual-theory synthesis delivers a more profound understanding of the consequences of the crisis in all 3 socio-political fields, despite my initial assumption that, in various cases, a discrete theoretical model could still be more suitable. Firstly, the coupled LI and PF framework was able to demonstrate why ruling parties within the V4 radicalized their anti-immigrant and Eurosceptic rhetoric after 2015, regardless of the attitude towards the EU of the general public. The extremist rhetoric, initially promoted by Hungary and Slovakia, influenced Poland and the Czech Republic to consolidate, thereby increasing their bargaining position on regional economic and security issues. Even though the hardline stance did not spring serious disintegration motives as the V4 was interested in preserving the economic benefits of Schengen (as predicted by LI), it did, however, lead to domestic issue politicization and changes in the political environments (PF forces).

Secondly, regarding Visegrad interaction and public perception of the organization, although LI best depicts the shifts in intergovernmental bargaining that appeared after the increase in group meetings, PF is able to demonstrate the “deterrents” that were established for Right-wing elite maneuverability, with the public in each state desiring to preserve Germany (the West) as a key partner for the group, positively viewing EU membership, and even opting for further integration with Western Europe. This strain ultimately prevented the V4 from following in the footsteps of Britain, as well as developing their “Friends of Schengen” notion, which had disappeared completely after the EU-Turkey deal.

Finally, by delving into the voting behavior of the citizens in the Visegrad countries, PF best illustrates the reasons for the changes in national and transnational party systems. However, in post-electoral periods, LI aids to expand on how the new intergovernmental bargaining positions, brought about by the electoral changes, could have had an impact on the delineations in transnational party systems and voting (European Parliament). Therefore, the incorporation of both a top-down and a bottom-up approach

to interpreting the exogenous shock enabled the filling of the explanatory gaps of the three dominant crisis specific European integration theories²⁵³ and provided a more thorough understanding of the consequences of the migrant crisis.

²⁵³ Borzel, T., and Risse, T., From the euro to the Schengen crises: European integration theories, politicization, and identity politics. *Journal of European Public Policy*. 2017. P. 102.

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