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Visegrad Four cooperation during the migration crisis

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Acknowledgements

Abstract

Together with the unprecedented migration flow in Europe**,** 2015-2016 period marked the date of the increased visibility of the four Central European states, otherwise known as Visegrad Four group. The Visegrad Four earned its fame by staying united against the EU proposals on tackling the migration crisis and soon became the focus of many academic queries. Along such academic line, this research too focuses on the case of Visegrad cooperation during the migration crisis and attempts to challenge already existing theoretical model on international cooperation with this particular case study. The selected theoretical model developed by Blondin & Boin (2020) put forward eight factors based on the collective action and crisis management theories which, according to the authors, explain the reasons states decide to cooperate in times of crisis. This research employs the pattern-matching technique to compare between the expected patterns derived from the aforementioned theoretical model and observed patterns based on the case of the Visegrad Four. As a result of the pattern matching analysis, the study confirmed four factors such as repeated interaction, feasible solutions, a small number of actors, trusted leadership to be true in the case of the Visegrad Four cooperation, while crisis exposure was just partially confirmed and the remaining factors such as domestic politicization, interdependence, and coordination mechanism were disconfirmed.

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List of abbreviations

B3 - Benelux
CEAS - Common European Asylum System
Commission - European Commission
Council - European Council
EaP - Eastern Partnership
EASO - European Union Agency for Asylum
EU - European Union
FRONTEX - European Border and Coast Guard Agency
IVF - International Visegrad Fund
NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PM - Prime-Minister
UNHCR - The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UN - United Nations
V4 - Visegrad Four
WB - Western Balkans

Introduction

Various events such as war, instability, and political crisis in the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa created a crisis, which spilled over the EU in a sense of unprecedented migratory flow challenging the southern borders of the EU, with the all-time high number of asylum seekers reported at the beginning of 2015 and throughout 2016. The migratory flow was mixed, in other words, those, who arrived at the EU coastlines and land borders included a heterogeneous group consisting of various nationals such as people from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Eritrea, Somalia, etc., and included 'asylum-seekers and other categories of vulnerable migrants' as well as 'economic migrants' (Pastore, & Henry, 2016, p.46-47). The frontline countries at the external borders of the EU such as Greece and Italy and later Hungary were overwhelmed with the unprecedented number of asylum seekers arriving from the Mediterranean route and therefore EU-wide debates were initiated on how to help these countries. The EU proposed a set of policies under the *European Agenda on Migration* package based on 10 specific suggestions, some of which ignited the most fierce and yet united collective response from the Visegrad states. The Visegrad Four regional group consisting of four Central European states of Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia **coordinated collective action and jointly responded to the migration crisis by strongly rejecting some of the EU policies** such as the mandatory redistribution of migrants according to the quotas and relocation of asylum-seekers from overburdened Greece and Italy, while advocating for other measures such as stronger border protection, cooperation with third-non-EU transit countries to keep the migrants outside the EU and fixing the crisis in the countries it originated from (Economist Intelligence, September 11, 2015). Despite the pressures from the European Commission and West European countries such as Germany and France, the Visegrad Four pursued their joint position (Economist Intelligence, September 11, 2015). The Visegrad countries did not abide by the EU policies and instead coordinated and released a number of statements, in which they presented their joint positions on the migration crisis. As a result, in 2015-2016 the media and newsletters were filled with the headlines such as 'Big Bad Visegrad' (The Economist, January 28, 2016), 'The Visegrad four: Brussels' eastern critics' (Financial Times, August 29, 2016), 'The Manufacture of Hatred: Scapegoating Refugees in Central Europe' (The New Humanitarian, December 2016) and names were given to the alliance such as 'awkward quartet' (Financial Times, August 29, 2016), etc. Albeit negative, this certainly drew much attention to the group which has not been much known or heard about before, and eventually, the scholarly attention increased drastically due to such a shift of dynamics. Academia started exploring various topics around Visegrad Four and the migration crisis, including questioning the reasons behind Visegrad's cooperation and their united response to the migration crisis. My research attempts to contribute to the same debate by exploring more about the joint response of Visegrad states to the migration crisis.

1.   Literature review

The literature review serves two functions in this paper; it attempts to draw attention to the scholarly debates on the possible explanations of Visegrad 4's joint response to the migration crisis and inadvertently, it also serves as a historical background overview to shed light on the events that took place during the migration crisis. Specifically, it covers the literature starting from the 2015 period, when the migration crisis first took place. Prior research mostly connects identity aspects, culture, religion, security dimension, economy, nativism, the rise of right-wing populist parties, and the historical perspective of the *Eastern European* legacy with the Visegrad's response to the migration crisis. This literature reviews the factors which influenced the decision-making of Visegrad Four regarding the migration crisis. In the literature, some authors prefer to use the term *refugee crisis*, but the usage of the *migration crisis* is more prevalent. Therefore, before going into Chapter 1, the research makes a distinction between the refugee and the migration crisis.

What is the difference between a refugee and a migrant?/Is it a migrant or refugee crisis?

The first and foremost important element in this research is to make a distinction between a refugee, asylum-seeker, and migrant. They are used interchangeably because they all share one significant commonality - they all are on the move and are in pursuit of finding a new country to live in. The difference, however, lies in the reasons for such pursuit. For example, refugees seek international protection and have rights for international protection because they are persecuted in their own countries or are escaping the war and essentially their lives are in danger if they remain in their own countries (UNHCR, 2016). Asylum seekers are people who have applied for international protection but have not been granted refugee status yet and their applications are in process (Ibid.). Migrant has more ambiguity in the definition because it refers to the people who are outside of their countries for different reasons such as the lack of employment opportunities, the bad economic climate in their countries of origin; even students who leave their countries to study abroad can be considered migrants (Ibid.). However, migrants cannot be considered refugees because their lives are not in danger (Ibid.). Making distincion between these two terms is very important in the legal sense because migration in general is the individual responsibility of each state, e.g. each country has its own migration policy and rules, while refugees are protected under internationl law and therefore countries are obliged to fairly process asylum applications and protect refugees in accordance with the international law (Ibid.). In the framework of the EU, European migration policy has three fields, first relating to the free movement of EU citizens within the EU, second related to the migration of third country nationals, which is each member state's competence, and asylum-seeking domain, where Geneva Convention to help those who are in need of international protection, from 2009 onwards, functions as any other EU treaty (Pastore & Henry, 2016, p.46). Under the third asylum domain, the EU has a shared obligation to accept asylum seekers and to process their application in a fair and unbiased manner, in accordance with the EU regulations (European Commission, n.d.).

The name of the crisis varies in the literature, sometimes it is called a refugee crisis, and sometimes it is a migration crisis. To understand the most suitable label, I propose to look at some of the statistics regarding the country of origin of asylum-seekers and the overall refugee recognition rate. The composition of asylum seekers from 2015 to 2017 was heterogeneous, namely, there was a tendency of asylum-seekers in Greece to be from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq, who had a high recognition rate for refugee status and they mostly traveled with families, meanwhile, Italy had a flow of mostly male West African asylum-seekers, who had lower chances of being recognized as refugees (The World Bank, p. 15). Besides such a tendency, the recognition rate also differs in each EU member state, even though there is just single uniform regulation under the CEAS directive and Geneva Convention, which dictates under what conditions the refugee status should be granted (Burmann & Valeyatheepillay, 2017, p. 48). In 2015, according to the calculations of Burmann & Valeyatheepillay (2017, p. 49), Syrians received 97,4% of the recognition rate in Germany, and in 2016, the recognition rate fell to 57,2%, meanwhile recognition rate of Syrian refugees in Hungary and Sweden was 6% and 10%, correspondingly, with a similar tendency of decrease as in Germany. When one observes the overall recognition rates from 2015 to 2016, even one of the biggest refugee-hosting countries, Germany, recognized only 43,8% of all asylum applications and 21,8% in 2016 (Burmann & Valeyatheepillay, 2017, p. 50). This suggests that the crisis can be called both refugee and migration crisis, but the clear decrease in recognition rate suggests that what at first was deemed as a refugee crisis slowly shifted to a migration crisis as many were not recognized as refugees, but rather migrants.

1.1. Opportunism and the role of national leaders

Earlier studies (Nič, 2016, Shmidt 2016) have considered the role of the national leaders in decision-making and cooperation on the issue of the migration crisis. For example, Nič (2016) and Shmidt (2016) argue that the key factor for the Visegrad's united view on the migration crisis is the position of the national leaders. Kaczyński, the leader of the PiS party in Poland, and Orbán, the Prime Minister of Hungary are especially vital for the Visegrad Four as they try to lead and change the group according to their ideas and conservative ideological beliefs with a focus on religiosity (Nič, 2016; Shmidt, 2016). However, whether this attempt of Hungary and Poland to reform and change the group according to their own needs is successful or not leaves the author doubtful as there was much evidence of the internal division of the region (Nič, 2016). The Czech Republic and Slovakia on the moderate side of the political spectrum tend to not always agree and support more conservative Poland and Hungary in their finger-pointing at the EU institutions and Western European counterparts Nič (2016). According to Nič (2016), opposition to immigration serves as a tool for Poland and Hungary to shape the Visegrad alliance against the EU. Furthermore, Shmidt (2016, p.127) argues from the historical point of view, that depending on leaders' positions, cooperation may or may not take place and one of the vivid examples of this assumption is the cancellation of the meeting of Prime Ministers in Budapest in 2002 because the Czech and Slovak colleagues found delicate the previous statement of Orban

about Benes decrees and its inconsistency with the European integration and the need to adjust to the EU legal system. In more recent literature, Schmidt's argument, essentially, echoes Kazharski's grand conceptualization of the Visegrad Four as *ad hoc regionalism*, in which Kazharski (2020) argues that the Visegrad Four only cooperates on certain issues, not all, and they cooperate opportunistically because they are embedded in Western liberal system, where most of the areas of cooperation within the EU are already covered. Thus, opportunism may lie in national leaders' will or their 'political and personal trust' (Lázár, 2014 quoted in Schmidt, 2016, p.127). Nič (2016) also agrees that the Visegrad Four is an ad hoc cooperation and whether they agree on policies or unite on certain issues also depends on the personal leanings of the heads of government. Kaczyński and Orbán are considered the two 'strong statesmen' (Shmidt, 2016, p.125), who have a bigger battle of ideologies with the EU institutions and they have some overlapping views on nationalism and conservatism (Nič, 2016; Shmidt 2016; Kazharski, 2020), e.g. they might not agree on many matters, but they are open revisionists and 'they openly call for a cultural counter - revolution' (Kazharski, 2020, p. 254). In regards to the more moderate national leaders at the time of the migration crisis, such as Slovakian Prime Minister Fico and Czech Prime Minister Sobótka with their center-left governments, were considered weaker leaders because they were challenged due to the presence of strong domestic opposition in both countries (Nič, 2016, p.288). In fact, the Slovak and Hungarian relations took a stalemate due to the aforementioned sensitivity regarding the Benes decree, and in 2013 Slovak Prime Minister Fico initiated 'a new chapter in the shared history of the two countries' (Lázár 2014 quoted in Schmidt, 2016, p.127). Essentially, cooperation itself is weak, but what makes it work are the national leaders and their personal and sometimes ideological affiliations. It is fair to agree that indeed, the role of the national leaders does play a role in cooperation within the Visegrad Four format, especially given the non-institutionalized nature of the alliance and the non-formal meetings of the Prime Ministers behind closed doors.

1.2. Security dimension

Majority of scholars acknowledge the security dimension of Visegrad Four's response to the migration crisis (Braun, 2020; Cichocki & Jabkowski, 2019; Dogachan, 2018; Podgórzańska, 2017; Stepper, 2016). Particularly, the response is viewed through the prism of securitization, which is presenting an issue as a security threat regardless of whether it in fact constitutes one. For example, Stepper argues that the Europeanization of Visegrad states necessitated these countries not to only adopt the CEAS, but also to adopt the Western European 'security agenda', which formulated illegal immigration as a security issue (Scwell, 2015, p.4. quoted in Stepper, 2016, p.64). Visegrad Four has been compliant with the CEAS since they acceded to the EU before the uncontrollable migration flow in 2015-2016 took place. However, this very 'security agenda' adopted from the EU has been played by the Visegrad states during the migration crisis when in each state of Visegrad Four immigrants were shoveled out in political securitizing discourse as economic migrants and as threats to the cultural and religious values of Central Europe (Stepper, 2016, p.64). Stepper (2016) points out that Visegrad states, especially Hungary,

given its location at EU's external borders, simply were not prepared for such a massive number of asylum-seekers, who needed much more logistics than the states had at their disposal because CEAS itself was not designed for such a number of asylum seekers. CEAS had funds available for member states in need to sustain asylum seekers on their territories, but the EU-wide acceptance of proportionate relocation was nowhere in sight (Stepper, 2016). Therefore, due to the shortage of logistics, including special border equipment, and also due to the general cautious attitude towards becoming another hotspot country for migrants, Hungary opted for barbed wire across its borders with the Western Balkan countries, which was one of the few options to control the unprecedented flow of migrants with no other tools in hand (Stepper, 2016). Along these precautions, there was a full securitization narrative at work in the domestic politics of Visegrad Four countries, which was successful in persuading the public of the harm the immigration would bring, which was strengthened by the Paris terrorist attacks in 2015 and assaults on hundreds of women in Cologne during the New Year's Eve (Stepper, 2016, p. 79). Braun furthers this argument by stating that the elite narrative puts internal security above the human rights norms promoted by the EU (Braun, 2020, p.936). According to the narrative analysis model, Braun (2020, p. 935) also found that the Visegrad Four projects 'ontological insecurity', which is reflected in the fear of the potential consequences of open-door migration policy which involves EU-wide, regional and individual security. Similarly, Podgórzańska (2017, p. 99) refers to the internal security linked to terrorism and a potential rise in the crime rate of transit countries such as the Visegrad states, where migrants usually do not stay but leave for Western European countries.

Similarly, Cichocki & Jabkowski (2019) argued that the public opinion in Visegrad Four was influenced by the securitization of immigration in political discourse. Based on the opinion poll such as the European Evaluation System, Cichocki & Jabkowski (2019) compared the convergence between the positions on immigration and normative values such as universalism and security, the former conceptualized as 'understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and nature ' and the latter conceptualized as 'safety, harmony and stability of society, of relationships, and of self' (Schwartz, 2003b quoted in Cichocki & Jabkowski, 2019, p.29). Such normative values, in their turn, polarized the masses and created tension between globalists and nationalists whose attitudes toward immigrants were irreconcilable (Cichocki & Jabkowski, 2019, p.29). The study found that while lower opposition to immigration was associated with universalism both in 2014 and 2016, opposition to immigration was not associated with security in 2014 and was strongly associated in 2016. In the case of the first finding, the only exception was Hungary, where universalism stopped correlating with the pro-immigration positions of the masses (Cichocki & Jabkowski, 2019). However, this is not to say that before the migration crisis, all Visegrad countries had a similar trend and the public opinion was all the same and changed in a similar way. The initial data for Poland showed more openness towards immigration than the rest of the region, but the convergence to more opposition was the highest in the region, and after the migration crisis became closer to the rest of the Visegrad members in terms of public attitude towards

immigration (Cichocki & Jabkowski, 2019, p.33). In Hungary, however, the masses were less open to immigration of other ethnic and religious groups even prior to the migration crisis (Cichocki & Jabkowski, 2019, p.33). Nonetheless, the most important finding of this literature is that security concern was correlational to the opposition to immigration starting in 2016, which signifies that top-down securitization of elites was successful and Central Europeans increasingly started to think of immigration as a security concern, endangering their culture and religion. If instead of securitization, there was universalist rhetoric on the part of the elites, one would see an increase in approval of immigration (Cichocki & Jabkowski, 2019).

Dogachan (2018) differentiated between human security and national security of EU member states and argued that the former would describe the right-wing nationalist elites and parties in the Visegrad Four countries who view immigration as a national threat to the sovereignty of nations, meanwhile the second group is left-wing parties and politicians who take a supranational approach, who refer to the migration crisis as a fundamental responsibility of EU member states. Dogachan (2018) posited that despite such stark differences between the approaches towards immigrants, both sides, the main host countries such as Germany, Sweden, and EU institutions on one side and the Visegrad group on the other, have both claimed themselves to be the defenders of European values. Right-wing anti-establishment populist parties resonated with the overall disappointment of the public with EU institutions and their poor handling of the migration crisis. For the nationalists, the European values lie in Christianity, the will of the masses, and national sovereignty, meanwhile for the supranationalists, the European values constituted human rights for asylum and rights of migrants (Dogachan, 2018, p.13). Therefore, nationalists or intergovernmentalists felt the need to take unilateral action in order to securitize the migration crisis in an attempt to save European values and national sovereignty, while suparanationalists or internationalis viewed securitization of immigration as incompatible with European values of human rights and rights of migrants (Dogachan, 2018).

1.3. West and East divide: ideological differences

A considerable number of scholars (Gruszczak, 2021; Schmölz, 2019; Strand, 2021; Kazharski, 2020; Viktor & Łukasz, 2021) focus on ideological differences, liberal versus illiberal leanings, and inherent West and East divide between the old and new member states of the EU, the latter including the Visegrad Four states, as an underlying reason for different responses to the migration crisis within the EU. For example, Schmölz (2019, p.23) argues that an already existing divide among the EU member states due to the 'the clash of different mindsets and ideologies' was triggered by the migration and therefore this difference resurfaced during the migration crisis. That is to say, the migration crisis was a mere trigger in the long east-west divide in the EU, which stems from their ideological differences (Schmölz, 2019, p.23; Kazharski, 2020, p.264) Similarly, Strnad (2021, p.92) argues that the Visegrad Four adopted the 'sovereignist' role against the backdrop of the migration crisis and Visegrad Four and old EU member states were 'speaking different languages' because of the 'different historical and societal backgrounds'. Their common historical past lies in the post-socialist 'socioeconomic'

security that the citizens are nostalgic about, meanwhile, accession to the EU is more about uncertainty and comes with advantages and disadvantages of being an EU member (Schmölz, 2019, p. 29). The elites are able to skillfully employ the securitization narrative of the migration crisis because they compare 'the good old days' of Communism and the new reality (Schmölz, 2019, p. 29). After all, 'the impact of history is still part of the political culture and gives a strong explanatory factor' (Schmölz, 2019, p. 29). However, Strand (2021) has a drastically diverging account of the historical past of the Visegrad states. Conversely, respondents of Strand's (2021, p. 86) research argue that the Visegrad Four states have undergone a traumatic experience with 'communist internationalism', where the mobilization of masses was forced and people were massively deported to create a multicultural society. This is in stark difference from the Western European experience of multiculturalism (Strand, 2021, p. 86) and hence the misunderstanding. Kazharski (2020, p.264) simply refers to the inefficiency and only partial fulfillment of the transition process in Central Europe after the fall of communism, which left the gap between East and West to persist until the migration crisis served as a catalyst for this gap to become visible.

Visegrad Four united to get an upper hand over the EU by playing the role of the 'sovereignist' group (Strand, 2021, p.92) or the role of the 'disadvantaged' group (Schmölz, 2019, p. 28). There is a slight distinction between the essential characteristics and aims of these roles. All in all, both roles have functional benefits such as portraying the EU as a culprit and both roles partially stem from the self-perceived inferiority and weakness of Visegrad states within the EU. Csanyi (2020, p.21) and Viktor & Łukasz (2021, p.669) also agree that Visegrad vocalize their discontent of being treated as inferior to the Western European old members of the EU, and in the migration crisis, they are forced to accept migrants against their will.

A sovereignist role would entail the perception that the EU and its migration policy is threatening the national sovereignty and identity of the Visegrad Four countries and therefore together they formed a united position of sovereignist states which try to balance the power of the EU (Strand, 2021, p.78). The sovereigntist role stems from the historically embedded fear of colonization by imperial powers in Central Europe because the region has always been surrounded by world powers (Strand, 2021, p.87). Today the leading Western European states and strong European leaders are viewed as potential oppressors and such fear is strengthened by the historical fact that Central European countries have been betrayed by their allies in the past (Strand, 2021, p.86-87). The initial role of the Visegrad Four states was the role of followers, e.g. as a pre-condition towards the EU accession, they had to accept this role of 'adopting the behavior of Western partners' (Strand, 2021, p.88). However, the migration crisis triggered the creation of the new sovereignist role because the Visegrad states could not relate to the norms and behavior of the old members anymore. Therefore, they decided to resort to nationalism (Strand, 2021, p.88), meanwhile, the Western European states are in their post-nationalist phase of history where they embrace a single entity of Europeanness and believe that Europeans will and should come together under the liberal order (Kazharski, 2020, p.261)

In contrast, the role of disadvantaged groups is played because the Visegrad Four states want to 'proactively exploit and benefit from being treated as second-class members' (Schmölz, 2019, p. 28). According to Schmölz (2019), the migration crisis was an opportunity to boost the group's ego as they had been frustrated with the EU long before the migration crisis. Perceived inferiority existed on the transnational level and it manifested in economic as well as policy areas (Schmölz, 2019, p. 28). In economics, Visegrad was frustrated with the brain drain within the EU and its citizens leaving for other EU states coupled with the economic dependence on other EU member states (Schmölz, 2019, p. 28). In policy areas, they were considered a junior partner in the EU which was not as progressive as its western counterparts (Schmölz, 2019, p. 28). Visegrad's self-perceived inferiority led the group to adopt the role of the disadvantaged group suffering at the hands of the EU and the migration crisis served as a platform where the Visegrad Four could play this role (Schmölz, 2019). This argument, however, goes against the popular belief that the Visegrad Four states benefited considerably from joining the EU, rather than brain drain affecting their attitude towards the EU negatively. If the Visegrad Four states are the main recipients of the EU cohesion fund under the regional stratification project and therefore it is not valid to argue that there was any economic grief that put them against the old member states. In fact, Koß & Séville (2020) argue that it was exactly the temporary dysfunction of the Schengen zone that pushed Visegrad states to oppose immigration because they wanted to keep the free movement within the EU as their citizens benefit from labor mobility in more prosperous EU member states.

A yet more diverging perspective on the historical past of Central Europe and its impact on the current decision-making of Visegrad states is provided by Gruszczak (2021, p.176), who explains the Visegrad Four's dismissal of refugees and migrants as a case of a resurgence of parochialism stemming from the post-Communist resistance against modernization. Xenophobic right-wing populist parties politicize immigration through the means of misnaming the refugees and migrants with derogatory self-created alternatives, which indicates the parochialism of Central European politics. Parochialism is defined as the opposite of cosmopolitanism, which indicates a local and conserved lifestyle (Gruszczak, 2021, p. 175), and specifically, parochial altruism has been chosen to explain the narrative of in-group solidarity and out-group hostility (Gruszczak, 2021, p. 176). Parochial actors, namely populist politicians, tend to dismiss refugees and immigrants because of the main feature of parochial altruism, which is the in-group and out-group divide, and the means to achieve their aims is by using the political tool of misnaming the target of their hostility in their political discourse (Gruszczak, 2021, p. 175).

1.4. Populism and Islamophobia

Many scholars (Frelak, 2017; Stojarová, 2018; Hafez, 2018) agree that embracing xenophobia not only by the traditional right-wing populist parties but also by the mainstream parties has played a role in furthering the anti-immigration agenda. According to Frelak (2017, p. 89-90), governments in the Visegrad countries were motivated by domestic electoral competition, where the mainstream parties did not want the far-right parties to take over their electorate. Similarly,

Stojarová (2018, p.32) argues that 'far-right parties focused on anti-Roma, anti-Semitism, anti-communism, anti-establishment, and anti-NATO matters', and after the migration crisis, they shifted to the anti-Muslim rhetoric but were marginalized by mainstream parties, which also adopted populist and xenophobic rhetoric, thus capturing the far right voters too. However, there is strong evidence compiled and presented by Hafez (2018) about the history of Islamophobia even before the migration crisis in the political realm of Visegrad states, primarily in the far right narrative. Hafez (2018) mainly refers to the work of Mares (2014, p.207) about the 'extreme right and Islamism in Central Europe' and therefore this research will try to use the primary source. For instance, in Poland, Islamophobic political discourse was employed since the 2000s by *Liga Polskich Rodzin* (LPR, League of Polish Families) (Mares, 2014, p. 217-218), when in 2006, its Member of Parliament Wojciech Wierzejski wrote a blog on 'Resistance to Islam', where he called for white men to 'wage a harsh and ruthless war' (Mares, 2014, p. 217-218). In the Czech Republic, in the second half of the 2000s, the big-scale anti-muslim campaign was short of being launched by the extreme right Národní Strana (NS, National Party), when they tried to allegedly burn the dummy of the Muslim Prophet Muhammad, but was stopped by the security services (Mares, 2014, p. 218). The party, however, managed to organize a protest in Brno after a terrorist attack incident happened in Islamabad killing the Czech ambassador (Mares, 2014, p. 219). In the case of Slovakia, right-wing populist parties are strong in the country with Slovenská Národná Strana (SNS, Slovak National Party) winning the seats in the parliament since 1990, excluding the 2002-2006 and 2012-2016 periods (Hafez, 2018, p.445). The party already in 2011 employed an anti-muslim agenda and raised a big concern or rather hysteria about Islamization and sharia law being installed in Slovakia (Mares, 2014, p. 216-217). Thus, attempts to instill anti-muslim bias for the electoral benefit have not been new, albeit, before the migration crisis, it was less successful as SNS lost its parliamentary representation in 2013 (Mares, 2014, p. 217). In 2010, an openly neo-fascist party under the name of Ľudová Strana–Naše Slovensko (L'SNS, People's Party–Our Slovakia) was created, which was later called Kotleba–L'SNS (Hafez, 2018, p.446) and its leader Marián Kotleba, already in 2007, spoke against possible EU enlargement to Turkey calling to 'not allow a situation in which our children would have fearfully to look at Islamic mosques and be afraid to defend Christianity, dreading the attacks of the Muslims' (Kotleba quoted in Mares, 2014, p. 217). The only exception was Hungary's far-right party Jobbik, which was sympathetic towards Islam at first, but later adopted an anti-muslim stance (Mares, 2014, p. 220). Thus, it seems there was already certain tension between the far-right of Central Europe and Islam, which doubled during the migration crisis, already absorbing the mainstream parties after 2015.

The migration crisis, for Stojarová (2018, p.32) and Viktor & Łukasz (2021, p.649) constitutes a situation where populism was complemented with the pinch of nationalism. Furthermore, Viktor & Łukasz (2021, p.649) argue that populism and nationalism have contributed to further cohesion and closer communication among the Visegrad Four states. The scholars use Canovan's conceptualization of populism as the simplified and emotional speech acts aimed at dividing people into 'the pure people' vs. 'the corrupt elite', which touches upon the identity issues

because there is a clear divide between 'we' and 'them' (Stojarová, 2018, p.34, Viktor & Łukasz, 2021, p.652). All Visegrad governing parties at the peak of the migration crisis such as PiS in Poland, Fidesz in Hungary, and SMER in Slovakia, with the exception of Czech ANO, which won formed a government in 2017, were the parties that fit into the category of populist parties (Stojarová, 2018, p.37). Viktor & Łukasz (2021) argue that the strengthened unity of the Visegrad Four countries can be explained by the shared populism of the governing parties, which is reflected in the similarities of their communication styles. Yet this unity was further solidified with the convergence of Hungarian and Polish political elites on the right-wing spectrum with PiS entering the political scene in Poland (Viktor & Łukasz, 2021, p.667). As the Polish parliamentary elections took place in October 2015, the opposition party PiS used this chance to include anti-immigration rhetoric in its campaign, meanwhile, the governing parties at that time were more moderate and less EU-skeptic PO and PSL with Ewa Kopacz as the Prime Minister. Viktor & Łukasz (2021) focus mainly on Hungary and Poland as the main actors in the Visegrad Four because they are the most vocal, more extreme, and harsh in their rhetoric regarding the migration crisis and the EU. However, there is no good reason to omit the other two members of the Visegrad Four as they bring value and provide research with more nuanced perspectives.

1.5. Identity and public attitude

A few scholars have discussed the roles of identity (Braun, 2019; Koß & Séville, 2020; Dingott Alkopher, 2018) and public attitude in the decision-making of the Visegrad Four on the migration crisis. The far right as well as the mainstream parties, as discussed in the previous paragraphs, have almost unanimously turned their backs on the EU's proposals on the relocation of the asylum seekers and any other proposal to host asylum seekers on the territory of the EU member states. This strangely unanimous response of the parties, despite their varying ideological backgrounds, points to the potential factor of such a decision making, which is the attitude of the public and potential electorate. As Podgórzańska (2017, p. 91) claims, 'politicians motivated by political calculations avoid making decisions against public opinion, including those relating to accepting immigrants'. An a few other scholars (Braun, 2019; Cichocki & Jabkowski, 2019) refer to various polls and public attitude surveys to argue that the public in Visegrad Four countries are skeptical of immigration, especially from the Muslim-dominated counties. The charts show a high level of popular opposition towards immigration from predominantly Muslim countries in many parts of the EU, but in Visegrad Four states this percentage of dislike towards Muslim immigrants is especially high (Braun, 2019; Cichocki & Jabkowski, 2019). Braun (2019, p.935) argues that the opposition to immigration plays well into the identity of the Visegrad states as defenders of Europe, rather than breaking away from it. This identity perspective is the opposite of the perspective of scholars, who see the Visegrad's opposition to immigration as an ideological difference between the East and West because Braun suggests that Visegrad Four states, in fact, strongly identify with the West and try to defend developments which have already been achieved within the EU (Braun, 2019.p.935). The Visegrad states try to preserve 'shared European identity' (Braun, 2019.p.935), rather than try to

differentiate and 'emancipate itself from the EU at large (Braun, 2019.p.935) as some scholars (Schmölz, 2019; Strand, 2021) have argued in previous paragraphs. Similarly, Koß & Séville (2020, p. 104) argue that Visegrad states oppose immigration from outside the EU because they try 'to maintain core achievements of the EU such as the free movement within the EU'. However, Koß & Séville (2020, p. 103), argue that despite presenting themselves as defenders of common identity, Visegrad Four, in fact, tries to save the economic benefits of the Schengen zone and to keep migration within the Schengen zone safe and unaffected as migration crisis caused the dysfunction to free movement within the EU. The arguments of Koß & Séville are reasonable given the fact that the uncontrolled migration crisis spurred the EU member states such as Germany to temporarily close their borders with Austria on September 13, 2015 (Pastore & Henry, 2016, p.54). Dingott Alkopher (2018) has attempted to look at the Visegrad's response from the socio-psychological point of view. With the multiple self-theory, Dingott Alkopher (2018) tries to look at the EU as an entity with similar psychological multiple identity features as a human being, where the EU has various, sometimes conflicting, identities. Dingott Alkopher (2018, p.1399) argues that the EU could not achieve consensus on the migration crisis because the EU's identity was dissociated from the 'xenonationalist' identity of Visegrad states. Dingott Alkopher's does not give much solid explanation for the opposition of Visegrad states' response to the migration crisis, but it is because of the non-functionalist and non-rational approach that the research adopts.

The literature review can be concluded in the following way: earlier works from the 2016 edition tried to pinpoint the role of the national leaders and their personal leanings and relations, which is fair, but the cooperation would not take place only because of the two leaders' ideological commonalities. Later the vast majority of the scholarship was divided between the factors of securitization, East/West ideological differences, and the role of domestic politics. The scholarship on the topic is very blended in the sense that securitization can be connected to domestic politics and the role of political parties, at the same time, East/West ideological difference contains the reasons for the securitization of immigration. Much of the literature lacks a strong theoretical umbrella to give a holistic explanation of the Visegrad Four's collective behavior. Some of the literature relies on a weak methodology and mostly historical perspective, which can be interpreted subjectively and without much evidence. Especially, the scholarship on ideological differences and the East/West divide gives a range of interpretations, one extreme arguing that the migration crisis was a trigger for the long-existing feeling of inferiority existing in Visegrad countries due to the economic and policy-related frustration and the renewed 'nostalgia' about the Soviet Union and the other extreme arguing that it Visegrad countries are playing this role for functional needs such as saving itself from potential oppressors, such as Brussels in this case, because historically, Visegrad Four countries have a traumatic experience of being oppressed by worlds powers. If the latter interpretation can somehow make sense, the former is far from being persuasive and also the author does not provide any proof of this 'economic' frustration in numbers, namely, how much Visegrad Four lost in their GDP and manpower since EU accession. The author's claim about nostalgia for the Soviet Union seems

like a propagandist personal opinion and certainly cannot find any backing in surveys and polls, hence, the author does not try to provide any evidence for such a strong claim. Populism and Islamophobia in the governing parties' campaigns and positions cannot explain the resistance toward EU migration policy, but they are the reflection of another phenomenon or a tool to achieve certain goals for politicians. Surprisingly, the identity factor is mentioned here and there, but it was never a focus of any research. However, the literature review gave a clear picture of the academic flow and they agree that nationalism, in general, is more important for the Visegrad countries than its Western colleagues, who happen to be in the post-national phase of their development.

2.   Theoretical Framework

My theoretical framework draws upon the combination of collective action and crisis management literature put together by Blondin & Boin (2020), which the authors developed by merging two separate areas of study in order to explain the reasons states respond or do not respond collectively to certain crisis situations. First, I explain the *pure* forms of two theories separately and then I lay out the combined theoretical framework by Blondin & Boin, where they polish the two theories and make them suitable to explain joint crisis management by means of mixing and extracting certain applicable theoretical elements. As was demonstrated in the literature review there is a lack of coherent theory-based works related to the Visegrad Four and the migration crisis. Therefore, I find this theoretical framework the most suitable from the scarce choice of the theories at hand because it provides a multidimensional and multi-theoretical perspective to the **research question** of this paper which is **'Why did Visegrad Four states unite/cooperate on the issue of migration crisis?**' or in other words '**What explains the joint response of Visegrad Four states on the migration crisis**?' The theoretical propositions of Blondin & Boin (2020) about collective action derive from the most pertinent and widely used theories of international relations and EU integration, also opening a door to the more nuanced view of the research question in fields such as environment, economics, and management.

   The research does not aim at building a new theory, but rather **utilizing and testing an existing theoretical framework** that has not been used before in relation to the case study employed in this research. Therefore, the most suitable format for this research is theory testing, which is using already existing theoretical propositions and pattern-matching, in other words, comparing them with the empirical evidence derived from the case (Ridder, 2017, p. 299). The pattern matching technique is used in case study designs in order to connect the theoretical propositions or expectations with the data (Yin, 2014, p. 34). Even though theory testing is mainly applicable for analyzing quantitative data, a **single case study** can also serve as a test given that it either confirms or challenges already existing theoretical propositions (Ridder, 2017, p. 299). Such case study research designs aspire to find 'gaps and holes' in existing theories in order to contribute to further betterment of existing theories (Ridder, 2016; Ridder, 2017, p. 287) and are also deductive in nature because they focus on the already existing theory or theories with theoretical propositions navigating the path towards finding relevant empirical data, which is called

'purposeful sampling' (Yin, 2014; Ridder, 2017, p. 287). Such **deductive theory-testing** approaches are suitable for 'why' or 'how' questions, where 'the research question is strongly related to the existing theory' (Ridder, 2017, p. 291). Thus, the theory testing method widely developed and elaborated by Yin (2014, p.2) suggests that the case has 'why' and 'how' research questions, existing theory and propositions, framework, while the data collections are based on purposeful sampling, encourages the use of qualitative data and analysis based on **pattern-matching technique**. However, at any point, the qualitative data can be supplemented with quantitative data, which will enrich and strengthen the overall empirical part of the research (Ridder, 2017, p. 298). Such qualitative theory testing by pattern matching is possible either with the researcher developing an inductive data-based analytical framework or gathering data based on an already constructed analytical framework (Vargas-Bianchi, 2020, p.3). As was already made clear, this research is based on the latter approach.

2.1. Blondin & Boin (2020. p.197): 'possible pathway toward a joint response'

Blondin & Boin (2020, p. 197) provide a new theoretical framework to explain 'why states collaborate in response to some transboundary crises but not others' using the theories of collective action and crisis management theory. Initially developed by Olson, collective action theory has been widely used in the fields of international relations, environmental field, and EU integration, and therefore the authors derive their theoretical propositions from the aforementioned fields as well. As none of these works pertaining to collective action consider a situation of crisis, the authors include the crisis management literature in order to have a more holistic view of the states' joint response to the crises. Hence, all, in all, the various theories and literature pertaining to governance, collective governance, in particular, are compiled and elaborated by the authors to give a full-spectrum view of the states' willingness to joint collaboration on the crisis situations. The authors identify eight factors that facilitate or impede the cooperation among states on transboundary crises. Eight factors are politicization, crisis exposure and expected benefit, decoupling from the threat, repeated interaction, a number of actors, organizational capacity, the (non)existence of feasible solutions, and the role of leadership (Blondin & Boin, 2020). In order to proceed with the theoretical model, it is important to review the collective action theory and its application in different fields and revisit the crisis management literature as these will serve as a guide to the understanding of the model and its sources.

2.2. Collective action theory and its insights

Olson, an economist by profession, in her *Logic of the Collective Action* article, has developed a theory that essentially lays out factors that facilitate or impede collective action in the market as well as the non-market environment. The theory has much insight on the functioning of the group behavior, incentives, and disincentives for cooperation among the members of different-sized groups, bargaining inside the group, and most importantly it touches upon the

issue of free-riding as the biggest disincentive for members of the groups to cooperate to achieve their common interests.

Olson (2009, p.1) challenges the traditional idea that 'rational' groups of individuals, who share common interests, would pursue these common interests collectively. Olson argues that rational, self-interested actors do not always attempt to achieve the group objectives; in fact, it is rational, especially in a large group, that they will not contribute to the group goal, even if their interests are invested and they would benefit from collective action outcome (Olson, 2009, p.2). In large groups, self-interested actors are not interested in furthering the common interests, unless forced to or incentivized by the potential reward (Olson, 2009, p.2). e.g. **in the logic of free-riding**, rational actors are not interested in putting effort into the outcome, which is going to benefit them all, regardless if they participate in joint efforts or not. Olson (2009, p.14) defines collective and public good as the good that regardless if any person in any organization, 'consumes it, it cannot feasibly be withheld from the other in that group'. Hence, there is a bigger incentive for rational actors not to participate in collective action because it would bring double benefit to not sacrifice their resources and still receive the benefits of joint action (Olson, p.2). Olson demonstrates the rationale behind free-riding using the example from the market situation and various organizations which represent collective interests. For example, even national states, despite being more about ideology and values such as nationalism, patriotism, communism, democracy, etc., also function in a market-based logic because they too derive their economy based on mandatory taxing and individuals who do not pay taxes cannot be excluded from using public goods the national states provide such as police, court and military assistance (Olson, 2009, p. 13-14).

However, Olson (2009) suggests that the size of the group plays one of the major roles in the decision-making of individual actors to participate in the collective action or not. In the **smaller groups,** Olson (2009, p.2) argues, the scene is different because there is much effort on an individual level to contribute to the group as they are considered **'more efficient and viable than large ones'**. In small groups, individual benefit exceeds the cost of contributing to collective good because there are just a few members in the group and each of their share of the benefit is substantial (Olson, 2009, p.34). Even in groups of unequal actors, such as some of the members having more power, the one powerful member alone can pay for the collective good because its personal benefit exceeds the entire sum of the collective good price (Olson, 2009, p.34). Olson (2009, p.34) puts it this way:

> *'Thus, in a very small group, where each member gets a substantial proportion of a total gain simply because there are few others in the group, a collective good can often be provided by the voluntary, self-interested action of the members of the group.'*

2.3. Collective action in the environmental sphere

Another political economist, Elinor Ostrom (1990) has contributed to furthering the collective action theory by using it in relation to the common pool resources (CPR) such as fisheries, grazing pastoral areas, forests, etc., in the sphere of environmental protection. CPR shares many

similarities with Olson's description of collective goods (Ostrom, 1990, p. 27) because both are common goods and can be used by everyone, which generates a problem of overusing goods. Ostrom's (1990) academic contribution to the study of collective action is that she emphasizes individual efforts in collective action, rather than collective action just being driven by third actors such as the government or the firm. Ostrom (1990) criticizes the existing collective action theory by Olson for 'extreme assumptions' or pessimistic views about individual ability to cooperate and argues that small-scale CPRs can respond to the collective issue on their own without the need for external intervention because of the **long-time interaction** among this compact community of individuals, which leads to **trust, shared norms, and reciprocity among the co-users of the same CPRs** (Ostrom, 1990, p. 183-184). Olson's *Logic of Collective Action* explains what individuals do when they are trapped in a situation that puts them to cooperate, but Ostrom (1990, p.184) takes it further and explains that individuals too have instruments, will, and freedom to impact the course of action by organizing and institutionalizing their collective actions. Just like in the market described by Olson, there is a high **interdependence** in CPR because, for example, in the fisheries, the users have the same individual interest in fishing in the fish-rich area, but they have to consider that others wish to as the first-come-first-take system works at the place (Ostrom, 1990, p. 38). Acting according to their self-interest of maximizing the benefit is not in their common interests and might even lead to the destruction of the fishery because of overfishing (Ostrom, 1990, p. 38-39). Therefore, there is a need to organize collective action, instead of acting independently to the collective harm (Ostrom, 1990, p.39-40). Organizing the collective action requires high costs and just like in the inclusive organizational setting described by Olson, the non-participants will still be able to enjoy the benefit (Ostrom, 1990, p. 40).

While Olson established that collective action is difficult to achieve because of the actors' rational tendency to free-ride and the subsequent need for external incentives, Ostrom (1990, p.36) argues that the actors are able to self-organize if they see a **potential benefit** in doing so. Considering that individuals are rational, Ostrom (1990, p.33) posits:

> *'An individual's choice of behavior in any particular situation will depend on how the individual learns about, views, and weighs the benefits and costs of actions and their perceived linkage to outcomes that also involve a mixture of benefits and costs'.*

Individuals value the benefits which are immediate or soon to be gained, as they are not far-sighted to think ahead of time and therefore individual 'discount future benefits' (p.34), e.g. in order to escape potential higher costs of their collective inaction, which can even manifest in the loss of CPR, they 'discount' or they invest today in order to escape the bigger costs in the future and receive more benefits. Their 'discount rates' depend on their 'physical and economic security' such as lack of confidence in the future fertility of the CPR, which may lead to physical starvation and also economic suffering (Ostrom, 1990, p.35). The individual choice on how much to discount also depends on the norms prescribed in the society such as which rate is considered normal among colleagues and others (Ostrom, 1990, p.33). Behavioral norms among bubbles of individuals interacting with each other also constrain the individuals from acting

opportunistically, namely if one individual acts opportunistically, the same behavior can be expected from others, which leads to erosion of 'long-term commitments' (Ostrom, 1990, p. 36). Thus, the individual choices to cooperate on the common issue are **'expected benefits, expected costs, internal norms, and discount rates'** (Ostrom, 1990, p. 37).
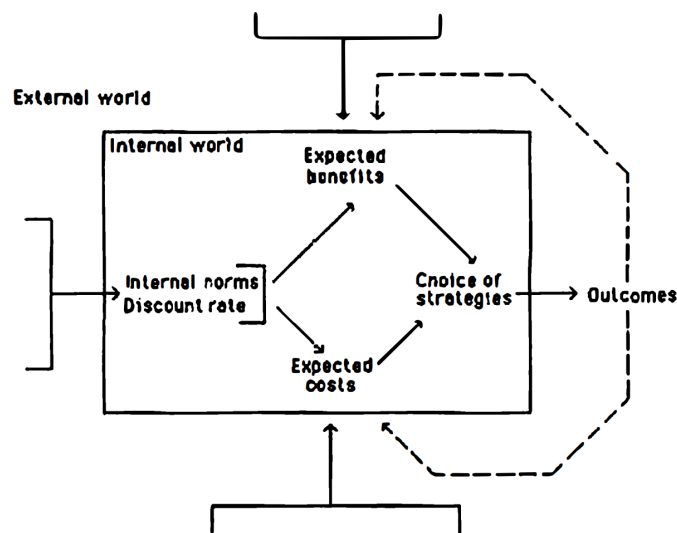

Figure 1. 'The internal world of individual choice' (Ostrom, 1990, p.37)

2.4. Insights about collective action in EU integration theories

European integration theories are aimed at explaining the reason countries decide to integrate in Europe or in other words to cooperate even further on a variety of policy areas. Neofunctionalism is one of the earliest versions of such theories of trans-national integration founded by Ernst B. Haas explained in his book *Beyond the Nation State* (BNS). Neofunctionalism recognizes the functional needs such as the economy for the creation of regional integration and the role of states in creating supranational organizations (Schmitter, 2005, p.257). Within the framework of this research pertaining to collective action, neo-functionalism is useful because it explains interdependence among states which pushes them to cooperate. Since the first introduction of neo-functionalism by Haas, the theory has been revisioned many times by plenty of scholars including Haas himself, among the scholars, Schimmelfennig (2014, p.327) makes a valid attempt at summarizing the initial theory together with its many revisions and comes to the conclusion that all of them have the common belief that '*dynamic and progressive integration process… transcends its intergovernmental origins as a result of endogenous interdependencies, spillovers and path-dependencies*'. The most important pillar of neo-functionalism, the spillover effect, is set to explain how the cooperation of states in one policy area spills over cooperation in other policy areas due to the unexpected outcome or shortage of the initial policy area (Shmitter, 1969, p.162). This spillover subsequently pushes the integration further making states **interdependent** by making '*the number and variety of policies subject to collective deliberation*' (Schmitter, 1969, p.163). Such interdependence is called **path**

dependency in neo-functionalism and it is considered to be important for decision-making and cooperation in the sense that it is difficult to reverse the course of action as it was built on numerous paths of integration that were taking place for decades. One of the cases of such spillover, for example, is the Schengen zone opening a way for the adoption of the Dublin regulation, according to which the refugee applications have to be processed in the first entry country of refugees. Due to the mass flow of refugees in 2015, the Dublin regulation stopped functioning and southern European countries let the refugees straight to northern Europe. Germany started receiving an incredible number of refugee applications and had to shut its borders with Austria in order to stop the refugee flow. This is a clear case of policy interconnectedness and irreversibility of policies because they were created due to spillover of policies and disrupting one policy would affect the other policies (Hooghe & Marks, 2019, p. 1121).

Post-functionalism is a theory developed by Hooghe and Marks to explain the resistance to further European integration on the part of member states of the EU. Hooghe and Marks (2009, p. 8) claim that 'politicization of European integration has changed the content, as well as the process of decision making' and argue that states have become more reluctant to further European integration or in the context of this research more reluctant towards cooperation because of the domestic politicization where parties tend to employ the anti-cooperation rhetoric. Postfunctionalism shares the idea with neo-functionalism and intergovernmentalism that regional integration is '*triggered by the mismatch between the efficiency and existing structure of authority*', but views the outcome differently; for post-functionalists, the outcome of the regional integration lies in the '*political conflict, which engages communal identities*', in contrast to neo-functionalism and intergovernmentalism which view functional pressures to be the drivers of regional integration (Hooghe & Marks, 2009, p. 2). Put simply, 'the mismatch' the authors refer to is between the existing institution and the need for supranational or multi-level governance, which resulted from interconnectedness. Theory suggests that in the post-Maastricht world, the decision-making processes are no longer solely in the hands of elite groups, but domestic politics started playing a big role in decision-making because issues such as European integration directly impact the public. As more and more issues, including the issue of immigration, shifted to the European level, the **politicization** would involve the mass public (Hooghe & Marks, 2009, p. 6).

2.5. Collective action in international cooperation theories

Keohane (1984) views political cooperation as vital for the functioning of the market system as without international cooperation, states would act unilaterally in the market trying to maximize their personal interests by all means, even to their own collective destruction. Keohane (1984, p. 63) defines cooperation as 'a process through which policies actually followed by governments come to be regarded by their partners as facilitating realization of their own objectives, as the result of policy coordination'. In the absence of a hegemon, Keohane (1984) argues, cooperation among equal partners is still possible given that they have **shared interests**, and such

cooperation stemming from **joint policy coordination** is supervised by international regimes or in other words by a set of 'principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures' (Keohane, 1984, p.59). Similar to Olson's collective action theory, the international cooperation theorists persist with their belief that a larger number of actors make it difficult to cooperate (Keohane & Ostrom, 1994, p.6).

Another scholar who has tremenedously contributed to the study of international cooperation - Robert Axelrod, has focused on the role of the repeated interaction in the international cooperation. Axelrod (1984, p.3) identified repeated interaction as the key driving force for the involved parties to cooperate by conducting a little experiment of his own, where using the game theory, he finds that the parties who play an indefinite number of games and are aware of the first-round game results establish a 'pattern of action'. Namely, when the parties know that both benefit by cooperating and thus can stay in the game as long as possible, they keep trusting each other and cooperating as they already know each other's behaviour, thus establishing a mutual trust (Axelrod, 1984).

2.6. Crisis management literature

'A general theory of crisis management, concerning how and by what type of organization crises should be managed, does not exist' (Lægreid & Rykkja, 2019, p. 10). However, one can make sense of the crisis management in combination with other theories, the organization theory being the most frequently employed (Boin et al., 2014; Lægreid & Rykkja, 2019). However, before jumping into the discussion of theoretical parts, it is important to give conceptual clarifications to the terms related to crisis management. The widely accepted and cited description of the crisis is that was given by Rosenthal et al. (1989), who view the crisis as 'a shared perception of threat to a fundamental part or value of a society, which requires urgent action by authorities under conditions of deep uncertainty' (Backman, & Rhinard, 2018 p.261). Crisis situations differ from that of regular turmoils in that crises are unpredicted, unprecedented, and anomalous, which take governments of all scales aback; as Boin et al. (2014, p.196) put it, 'in a crisis, past experience provides policymakers with little guidance'. Due to such unprecedented and unexpected nature, the crisis puts much pressure on organizational, coordinative, and managerial institutions as well as national governments (Backman & Rhinard, 2018, p. 3). However, the crisis is a constructed concept and it is mostly constructed by the political elites and other agents ('t Hart, 1993, p. 37), e.g if political elites or other agents call it a crisis then it becomes a crisis. Therefore, at times the **crisis tends to be exploited and manipulated** by the political elites and other agents or stakeholders for their own interests ('t Hart, 1993, p. 37).

2.7. Transboundary crisis conceptualization

One type of crises is transboundary and as the name already suggests, it is the type of crisis that transcends the traditional national borders and spills over various international jurisdictions (Boin et al., 2014, p.195; Backman, & Rhinard, 2018, p. 261). While the crisis itself is a difficult venture which requires a coordinated and fast response, when it becomes transboundary it is

even more difficult because more actors are engaged in the transboundary crisis making it difficult to negotiate (Boin et al., 2014, p.195). Boin et al. (2014) suggest three dimensions, according to which we can identify if the crisis is transboundary or not. Transboundary crisis, sometimes, is able to transcend the political jurisdictions vertically or horizontally, specifically vertical transcendence would include the lower institutional bodies being overwhelmed with the crisis and requesting larger, regional, or national assistance, meanwhile horizontal would include the same level of institutions being exposed to the crisis (Boin et al., 2014, p.196). Another dimension features functional transcendence when the crisis spills over and affects different policy areas and accordingly different sectors of management (Boin et al., 2014, p.196). The last dimension covers time transcendence when the crises have long-lasting effects even after it is over (Boin et al., 2014, p.196). Generally, the higher the score on the above-mentioned dimensions, the more the crisis can be labeled as transboundary, but the transboundary crisis, as was already mentioned, is more difficult to cooperate on, than just a crisis (Boin et al., 2014, p.197). However, cooperation also depends on the factors such as interdependence and trust level among the entities, actors, or organizations. Relying on Thompson's (1967) classification, Boin et al. (2014, p.197) point out pooled, sequential and reciprocal interdependence; i.e. the pooled interdependence includes cases when transboundary crisis impacts two entities, but there is no need for a collective response, sequential is when entities' response to the crisis impacts each other and therefore it is in the interest of the potentially expected party to cooperate and help, and third is reciprocal when collective action is required. The reciprocal interdependence also requires a high level of trust in order for the parties to cooperate (Boin et al., 2014, p.197).

2.8. Collective action in crisis management

Transboundary crisis is difficult to handle because it creates multiple issues such as the prevalence of **uncertainty** about the situation, resource-related capacity, difficulty in organizing a response, and informing the public in a clear way (Boin et al., 2014, p.197). Uncertainty appears when there is not enough information about the crisis such as its origins and its implications for further functioning of the system and overall lack of knowledge on how to resolve it (Boin et al., 2014, p.197). Most of the time, a crisis requires material funding in order to respond in an effective manner (Boin et al., 2014, p.198), e.g, material funding for providing masks and vaccinations during the epidemiological outbreak, etc. **Coordinating a response** is another challenge in crisis management because it requires addressing the crisis collectively and sharing responsibility, rather than 'tossing hot potato' from one authority to another (Boin et al., 2014, p.199). In such cases, it is considered that self-organization and self-coordination is more efficient than forced cooperation (Boin et al., 2014, p.199). Another problem with rapid response to the transboundary crisis is the vertical and horizontal coordination among various entities; in the case of vertical coordination, entities on different levels have to cooperate in a certain crisis situation, but due to their different policies and fields, the coordination is challenging (Boin et al., 2014, p. 199). Similarly, on the horizontal level 'nation must coordinate with a neighboring

nation' (Boin et al., 2014, p. 199). However, this challenge can be overcome, if there was already coordination experience or **'prior interaction'** among the entities (Boin et al., 2014, p. 199).

2.9. Crisis handling mechanisms and solutions

As was mentioned in the previous paragraph, **the leadership or the political leaders** play a big role in handling the situation through their communication with the public and their will to coordinate a collaborative response either with other governments or with international organizations. Meaning-making is essential in the political domain because the public waits for them to explain the crisis and the story or their interpretation must be 'compelling' for the public to trust and for governments to establish their legitimacy (Boin et al., 2005, p. 13). Boin et al. (2016) rather provide normative suggestions on how the leaders must act in times of crisis. In crisis management effective leadership is assessed by their ability to detect the crisis earlier, to 'make-sense' or to identify a threat to responsibly address it, to coordinate on the intergovernmental or organization level, to communicate crisis situation to the public and to end the crisis, they must address the question of accountability, e.g. explain who was accountable for the crisis without overtly blaming anyone (Boin et al., 2016). Political leaders are accountable to their citizens to explain the events in order to ease citizens' anxieties and therefore they must provide clear and persuasive messages and strategies; however, their success may depend on whether there is a different narrative employed by their opposition (Boin et al., 2014, p.200). If it is a national crisis, a large number of people involved and different narratives may inhibit the whole cooperation (Boin et al., 2014, p.200).

2.10. Blondin & Boin's theoretical model

Based on the aforementioned theories and literature, Blondin & Boin have developed the theoretical propositions which explain the joint response of states in times of transboundary crisis. First of all, the chosen theoretical framework explores the **circumstances** that prompt countries to consider cooperation, rather than unilateralism and in the second half of the framework, factors that prompt the **implementation of the collective response** are explored (Blondin & Boin, 2020, p.200). The factors identified by Blondin & Boin (2020) stem from the homogeneity of interests among the states. A theoretical model developed by Blondin & Boin (2020) is as follows:
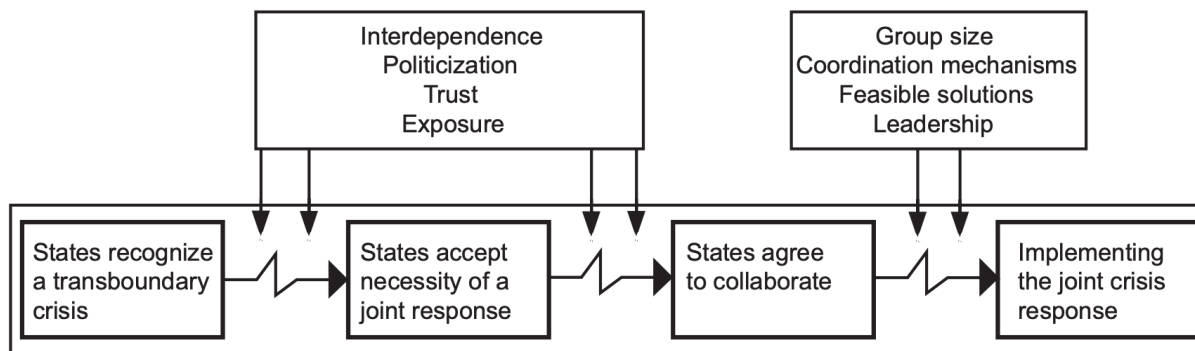
Figure 2. Model of a joint response to the transboundary crisis by Blondin & Boin (2020, p.206)

2.10.1. Interdependence

Interdependence of states is conceptualized as the inability to 'decouple' or to disconnect from the crisis (Blondin & Boin, 2020, p.5), which puts states into an interdependent position not allowing them to opt-out from cooperation. Blondin & Boin (2020) view interdependence through the prism of degrees of integration. They assume that states would reconsider the costs of non-collaboration, if such action would entail high prices or sanctions, states would not venture to withdraw from the cooperation. This assumption stems from Hardin's (1968) insight into collective action theory where the author posits that the lack of 'alternative good' pushes states into collaboration, strengthened by the path dependency theoretical proposition in neo-functionalism, according to which, it is difficult to reverse the course of action as it was built on numerous paths of integration which were taking place for decades. Drawing from EU integration, the perceived high losses of non-cooperation would include the disintegration of the regime and the difficulty to exit the regime (Blondin & Boin, 2020, p. 202). Based on this factor, my hypothesis would be:

H1: Interdependence of the V4 states led to their cooperation on the migration
crisis

2.10.2. Politicization

Politicization is conceptualized as 'political exploitation' and crises are especially prone to be exploited by political actors because of its socially-constructed nature (Blondin & Boin, 2020, p.4). Drawing from post-functionalism and crisis management literature, Blondin & Boin (2020) argue that domestic politicization impedes cooperation among states. One of the EU integration theories, namely, the post-functionalist theory posits that the politicization of the crisis leads to its disintegration (Hooghe and Marks, 2009), therefore politicization of the crisis is considered to be negatively associated with cooperation. Based on this factor, the hypothesis that I will be testing would be:

H2: The lack of or low politicization led the V4 countries to cooperate on the
migration crisis

2.10.3. Trust

Mutual trust naturally helps the states to cooperate better and trust in the international environment manifests itself in repeated interaction between the states (Blondin & Boin, 2020). In times of crisis, previous cooperation in different policy areas pushes states to cooperate because the institutional structures are already ready and ripe for cooperation (Blondin & Boin, 2020, p.202). In the collective action theory, Ostrom (1990) argues that the long-time interaction among a community of individuals leads to their sharing of trust, shared norms, and reciprocity (Ostrom, 1990, p. 183-184). Also, interaction creates a shared identity because the actors who have had prolonged interaction socialize with each other and know each other well (Blondin & Boin, 2020, p.202). Therefore, shared experience, especially in crisis management, leads states to cooperate with each other (Blondin & Boin, 2020, p.202). Based on this factor, my hypothesis would be:

H3: Trust among the V4 states led to their joint response to the migration crisis

2.10.4. Crisis exposure and expected benefits

Drawing from Ostrom's (1990) idea about the collective harm in the case of inaction and similar perceived threat and benefits in the case of cooperation, Blondin & Boin (2020) argue that symmetric exposure and similar expected benefits facilitate the collaboration among states. In line with Ostrom's (1990) theoretical contribution, it is the perception of a common threat that drives cooperation and forms the need for collective action (Blondin & Boin, 2020, p.201). If the exposure to the crisis is asymmetric it gives power to members of the group to bargain and therefore they would 'holdout' the cooperation in order to gain benefits (Ibid.). This assumption is present in intergovernmentalist theory as well as Olson's (2009) collective action theory. Based on this factor, my hypothesis would be:

H4: Symmetric crisis exposure and perceived benefits led the Visegrad states to cooperate
on migration crisis

Crisis management facilitation

2.10.5. Group size

As the core theoretical assumption of Olson (2009) suggests, the large number of actors in a group impedes cooperation because the free-rider problem arises and it is not in the best interests of rational actors to cooperate in a group where there is a possibility to free ride. Olson (2009) also posits that it is organizationally more expensive to cooperate in large groups. This assumption is strengthened by crisis management literature, where authors agree that the larger number of actors would be problematic in the sense that the variety of solutions and methods to handling the crisis would increase (Blondin & Boin, 2020, p.201).

H5: The small number of states in the V4 fostered their cooperation on the
migration crisis

2.9.6. Coordination mechanism

As it was mentioned, in collective action cooperation is most likely when there is an external pressure such as coercion (Olson, 2009) or coordinating hegemon of some sort (Keohane, 1984), but due to the anarchic nature of international relations, there is no one specific force that brings states to cooperate and therefore in such case crisis management specifies the role of the facilitator of collaboration or the third actor in the form of organization such as WHO and EU which already have ready mechanisms in the case of crisis (Blondin & Boin, 2020).Based on this factor, my hypothesis would be:

H6: The presence of a coordination mechanism fostered V4 response to the
migration crisis

2.9.7. Feasible solutions

As was mentioned in the crisis management literature, the overall uncertainty about the crisis situations, its solutions, and origins make the cooperation less likely because the actors simply do not know how to act and what to respond (Blondin & Boin, 2020, p.204). However, if they know the causes and effects they are able to cooperate and find a common ground (Ibid.). Blondin &

Boin (2020, p.205) refers to the concept of 'focal point' developed by Schelling (1960), which means a feasible solution that actors can agree on and cooperate with each other. Therefore, ' when causes are clear and a proven solution is available (or a clear route to finding one), collaborative crisis management becomes more likely' (Blondin & Boin, 2020, p.205). Based on this factor, my hypothesis would be:

H7: The presence of feasible solutions enabled V$ states to cooperate on the
migration crisis

2.10.8. Leadership

Drawing from the crisis management literature, Blondin & Boin (2020, p.205) argue that leadership plays an important role in times of crisis. The leaders help to facilitate the cooperation on transboundary collaboration (Blondin & Boin, 2020, p.206). The leaders in times of crisis are referred to as 'mobilizers'. Thus, my last hypothesis would be:

H8: The presence of 'trusted and experienced' leaders fostered V4's joint
response to the migration crisis.

3. Research design, methodology and data review

3.1. Research design

Pattern matching is an essential element of the **theory-testing case studies.** Pattern matching, as its name already suggests, is oriented to matching the pre-established theoretical propositions and hypotheses, with the empirical findings from the case. Campbell viewed pattern matching technique as *holistic* because it provides much insight into the pattern in qualitative study (Hak & Dul, 2010, p.2). Yin came up with the two types of designs in pattern matching - the **dependent and independent variable designs (**Hak & Dul, 2010, p.2). The dependent variable is suited for cases where the dependent variables are under investigation and their patterns are matched, while independent variable design is focused on the examination of the independent variables. The dependent variables designs tend to be more rigid as they require that even if one of the variables do not match the hypothesis is disconfirmed, which is different in the case of the independent variable design, where each hypothesis represents rival theories and the results will show the best sitting theoretical explanation based on the hypotheses that are confirmed **(**Hak & Dul, 2010, p.2-3). Therefore, the hypothesis must be derived from different rival theories to give alternative explanations in the case of disconfirmation. However, as is already mentioned the theoretical model this research relies on derives its propositions from multiple theories such as collective action, International Relations, EU integration theories, environmental and management studies. Hence, the rival theories of international cooperation are already incorporated into the model and therefore it is not necessary to include any other additional theory in the case of the hypothesis disconfirmation.

As was already presented in the theoretical part of the research, theory testing can be implemented either with a **single case study** or the sample case study. The difference between

the two can be identified based on the theoretical propositions employed. Namely, sample case study is suitable for the propositions which 'express a linear relationship between an independent and a dependent variable' such as in propositions like 'If there is x% more X, then there is y% more Y', e.g. in sample case study the theoretical propositions provide different sets of sample cases and researchers focus on one single sample set and test that set empirically (Hak & Dul, 2010, p.10). Single case study, on the other hand, is suitable for the propositions which outline **necessary or sufficient conditions,** e.g. necessary or sufficient conditions test the presence or absence of the theoretical conditions in a selected case (Hak & Dul, 2010, p.6). Such propositions usually take forms such as 'X results in Y', 'X contributes to Y', X being an independent variable and Y being a dependent variable (Hak & Dul, 2010, p.6). Depending on the interpretation of such conditions, it can be divided into necessary or sufficient conditions. For instance, if we take X (the cause) as a vital condition for the presence of Y (the outcome), that is to say, if we take the rigid position that the outcome Y is not possible without the condition X, it would be called necessary condition (Hak & Dul, 2010, p.7). However, if we assume that the presence of the condition X does not necessitate the outcome Y, then it would be a sufficient condition, where the presence of the cause would make the presence of the outcome more likely, but not necessary (Hak & Dul, 2010, p.7).

Because this research does not aim at exploring linear relationships between the variables and rather concentrates on the conditional variables, the single case study is applicable in this case. The testing is based on necessary conditions given that the outcome of this research, which is V4's cooperation already exists and therefore I try to confirm or disconfirm the necessary conditions which are my independent variables. There are *eight independent variables* such as interdependence, lack of domestic politicization, trust and symmetric exposure and expected benefits and *one dependent variabl*e of Visegrad joint cooperation on migration crisis in my research. Hence, my research relies on **independent variable design**, where dependent variables already exist and I test the four independent variables according to the expected theoretical patterns. However, I will not be testing alternative rival theories as my utilized theoretical framework already derives propositions from different rival theories pertaining to collective action. Yin (2014) identifies multiple reasons researchers choose to focus on single case studies such as the case posing some anomaly, or the novel case, which no other research has looked at etc. This research focuses on the V4 joint response to the migration crisis as critical case because according to Yin, the critical case is aimed at challenging, extending or confirming *'a well formulated theory…[which] has specified a clear set of propositions as well as the circumstances within which the propositions are believed to be true'* (Yin, 2014, p. 47). Therefore, this research focuses on the Visegrad's joint response to the migration crisis as a critical case aimed at checking the validity of theoretical propositions and is required to explain the mismatches between the expected patterns or theoretical propositions and the observed patterns derived from the case study (Yin, 2014, p. 47).
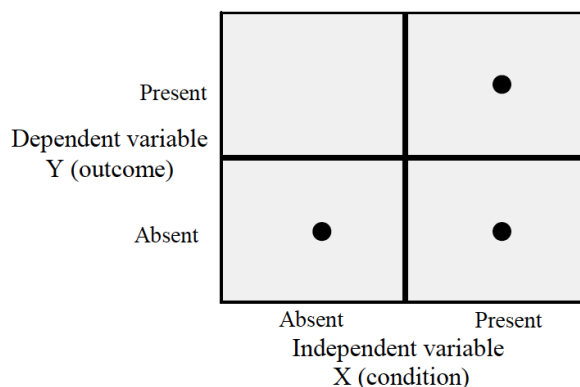
Figure 3. Necessary condition model (Hak, T. and Dul, J., 2009, p.7)

3.2. Methodology and findings

This section explains the conceptualization of the independent variables and provides the results of the findings. However, before going into such details, the overall table of the independent variables, theories where the variables derive from and expected theoretical patterns are provided for further clarity.

Independent variables	Theories	Expected patterns
Domestic politicization	Crisis management and postfunctionalism	Politicization of crisis at home inhibits cooperation among members and makes collaboration between them impossible
Interdependence	crisis management and neofunctionalism	The states collaborate because they are interdependent on each other
Repeated interaction	Collective action, international cooperation and crisis management	States collaborate because they have repeatedly interacted and have an experience of working together
Crisis exposure and expected benefits (threat perception)	Collective action, international cooperation	Symmetric crisis exposure leads to cooperation
Number of actors	Collective action, crisis management	States jointly collaborate on the crisis when the number of states involved are small
Coordination mechanism	Collective action and crisis management	Coordination mechanisms such as organizational capacity are necessary for joint crisis response
Feasible solutions	Crisis management and collective action theory	The joint crisis response is possible when the states agree on the origins of the crisis and the possible solutions
Leadership	Crisis management literature	If the leaders are trusted and experienced, the joint crisis response is more likely to happen

Table 1. Illustration of independent variables with respective theories and expected patterns based on Blondin & Boin's (2020) model

3.2.1. Crisis management and postfunctionalism: Domestic politicization

Transboundary crises tend to become politicized easily (Hooghe & Marks, 2009), in other words they tend to become the focus of the political debate and are often the target of political exploitation (Boin et al. 2009). Post-functionalism posits that the politicization stalls states from collaborating with each other (Hooghe & Marks, 2009). Beyond asserting the destructive power of politicization towards the regional cooperation or integration, which is essential for this research as one of the obstacles towards cooperation, post-functionalism gives a long and detailed answer which involve the questions such as how and why the politicization takes place and what actors are involved in the process. However, it is not the aim of this research to explore how and why the politicization took place, the consequences of the politicization and actors involved in the politicization etc., but rather to look at the simplest observation-data which would demonstrate either absence or presence of *the political exploitation of migration crisis* on the national level of each Visegrad state.

Operationalization

There are a variety of ways to observe and measure politicization in countries depending on the conceptualization of the term and aim of the research. However a number of well-known works based on empirical assessment of politicization agree that there are three main measuring methods of politicization, which are achieved through investigating issue salience, actor expansion and polarization (De Wilde et al., 2016; Hutter & Grande, 2014; Hutter et al., 2016). Issue salience is the 'visibility' of the issue on public and political debates, actor expansion is the involvement of a variety of actors, and the last polarization is a political divide among the political actors who have diverging views on the issue (Vasilopoulou & Gattermann, 2021, p. 663). In line with the aim and research design of this research, I am going to look only at one of the aforementioned elements which is the issue salience because it best reflects the research question of this thesis. According to Green-Pedersen (2012, p.117), *'politicization can be defined as a matter of saliency, i.e. that the issue is high on the agenda of political parties as well as the electorate'*. Relying on this element of the visibility of the issue, I am going to look at the so-called *arenas* where the issue enters the political realm. Elections and referendums are believed to be the important venues where the issue is exploited by the political entrepreneurs. However, as the timeline of this research is only 2015-2016, not all countries in the V4 had elections during the specified period. Therefore election campaigns will be analyzed only in the case of Poland and Slovakia, which had elections in 2015 and 2016, respectively. One of the common methods of political campaigning is releasing party manifestos. Party manifestos are official documents, where political parties express their positions, raise issues they consider *salient*, in other words, important, and offer their policies to solve the existing issues. Party manifestos are available both for Poland and Slovakia which will be used to assess the saliency or the issue of migration crisis being raised or not raised in the party campaigns. In order to

measure politicization of the migration crisis in party manifestos, I refer to the Manifesto Project Database available at *Manifesto Corpus* (2020), where the content analysis of the parties in all OECD member states is available. There are six and nine original party manifestos available in *Manifesto Project Database* for Poland and Slovakia, respectively, in their original languages. The database provides a percentage of statements regarding a variety of topics, including sub topics such as immigration, both on negative and positive scales. Negative statements about immigration are coded under ***per601_2*** entry and include statements against acceptance of new immigrants, against the introduction of migration quotas and expressing views about immigration being a security threat to the nation (Manifest Corpus, 200). Positive statements about immigration are coded under ***per602_2*** entry and include the statements in support of accepting new immigrants, in favor of migration quotas and the general economic benefits new immigrants bring to the receiving country (Manifesto Corpus, 2020). It is significant to note that aforementioned entries only pertain to the new incoming immigrants, not the immigrants already residing in the manifesto countries, which is suitable for this research because this research looks at the politicization of new potential immigration. In accordance with the aim of this research, which is to assess presence or absence of the necessary conditions, the threshold for presence of politicization will be anything above 0 because even if just 0.35% of the manifesto was devoted towards the issue of immigration, it still suggests that the issue was considered by the party and therefore included in the political agenda of the party. However, intensity or degree of politicization will be identified through the number of parties, which politicized or did not politicize the migration crisis, i.e. if per country less than 3 parties mention the migration crisis in their manifestos, the politicization is low; if 3 to 5 party manifestos mention migration crisis, the politicization level is medium; and if more than 5 parties manifestos mention migration crisis, the politicization level is high. In the review of the original manifesto documents, the language barrier is overcome by translating the words pertaining to the migration crisis such as 'migration', 'asylum' into the Polish and Slovak languages, key searching with aforementioned translated words in the manifesto documents and translating relevant parts.

In times when there are no elections, political campaigning can still take place through various other methods such as through billboards and referendums, therefore it is important to observe the presence of other methods of political campaigning. One of the other 'arenas' of politicization is referendum as was mentioned before. The referendums signify the high political salience of the issue because they take the matter further than the electoral campaigns do in that the politicians make an issue a nation-wide concern by putting an issue on the table for discussion on the national level. As Hooghe & Marks (2009, p.18) point out, referendums constitute the platform where parties bring the issue to the 'mass politics'. Out of all Visegrad countries, in 2016 Hungary had a referendum specifically on the 'EU migrant quota referendum' and this referendum is an important politicization case and therefore the information on the referendum will be included. Much information can be found on the referendum in various mass media and therefore this research will review the coverage from BBC News and Politico for this purpose.

Yet another arena where politicization takes place is the parliamentary debates. National parliamentary debates are perfect for observation of the domestic politicization process and the national parliamentary debates will be considered in the case of Czech Republic because they are available online and publicly accessible on the official website of Czech Senate. Within the framework of this research, the numeric threshold must be set prior to the assessment of the data. Therefore, in a single term, holding ≥ 5 times heated debates on the migration crisis would be considered a case of polticization on the political level.

Electoral campaigns

● *Poland*

In the Polish Parliamentary elections on the 25th of October 2015, from eight parties running for the seats in Parliament, six manifestos were available online. Migration crisis is only mentioned by two parties such as *Civic Platform*, the German *minority* and *Modern*, with **0.82% of negative statements** about the migration crisis in the case of *Civic Platform* and German minority and Modern mentioning very slightly that it is not visible at the scale (Manifest Corpus, 2021). However, other parties such as *Law and Justice, Kukiz'15 and Polish Peasants' Party* did not include the immigration question into their agendas at all, therefore each allocated 0% (Ibid.). In the manifestos of *Modern* and *German Minority* parties, the migration crisis is briefly mentioned as a factor raising social 'insecurity' (Modern, 2015) and the challenge for the whole Europe (German Minority, 2015). However, there are no clear-cut solutions and positions that the parties take regarding the migration crisis and therefore the two parties are also allocated 0% on ***per601_2*** and ***per602_2*** entries. Therefore, only Civic platform left, which made the issue of migration crisis salient, which suggests that according to the manifestos, the politicization of the migration crisis in Poland in 2015 was low. Below is the illustration of the politicization in Polish 2015 elections, according to the manifestos:
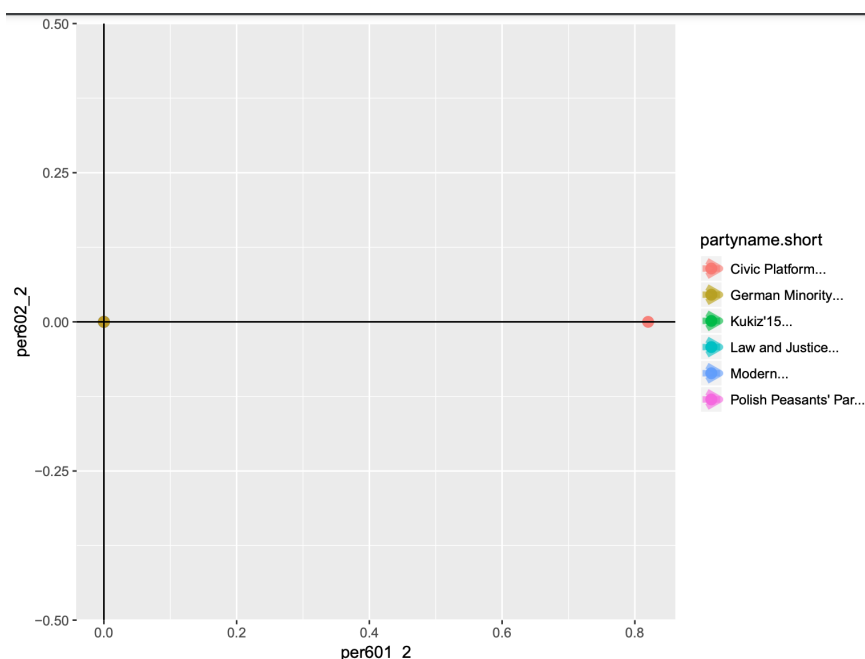
Figure 4. *Graphic illustration of per601_2 and per602_2 entries, on negative and positive statement percentages on migration crisis, respectively, in Poland's 2015 Parliamentary elections (Manifesto Corpus, 2020)*

Even though there is no trace of the discourse on the migration crisis in the official manifesto of the Law and Justice, the political rallies show a different picture. Jarosław Kaczyński, the head of the party, used the migration crisis in his political agenda claiming that:

'*There are already signs of the emergence of very dangerous diseases which haven't been seen in Europe for a long time: cholera on Greek islands; dysentery in Vienna; various types of parasites, protozoans, which aren't dangerous in the organisms of these people but which could be dangerous here*' (Kaczyński cited in Toronto Star, October 2015; Politico, October 14, 2015).

This sparked a political response from the rival parties, some of the members of the left-wing parties such as Andrzej Celinski and Janusz Palikot connecting the rhetoric to the terms used against Jews during the war time (Toronto Star, October 2015; Politico, October 14, 2015).

- ***Slovakia***

Elections took place in Slovakia on March 5, 2016 where parties such as SNS, Most-Hid, Siet and Smer composed a governmental coalition. Overall 23 parties took part in the electoral competition, but only nine of the party manifestos are available in Manifesto Project Dataset considers only parties, which win at least two percent in the lower house (Manifesto Corpus, 2020). In turn, it is enough to observe the absence or presence of politicization of the migration crisis. Migration crisis is on the political agenda of seven parties out of the total nine parties which participated in the elections, **which fit the high politicization,** according to the scale within this framework. The positions are mostly against the acceptance of refugees and *economic* migrants, except for *Christian Democratic Movement* and *We Are Family*. In *Christian Democratic Movement Manifesto,* 0.13% of statements express support for the EU migration

agenda, but at the same time the party proposes strengthening border protection and securitizes illegal immigration, which is considered expressing a negative stance on immigration and constitutes 0.259% of *Christian Democratic Movement's* overal manifesto content (Manifesto Corpus, 2020). The party declares:

'We *will support strict border protection in order to prevent illegal migration, smuggling and smuggling. We will stick to strict adherence to the asylum policy Development aid (cooperation) KDH wants Slovakia, which will be in solidarity with its citizens, but also to the needy in the world*' (Christian Democratic Movement, 2016).

Similarly, *We Are Family* has 0.703% of positive statements about immigration, but significant 3.747% of negative statements against the immigration (Manifesto Corpus, 2020). *Bridge* and *Network* do not include the migration crisis on their agenda at all (Manifesto Corpus, 2020).
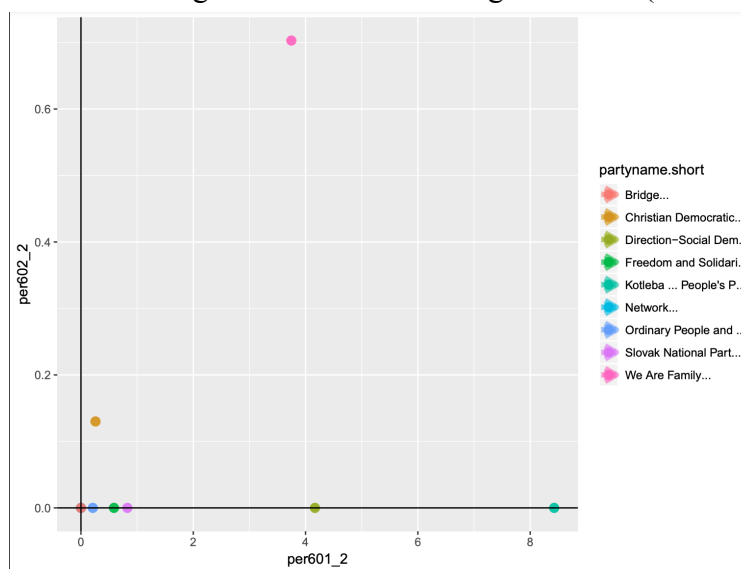
Figure 5. *Graphic illustration of **per601_2** and **per602_2** entries, on negative and positive statement percentages on migration crisis, respectively, in Slovakia's 2016 Parliamentary elections (Manifesto Corpus, 2020)*

Kotleba, Slovak National Party, Ordinary People and Independent Personalities (OĽANO in Slovak), Freedom and Solidarity, Direction-Social Democracy all echo each other's rhetoric and politicize the migration crisis by elaborating and giving a priority to migration issues in their agendas (Manifesto Corpus, 2020). The highest 8.427% of negative statements are expressed by Kotleba, followed by 4.167% by Direction-Social Democracy party, and then smaller 0.826% by *Slovak National Party,* 0.588% by Freedom and Solidarity, 0.259% by Christian Democratic Movement, and 0.211% by OĽANO (Manifesto Corpus, 2020).They consider the migration flow as first of all a security challenge by linking it to terrorism and view it as a threat to the safety of their societies. There is a clear political debate as some of the parties such as Ordinary People and Independent Personalities, Kotleba, and Freedom and Solidarity show clear opposition to the reception of immigrants from the 'different civilization' (Manifesto Corpus, 2020).

Referendums

In Hungary, the ruling party Fidesz with its leader Viktor Orbán in charge organized a referendum in October 2016 against the reception of 1294 immigrants, which was result of the EU plan on the relocation of 160,000 asylum seekers from heavily overburdened Greece and Italy (BBC News, 3 October, 2016; Politico, October 2, 2016). Despite the turnout being 43.35%, which is less than required +50% for a referendum to pass, the 98% of the participants supported the government's referendum against the reception of immigrants (BBC News, 3 October, 2016). Left-wing opposition parties responded to the referendum by calling citizens to boycott a referendum or to spoil the ballot boxes (Politico, October 2, 2016). Other opposition actions against the referendum included a rally (BBC News, 3 October, 2016) with the most creative approach taken by 'Two-Tailed Dog Party', which mocked the government's anti-immigration campaign (Politico, October 2, 2016).

Other political campaigns

A part of the Hungarian government's campaign against immigration were the national consultations and anti-immigration billboard campaigns. In early May 2015, the government sent out the questionnaires to 8 million Hungarian citizens pertaining to the immigration such as what the citizens think about particularly economic immigrants and terrorism (European Commision, 2015). This 'national consultation' in the form of questionnaires such as what measures have to be taken towards illegal immigrants if they are caught and how to resolve the problem of immigrants abusing social benefits (European Commision, 2015). Such consultation sparked EU-wide debate, where Prime Minister Orbán took part (European Commision, 2015). Along with such consultations the Hungarian government used anti-immigration billboards such as 'If you come to Hungary you cannot take away Hungarians' jobs" and "If you come to Hungary you must respect our culture" (Reuters, June 12, 2015). However, opponents were replacing such billboards with the ones which mocked the governments bringing up other socio-economic problems which already existed in Hungary such as mass emigration of Hungarians to other EU countries for better jobs etc (Euronews, June 10, 2015; BBC News, June 14, 2015). Other activists engaged in spoiling the government billboards as an act of disagreement (The Guardian, June 8, 2015; Newsweek, July 10, 2015).

National parliamentary debates

National parliamentary debates, meetings reports, and resolutions adopted by the Senate are all available on the official website of the Czech Senate (Senát Parlamentu České). The dates 2015-2016 suit the 10th term of the Czech Senate, which lasted from 2014 till 2016 and also the beginning of the 11th term, which started from 16th of November. Migration crisis was under debate in the Czech Senate starting from the 12th meeting on 23rd of September 2015 . **A total number of six plenary sessions** were devoted to the discussion of the migration crisis, its impacts, the domestic regulations pertaining to the immigration, European Council decisions on migration etc (Senate of the Czech Republic, 2022). Similar concerns were raised as in the

abovementioned electoral campaigns in Slovakia regarding the religious differences as the first Vice President of Senate, Přemysl Sobotka, stated,

> '*And I'm afraid, because if you caught the information right, the survey among Islamists in Denmark, 40% want to introduce sharia law into the legal system of Denmark. I am not a xenophobe, I am not a person who is afraid of drama. Here everyone flaunts human rights. I will honor them to the fullest extent, but there are also civil rights that come with responsibilities.'*
> (Czech Senate Debate, 22 October 2015).

Some of the Senators also raised a question of possible punishment to Greece for letting in the unprecedented number of asylum seekers. Senator Jaroslav Doubrava for example stated: '... this is a condition here for the money to be given to Greece, that is, that Greece is actually being ordered not to protect the Schengen border, and of Croatia, which is fulfilling its duty by even intending to build a fence. It is about something else, Croatia is criticized for it and, surprisingly, not persecuted. That's one thing.' (Czech Senate Debate, October 22 2015). Minister of the Czech Republic Jiří Dienstbier declared, 'In the discussion in Bratislava, the statesmen tried primarily to diagnose the current state of the European Union. As a result of the accumulation of crises in recent years, economic and debt, the wars in Syria and Ukraine, the terrorist threat and, above all, the migration crisis, citizens' confidence in European integration has weakened'(Czech Senate Debate, October 22 2015). The following is the table of the plenary sessions in the Czech Senate, where the migration crisis was discussed:

Meeting number	Term number	Themes discussed
12	10	Review of Proposal of the Commission to resolve the refugee crisis in the EU, including the EU Action Plan against the Transfer of Migrants
13	10	temporary international protection measures in favor of Italy, Greece and Hungary and debate on crisis relocation mechanism, Return Policy
14	10	Review of national asylum rules
15	10	Security after terrorist attacks in Paris
27	10	Discussion of the European Agenda on Migration and Commission's proposal to cooperate with third countries
28	10	Asylum law reform package

Table 2. 'Plenary sessions on the migration crisis' (compiled from the website of Senate of the Czech Republic, 2022)

3.2.2. Crisis management and neo-functionalism: Interdependence

In crisis management, some crises are recognized as easier to withdraw from unilaterally than the others. Neofunctionalism explains such interdependence by postulating that interdependence stems from the level of integration, e.g. integration level dictates whether states cooperate or not (Schmitter, 1969). The higher the level of integration, the less likely it is that states will single-handedly withdraw from the crisis because much is at stake such as the withdrawal may entail high costs, regime - threatening consequences and policy limitations (Schmitter, 1969).

Operationalization

The degree of institutionalization or integration must be assessed in order to measure interdependence of Visegrad states. When assessing institutionalization, the concentration must fall on aspects such as potential costs of withdrawing from the cooperation, the legal possibility to withdraw from the cooperation and the consequences for the Visegrad group if one of the members withdraws from cooperation. For aforementioned purposes, the reports on the nature of the Visegrad alliance will be reviewed. Such reports can be found on the Visegrad group's official website, where each Visegrad state, who holds Visegrad Presidency produces an annual Presidency report on the past achievements, present and future goals.

The nature of the Visegrad regional group
The Visegrad Four was established in 1991 as a cooperation of states which had a common goal of joining the EU. The first ever regional document was signed by the then President of Czechoslovakia Václav Havel, the Prime Minister of Hungary József Antall, and President of Poland Lech Wałęsa, under the title 'Declaration on Cooperation between the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Hungary in Striving for European Integration' (Visegrad group, 2013a, p.7). This document, according to the report, 'represented a security guarantee' for Western European countries which signaled that the four Central European countries would have a great value for the European Union and that they are open to cooperation rather than disintegration as it happened with former Yugoslav countries at the time (Visegrad group, 2013a). As of Visegrad integration, the report suggests that **there is no institutionalization** except for the Visegrad Fund and such non-institutionalized formation is deemed 'a political asset' by the Visegrad countries because this is what 'makes it easier to respond to various challenges and crises, and promptly react to the changing political environment' (Visegrad group, 2013a, p. 8). The Visegrad Fund is only binding in a sense that the members must contribute annually to the Fund (Visegrad Fund Statute, 1999) . The popularity of the alliance grew after 1998 when the Visegrad countries implemented a collective effort and assistance towards Slovakia, which in 1998 was not invited to EU and NATO accession talks as the rest of the Visegrad group and therefore Visegrad was an important platform to help Central European countries access EU and NATO (Visegrad group, 2013a, p. 9). There were other countries such as Bulgaria and Romania who wanted to join the group, but instead of expansion, the Visegrad Four decided to open V4+ format to facilitate partnership and

cooperation with countries beyond the group core four members (Visegrad group, 2013a, p. 9). Because there is no institutionalization at all, except for the Visegrad Fund, which involves only commitment to fund educational, cultural and scientific programs and projects, there are no legal and policy constraints for the V4 to withdraw from the cooperation. Furthermore, as there is no institution or policy integration, the resistance of one of the members of the group would not jeopordize the regime.

3.2.3. Collective action, international cooperation and crisis management: Repeated interaction

Collective action and international cooperation fields theorize that repeated interaction is essential for fostering cooperation. For collective action repeated interaction signifies the creation of shared norms and trust which lead to the likeliness of cooperation (Ostrom, 1990), while international cooperation finds the influence of repeated interaction positive on the cooperation based on the game theory. The Prisoner's Dilemma suggests that the players, who had been playing for a number of times with each other and therefore having repeated interaction are more likely to cooperate because they have established a certain cooperative pattern (Axelrod, 1984, p.4). For crisis management, therefore, cooperation is more likely when the states already have repeated interaction over the range of policies (Blondin & Boin, 2020, p.202).

Operationalization

Thus, repeated interaction, defined as the communication between actors on different policies, will be assessed through the analysis of intergovernmental meetings within the V4 and the policy areas of the communication in each meeting starting from 2004 until 2015. Specifically, the timeline of 2004 to 2015 is chosen because from 2004 on the official Visegrad website started reporting their joint activities and shared official documents from governmental meetings of all scales to the public. Naturally, till including the beginning of 2015 is chosen because that is when the migration crisis started. The official summary documents about the meetings of Prime-Ministers, Foreign Ministers, Culture Ministers, Environmental Ministers, Regional Development Ministers, Agriculture Ministers and a variety of other ministerial meetings are available on the official website of V4 at visegradgroup.eu in English. All the governmental meetings can be chosen in order to see the policy areas in which the governments interacted. Even though it is high profile politicians such as Prime Ministers who hold the biggest responsibility in times of crisis, other ministerial meetings should not be neglected as they are able to provide the information about overall 'intensity of cooperation' between the states. The policy areas will be divided into the relevant categories and intergovernmental interaction will be looked at in detail within each policy area. The interactions, e.g., the intergovernmental meetings will be grouped according to the policy areas.

Blondin & Boin (2020, p. 203) refer to Novaky (2015) to highlight that repeated interaction can be defined as 'intensive collaboration over the years'. Therefore, within the framework of this research, it is important to establish a numeric signifier for such *intensiveness* of interaction. On the bigger EU level, specifically taking the Committee of Permanent Representatives (hereby COREPER), otherwise known as the institution in charge of the Council-level ministerial meetings, the weekly meetings are considered to be an *intensive interaction* (Lewis, 1998, p.482). Visegrad as a subregional alliance is much smaller than the EU and therefore it would not be fair to expect the Visegrad interaction to take place weekly to be intensive. Furthermore, on the Visegrad level, all fields of cooperation are taken into account and therefore more realistic numeric threshold shall be set. Thus, the interaction would be considered intensive and repeated on the Visegrad level, if annually there are at least >7 meetings with all policy areas included over a period of at least > 5 years before 2015. These numbers can be considered realistic because it is a minimal requirement for the countries to know each other and qualifies as certain kind of experience of cooperation among the states.

All interactions

The Visegrad states have significantly increased their interaction in different policy areas starting from 2004. Throughout 2004 to 2006 period the interaction was not intense, e.g. it did not meet the requirement set in this research to be considered an *intensive interaction*. However, starting from 2007, there is a significant increase in the number of regional meetings, the majority of which focused on the EU-related post-assession talks and discussions (Visegrad group, n.d.). 2008-2010 period is marked by a slight drop in the intensity of the interaction, but still meets the minimal requirement set in the framework of this research (Ibid.). 2011-2012 shows a priority cooperation in the fied of foreign policy when tthe countries heavily discussed the Eastern Partnership and Western Balkans in the framework of EU accession, sharing experience, strengthening democratic institutions and improving the rule of law (Ibid.). The energy security was the top area of interaction in 2013, in 2014 followed by the foreign policy taking the leading role in interaction as the war erupted in Ukraine (Ibid.). In 2015, foreign policy remained the top interaction area on par with the new topic of migration. Thus, the interaction within the V4 format has been *intensive* from 2007 to 2015, with the maximum number of interactions taking place in 2014 and 2015 (Ibid.). Thus, it is fair to say that the repeated and intensive interaction was present in the V4 prior to the migration crisis as it included 9 years of repeated intensive interaction in exceeding the numeric requirement set above. The data shows that the V4 interacted on various policy areas and respoonded collectively on the issues dependeding on the development and escalations taking place around this or that issue.
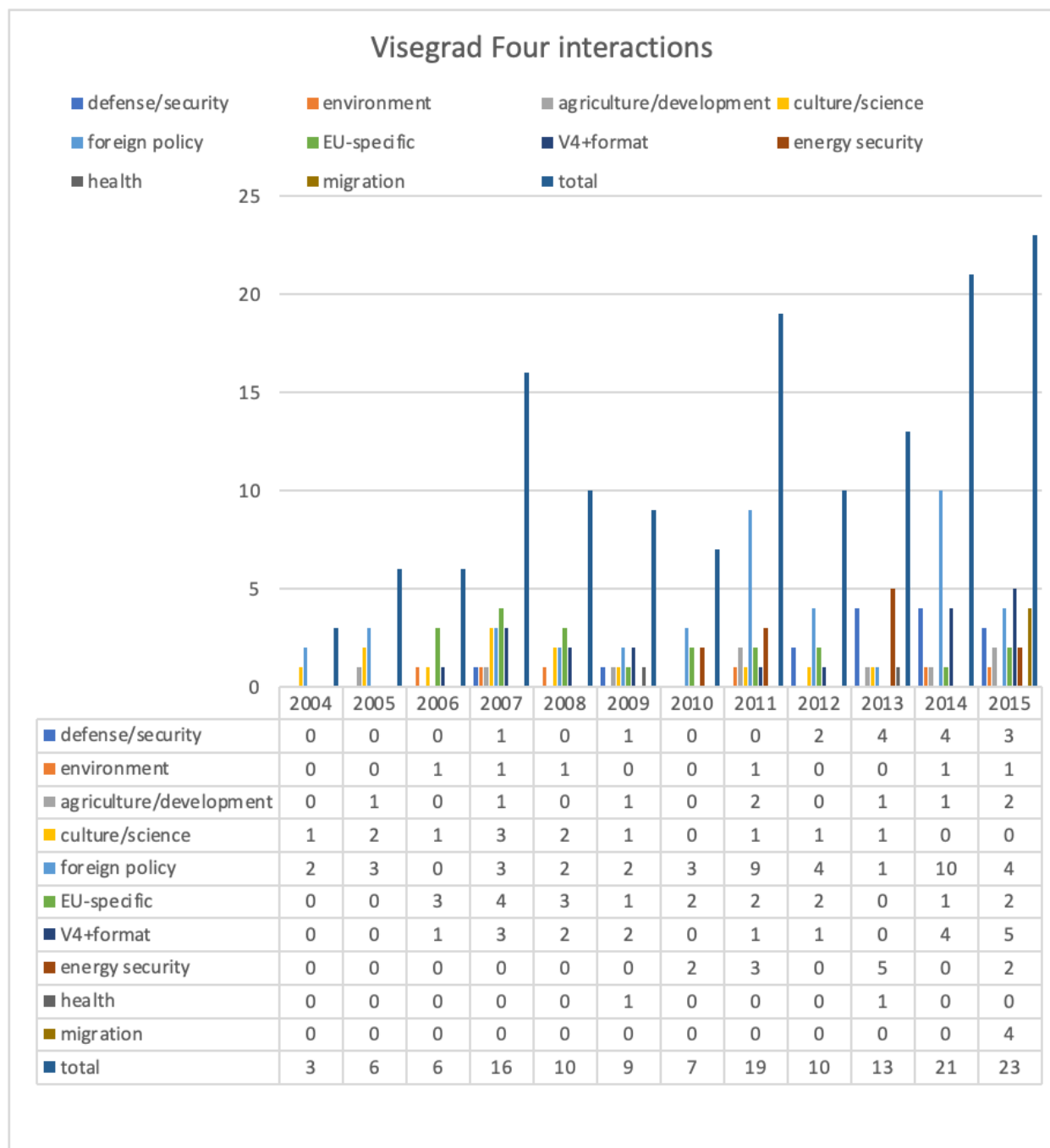
Figure 6. Graphic illustration of the Visegrad meetings/interactions on different policy areas compiled by the author based on the data available at Visegrad group (n.d.)

Interaction in defense and security policies

According to the declarations, joint statements, communiques and meeting reports, the interaction on defense and security policies between Visegrad states took an intense character starting from 2012 (Visegrad group, n.d.). On **April 18, 2012** the Foreign Ministers of the Visegrad group released a joint statement on their support of NATO response forces in the

Visegrad countries and their willingness to further the **EU Battlegroups** initiative by establishing the Visegrad Battlegroup (Visegrad, 2012a). Not long after, the **Defense Ministers of V4** announced the common Visegrad defense project 'Defense Austerity V4 (DAV4)' (Visegrad group, 2012b). **On March 6, 2013,** the meeting held between the Minister of Defense of V4 with German and French Defense Ministers produced a joint statement, where Visegrad's Western allies expressed support for the initiation of Visegrad EU Battlegroup (Visegrad group, 2013b). **On April 18, 2013**, In Bratislava, Prime Ministers of the V4 declared their will to contribute to the CSDP and their shared view about the importance of the development of defense capabilities within the EU and NATO (Visegrad group, 2013c). **On March 14, 2014**, the Ministers of Defense of Visegrad countries signed 'Long-term Vision of the Visegrad Countries on Deepening Their Defense Cooperation' and 'Framework for an Enhanced V4 Defense Cooperation', where they agreed on three main cooperation perspectives of V4 in the fields of capability development, the establishment of regional unit which can be deployed at the EU and NATO levels, and educational sphere such as institutional cooperation of Visegrad states under the common Visegrad Group Military Educational Program (Visegrad group, 2014a). Alarmed by the developments in Ukraine in 2014, the Prime Ministers of Visegrad states once again reiterated their will to focus on defense cooperation, specifically on the Visegrad Battlegroups, to develop action plans to implement the long-term vision outlined before and to establish a 'modular force' to support EU and NATO actions (Visegrad group, 2014c).

Interaction in environmental field

The Ministers of Environment of Visegrad states met 17 times starting since the inception of the V4 till 2015 (Visegrad group, n.d.) and sometimes the Ministers collaborated in V4+ format, which is when V4 meet with delegations of other countries and in such meetings the Visegrad group represents one single position. This kind of format is very common for the Visegrad group. In such meetings the Ministers consult on a number of challenges and the resolutions of the EU level and discuss within the Visegrad framework. At the latest 17th meeting of Visegrad Environment Ministers on March 7–8, 2011 in Slovakian Šamorín-Čilistov, the Ministers discussed and agreed on a number of issues and resolutions (Visegrad group, 2011a). Taking into account the previous meetings, the Green Climate Fund, Cancun agreement was endorsed, and Ministers also agreed on the need to share the experience of fast-start projects within the Visegrad group, discussed the Environmental Action Programme of the EU, the difference between handling of contaminated sites between the Western and Central European states etc (Ibid.).

Interaction in agriculture policy

A number of V4+ meetings were held in the sphere of agriculture. On 29th of April, 2009, during the meeting of Ministers of Agriculture of Visegrad states with the respective Ministers of Bulgaria and Romania, the Visegrad states presented a joint position on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), where they emphasized the need to ease the process of payments for

the field workers (Visegrad group, 2009a). The other matters related to the European Commission's suggestions in the agricultural field were also discussed and approved by the participants of the V4+ meeting (Ibid.). The simplified payment discussion was followed by a joint declaration of Ministers of Agriculture of V4 + the respective Ministers of Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia, where they raised their concerns to the European Commission about the shortages of the *Complementary National Direct Payments* under CAP (Visegrad Group, 2011b). In another V4+ Bulgaria, Romania meeting in Krakow in 2013, the Ministers of Agriculture raised their opposition to the European Commission's proposal to ban slim cigarettes and to decrease production of flavored cigarettes (Visegrad group, 2013f)

Interaction in cultural and scientific sphere

Until 2013, there were in total 23 meetings of the Ministers of Culture of V4 (Visegrad group, n.d.). The Ministers meet to discuss, overview, approve or decline, and evaluate various projects related to the promotion of Central European culture, educational and art purposes related to Central Europe (Ibid.). Some of the projects discussed on the 23rd meeting of Ministers of Culture in Krakow in 2013 included the 'System of Post-Napoleonic Fortresses of Habsburg Empire', the project related to the 'Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of the Cultural Expressions for Selected Central and Eastern European countries', digitization projects etc. (Visegrad group, 2013g). The Ministers of Culture of Czech Republic and Slovakia, Minister of National Resources of Hungary, Minister of Culture and National Heritage of Poland in their meeting in Mikulov on October 7, 2011, jointly proposed to include culture in EU cohesion policy as they asserted that culture is important both in social and economic terms and therefore 'culture contributed to the goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy' (Visegrad group, 2011c).

Interaction in foreign policies

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Visegrad countries meet to discuss various events across the world and the special attention is given to the EU Eastern Partnership countries and Western Balkan states as they are located in the immediate vicinity of the Visegrad states. Therefore statements, communiques and meetings of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Prime Ministers of Visegrad states address the stability and democratization of Eastern European and Western Balkan neighbors (Visegrad group, n.d.). The V4 has a joint foreign policy when it comes to these two regions. The joint foreign policy of Visegrad states on the topic of Eastern partnership revolves around helping the Eastern European countries with their path towards the EU, which entails an ultimate goal of being members of the EU. V4 interact and cooperate constantly on the topic of Eastern Partnership, sometimes with other EU colleagues or sometimes with the Eastern Partnership colleagues themselves because the four countries function as mentors for the countries who have a potential to be in the EU. In an attempt to cooperate more on the Eastern partnership, the V4 has also extended the educational projects in the Visegrad Fund towards the countries of the Eastern partnership such as creation of programs like V4EaP which stands for Visegrad Four Eastern partnership and is aimed at furthering the causes of the Visegrad group

such as democratization and development of civil society in the Eastern Partnership region (Visegrad group, 2012a) The Visegrad states also called out the democratic backsliding and authoritarian tendencies if they occur in the countries of Eastern partnership such as the calling Belorusian authorities to stop political purges and repressions (Visegrad group, 2011d).

3.2.4. Collective action and international cooperation: *Crisis Exposure*

Collective action theory posits that the states which are equally exposed to the threat are going to work collectively (Ostrom, 1990). Similar view is shared by the international cooperation theories, where 'asymmetric' or unequal exposure is believed to lead to the problems of bargaining and heterogeneity of solution preferences, which make the cooperation difficult to achieve (Fearon, 1998). Therefore, Blondin & Boin conclude that symmetric exposure positively contributes to the will of countries to cooperate.

Operationalization

Thus, crisis exposure or vulnerability to the crisis can be measured in two ways: physical exposure, e.g. whether the country was flooded with the migrants on its borders, and regulatory, that is, whether the crisis exposure took place due to legal obligation that countries needed to do upheld. In order to assess the former it is fair to review the number of asylum applications in each of the Visegrad countries; for the latter, the regulatory framework or obligation on the part of the third party/power must be reviewed and therefore the EU suits for this role. The data for physical exposure will be gathered from the *Eurostat,* where statistical information is available for every country in the EU, including the Visegrad countries. For the regulatory crisis exposure, the resolution document by the EU Council will be reviewed. For both Eurostat data and legal EU Council documents, 2015-2016 timeline will be chosen in line with the time scope of this research, which is the cooperation among Visegrad states during the peak of the migration crisis. Based on the data , it is possible to see to what extent each country in V4was affected and if their exposure was symmetric or asymmetric. In terms of the physical exposure, it is important to set a numeric classifications such as what would be considered low, significant, and high number of asylum applications in order to examine whether the exposure was symmetrical or not. Therefore, this research will rely on the numeric classification of Eurostat, where the countries are classified into 6 numeric categories and within the the framework of this research, I designate the numeric range taken from Eurostat with the level of exposure such as *insignificant, low, medium, significant, high, very high* classifications. For the countries to be exposed to the crisis symmterically they have to all lie in one category.

range	exposure level
≥ 150 to 330	insignificant

≥ 330 to 1625	low
≥ 1625 to 12 698	medium
≥ 12 698 to 31 935	significant
≥ 31 935 to 70 966	high
≥ 70 966 to 476 510	very high

Table 3. *Author's categorization based on the numeric groupings of Eurostat (2015)*

Such measurements differ in the case of the legal exposure because in legal exposure, each state's capacity is taken into account and therefore, any legal document that obligates countries to host asylum-seekers would have equal impact on the countries, e.g. the countries would be equally exposed if the legal document applies to each state. Therefore, regardless of the number of asylum-seekers, if the legal document obligates each state to take certain number of asylum seekers, it would mean they are all in the 'same boat', that is assymetrically exposed to the crisis, as all would be subject to implementing the directive. Thus, to measure the exposure to the crisis in legal terms, it is sufficient to observe if any legal document obliges each Visegrad state to take up asylum seekers.

Physical exposure

In the *Eurostat (n.d.)*, all asylum applications are counted regardless of whether they were submitted on the border area or inside the country illegally or legally, therefore there is no distinction between legal and illegal border crossings in the data. There is a distinction, however, between the first time application and general application, first time application being that the person has never applied for the asylum application in the given country and therefore the person is registered only once at the country's system (Ibid.). The general asylum application includes all the applications, regardless of the number of times the application from the same person was submitted, therefore the numbers between the two vary (Ibid.). It is more logical to pay attention to the first time application section, rather than the general asylum application numbers because it reveals the real number of people, 'head count' so to say, who apply for the asylum. Also, first time asylum applications do not take into account the asylum applications of the same people in other EU member states because it was made mandatory to share such data among member states only starting from January 2021 (Ibid.).

According to the classifications below, one can see that the physical exposure of the Visegrad states to the migration crisis varies greatly as Slovakia has been in the category of the least exposed countries where the number of the asylum applications shows the lowest 'insignificant' 270 for the first applicants in 2015 and even less, just 100 applicants in 2016 (Eurostat, 2015; Eurostat, 2016). In stark contrast, Hungary has immensely been exposed to the crisis in 2015 with very high number of 174,435 individuals applying for the asylum, while in 2016, it was still flooded by significant number of asylum seekers (Ibid.). Exposure level in Czech Republic was low with number of asylum seekers reaching only 1235 at most. Poland has seen significant and

medium level of exposure with 10,255 application in 2015 and decreased 9780 in 2016 (Ibid.). Therefore, it is correct to claim that the exposure level was not symmetric in the Visegrad states, that is each country experienced different level of physical exposure to migrants.

Country	Asylum application				First time applicants			
year	2015	Exposure level	2016	Exposure level	2015	Exposure level	2016	Exposure level
Czech Republic	1515	low	1475	low	1235	low	1200	low
Hungary	177, 135	very high	29,430	significant	174,435	very high	28,215	significant
Poland	12,190	significant	12,305	medium	10,255	medium	9780	medium
Slovakia	330	insignificant	145	insignifant	270	insignifant	100	insignifcant

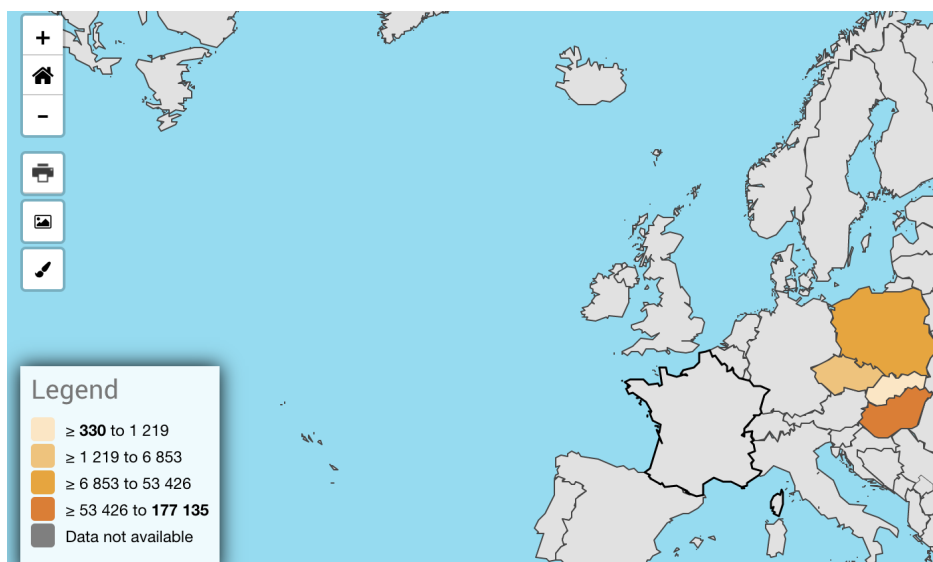**Table 4.** Compiled from the data available at *Eurostat (2015); Eurostat (2016)*

Figure 7. *Map of the V4 countries according to the number of asylum and first time asylum applications in 2015 (Eurostat, 2015)*

Figure 8. Map of the V4 countries according to the number of asylum and first time asylum applications in 2016 (Eurostat, 2016).

According to the *head count* of the applicants, in 2015, Hungary had seventeen times more applications than Poland, the second biggest recipient after Hungary among the Visegrad group (Eurostat, 2015). The least affected Slovakia only received 270 first time applications, while Czech Republic steadily received around 1200 applications both in 2015 and 2016 (Eurostat, 2015; Eurostat, 2016). Hungary being at the external border of the EU with the Western Balkans, otherwise known as Balkan route for migrants, was exposed to such a large number of asylum seekers.

Legal obligation

In line with the Common European Asylum System, EU tried to tackle the issue of migration crisis by means of taking control of the return policy, colloborating with the third countries to hold the migrants outside the EU, and relocating asylum-seekers from the overburdened member-states of the EU (European Commission, n.d.). The **third policy had an impact on how the Visegrad states were exposed to the crisis** as the policy first entailed the mandatory physical relocation of 40,000 asylum-seekers from Greece and Italy and later 120,000 asylum seekers from Greece, Italy and Hungary to other members of the EU, with the exception of Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom (Council Decision 2015/1601, 2015). The mandatory relocation would take place in accordance with the quota system, where each EU member-state would be allocated a number of people 'in clear need of international protection' based on the member-state's capacities such as GDP, number of population, unemployment rate, and already present number of asylum-seekers (Council Decision 2015/1601, 2015). As Hungary requested to remove it from the list of the relocation beneficiary countries, it left the V4 with the following asylum-seekers numbers to be relocated:

Visegrad Four	From Italy (out of 15,600 asylum seekers)	From Greece (out of 50,400 asylum seekers)

Czech Republic	376	1215
Hungary	306	988
Poland	1201	3881
Slovakia	190	612

Table 5. The number of asylum seekers for relocation (Council Decision 2015/1601, 2015)

The Council Decision 2015/1601 (2015) obliges all Visegrad states to participate in burden-sharing policy and take a certin number of asylum seekers into their countries, therefore it is correct to conclude that the Visegrad states were symmetrically exposed to the migration crisis in the sense that they were legally bound to receive abovementioned quota of asylum seekers.

3.2.5. Collective action and crisis management: Number of Actors

One of the most important assertions of collective theory by Olson (2009) is that the smaller groups are better suited to cooperate because they do not experience free-riding issues and it is less expensive to organize cooperation among a small group. Similarly, crisis management views the transboundary crisis to be difficult to manage collectively in general because of different constituencies and different policy approaches of the countries involved (Laegreid & Rykkja, 2018), and therefore, it is logical to assume that the larger number of countries would make it even more difficult to cooperate (Blondin & Boin, 2020, p.203).

Operationalization

There is no need of observing or analyzing this variable because it is obvious that there are four members in the Visegrad group. However, it is important to establish if this number belongs to a large or a small group. Blondin & Boin's model does not set any numerical conceptualization for their large or small group definitions. However, one may look at the collective action theory to have some categorization and approximate numeric understanding of what is considered large and small groups. Hence, this research looks at the categorization of Olson (2009, p. 49-50), where the author identifies between the pure monopolistic, oligopolistic and atomistic competition in the market terms, which are translated in the non-market organization terms as single person, privileged or intermediate groups and finally latent groups, with the ascending order from the smallest to the biggest.

Olson's group categorization

The first categorization is about pure monopoly or a single person, who naturally does not and cannot form any collective action (Olson, 2009, p. 49). The second type is divided between the privileged or intermediate, both of them consisting of a few members, the difference between which is that the former has the members who are ready to cover the whole costs of the

collective good, regardless of whether anyone else contributes (Olson, 2009, p. 50). In other words, collective action does not have to be coordinated in this case because one member pays off the whole price of the collective good (Olson, 2009, p. 50). Intermediate group, on the other hand, is the group that needs coordination in order to obtain collective good and if one of the members does not contribute to the costs of the collective action, the others would be less willing to engage in the collective action because the number is so few that they notice free-riders (Olson, 2009, p. 50). Therefore, in the intermediate group the chances of collective action depend on each individual member and the chances of collaboration are 50 to 50, while the cooperation is most likely in the privileged groups (Olson, 2009, p. 50). However, the members of the large groups or latent groups are not motivated to contribute to the collective good because of the free-rider problem, e.g. the members are more interested in receiving benefit of cooperation, but not investing in cooperation because in large groups members would not notice non-participation anyways (Olson, 2009, p. 50). Now, given that there are four members in the Visegrad group and there is a coordination of the collective action, the V4 falls under the category of intermediate group and is therefore considered a small group. Overall, it is important to establish the V4 as not the large group because in line with Olson's collective action theory, the large groups are difficult to coordinate because of the free-rider problems and more expensive to coordinate, therefore the cooperation is less likely in the large groups and more likely in the small groups like the Visegrad Four.

3.2.6. Collective action and crisis management: Coordination Mechanism

The collective action theory suggests that cooperation is less likely unless there is a coercion or some other kind of 'device' that will ensure cooperation on the members of the group (Olson, 2009, p.2). In the absence of such enforcement devices on the international level, crisis management offers the role of international organizations as having the organizational capacity to coordinate inter-state cooperation (Sabel & Victor, 2015).

Operationalization

In order to assess organizational capacity of V4 as a facilitating mechanism for cooperation, the institutional 'machinery' (Blondin & Boin, 2020, p. 204) of the group will be reviewed. The main institutions are reviewed according to their governance structure, policies and budget. Information about institutions of V4 will be searched on the official website of V4 and after identifying the key institutions, data about the structure, policies and budget will be derived from their official websites.

International Visegrad Fund

The Visegrad official website's section on the aim and structure of the group states that there is only one organization within the Visegrad group under the name of 'International Visegrad Fund' (Visegrad, n.d.). The International Visegrad Fund (hereby IVF) was created in 2000 by V4 governments with its base in Slovakia. The mission of the Fund is to advance the cooperation between the Visegrad states through the means of providing financial support to the educational projects and exchange programs (Visegrad Fund, n.d.). Their vision includes the increased awareness of the shared history among the Central Europeans (Visegrad Fund, n.d.). The organizational structure of the institution consists of the Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the Council of Ambassadors as governing entity, Executive Director in the executive branch and the Secretariat as the administrative entity (Visegrad Fund Statute, 1999). The Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (hereby Conference) is the supreme body, which approves the budget of the Fund, determines monetary contribution of each Member state and sets procedural regulations (Visegrad group, n.d.). There is an annual Presidency at the Conference and in the rotating order each Minister becomes a President of the body for a year (Visegrad Fund, n.d.). The Council of Ambassadors consist of Ambassadors, otherwise known as Chargé d'Affaires from each Visegrad state, who meet twice a year. The Presidency at the Council is synchronized with the presiding Presidency of Conference, namely the Ambassador in charge of the Council must come from the same member state as the President of the Conference at the time of the Presidency (Visegrad Fund, n.d.). The Council of Ambassadors is responsible for the provision of budgetary reports and project documentation which they present to the Conference (Visegrad Fund, n.d.). The Council is also responsible for overseeing and approving the project selections. The administrative body is governed by the Executive Director and is responsible for overseeing the implementations of the projects (Visegrad Fund Statute, 1999). There are different kinds of scholarships and grants available for the applicants from Visegrad states as well as for third country nationals, primarily the citizens of the Eastern Partnership and Western Balkan countries. The financial contribution of Visegrad states to the IVF has been growing steadily, with one million euros being transferred from each Visegrad state at the outset of the Fund in 2000 and by its 15th birthday, the Fund had €9,725,489 at its disposal in grants and scholarships (Visegrad Fund, 2015).

3.2.7. Crisis management and collective action theory: Feasible Solutions

Crisis management literature and collective action theory agree that uncertainty around the causes of a threat negatively contributes to the cooperation (Boin et al. 2016, p. 3-4; Sandler, 1998, p. 237), namely if actors are uncertain about the threat's origins, the cooperation is less likely to take place. The international cooperation adds that cooperation is unlikely to take place if there is no feasible and clear solution because the feasible solutions can be a remedy for the issue of bargaining and can merge the actors' preferences around clear solutions (Fearon, 1998, p.298).

Operationalization

To assess the availability or the lack of feasible solutions, which are termed as 'crisis plan' by Blondin & Boin's (2020, p.205) or the documents that contain the specific solutions need to be explored. In the case of V4, their migration crisis plan can be found in their official joint statements. Their joint statements regarding the migration crisis are available in English on their official website. The joint declarations and statements on the topic of migration crisis will be selected out of numerous other documents on the Visegrad website.

Enhanced protection of EU's external borders
V4 proposed focusing on the protection of the EU's external borders by means of assisting the Western Balkan states and Greece, which are heavily impacted by the migratory flow. To do so, the V4 proposed increasing the number of officials in the European Border and Coast Guard Agency 'FRONTEX' and European Union Agency for Asylum (EASO); implementing hotspot approach in order to manage the migratory flow by means of thorough registration and fingerprinting of newcomers (Visegrad group, 2015d). The V4 prioritizes the enhanced protection of EU borders because the migration crisis negatively impacts the functioning of one of the EU's core regulations, namely Schengen regulation on the free-movement of the people inside the EU (Visegrad group, 2015d; Visegrad group, 2016a). V4 claims that the creation of mini Schengen zones within the Schengen zone is one of such consequences of the migration crisis and therefore the four states agree and propose the solution of the stronger border protection in order to preserve one of the core regulations of EU, which is considered 'a key practical and symbolic achievement of European integration' by Visegrad states (Visegrad group, 2015d) and therefore Visegrad states 'declare that they will continue to fulfill their obligations under the EU acquis, including the responsibility to protect the EU and Schengen Area external borders' (Visegrad group, 2015e).

Focus on Turkey-EU Dialogue and Ending a human trafficking
As Turkey is a transit area for the asylum seekers from the Middle East, it has a strategic role in the crisis management, hence the V4 countries called for and encouraged the EU to open negotiation with Turkey to execute the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan, which would significantly curtail the number of migrants arriving in the EU (Visegrad group, 2016a). The EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan is a comprehensive set of agreements reached between the EU and Turkey in order to control the Middle Eastern irregular migration flow from Turkey to the EU (European Commission, n.d.). The key aspect of the deal focuses on shared migration management between the EU and Turkey by allocating funds to Turkey in order to provide necessary help to Syrian refugees, which would diminish the pull factor for Syrians to seek refuge in the EU, strengthening of Turkish coastal patrolling, increasing awareness among asylum seekers about legal ways of applying for asylum, expanding FRONTEX' activities to Turkey in order to

effectively monitor and exchange intelligence between Turkey and the EU (European Commission, n.d.).

Relocation and resettlement on voluntary basis

In response to the Migration Agenda put forward by the European Commission on mandatory redistribution of asylum seekers across the EU, the V4 disagreed with the agenda and instead proposed relocation and redistribution of asylum-seekers on voluntary basis (Visegrad group, 2015e), which would mean that the EU member states take in the asylum seekers depending on their will and capacity. V4 believes that mandatory redistribution of asylum-seekers will not solve the migration crisis, but will only exacerbate the problem as such a scheme will only attract more migrants (Ibid.). As V4 put it: '*We do not deny the spirit of solidarity but we firmly argue the contradictory effects and pull factors of a possible mandatory redistribution scheme for asylum seekers*' (Visegrad group, 2015e). Additionally, the V4 urged to return the migrants who are not recognized as refugees (Ibid.).

3.2.8. Crisis management: Leadership

Crisis management literature views the presence of leadership, namely a 'trusted and experienced' leader to be the final component for the joint crisis response to take place (Boin et al. 2016).

Operationalization

Leadership is a challenging concept to define, Blondin & Boin (2020) do not provide a clear conceptualization of leadership, but they claim that in times of crisis, leaders can be referred to as 'mobilizers' and sometimes leaders are perceived to be 'zsars' or policy makers and close advisors to the political leaders, who are involved in decision making and handling of crisis. However, there is no way of knowing the close advisors of leaders as they do not present themselves publicly. Therefore, it leaves only national leaders themselves to take the leadership position in this framework. Some of crisis management literature refers to the role of EU High Representative Javier Solana as the leader who could mobilize forces for a collective action (Boin et al., 2013, p. 84) and therefore to narrow down the number of leaders in V4, I suggest looking at the Prime Ministers of the V4 because the migration crisis was handled on the Prime Ministerial level. Therefore, leaders, in the framework of this research, are Prime Ministers of V4 during 2015-2016 period. However, the case of Poland is more complex because despite the fact that the V4 meetings on migration crisis take place primarily within the Prime Ministerial scope, Jarosław Kaczyński, the leader of the largest governing party in Poland starting from 2015 is a very important politician in Poland. If we revisit the literature review chapter of this research about the role of national leaders in activating V4 cooperation, we can see two names occurring more often as the coordinators and drivers of the Visegrad cooperation. For example, Nič (2016)

and Shmidt (2016) agree that Visegrad cooperation is largely shaped by Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and the leader of the Polish Law and Justice party, Jarosław Kaczyński. Therefore, I suggest assessing trustworthiness of Prime Ministers of each Visegrad state and in the case of Poland, I suggest looking at both Jarosław Kaczyński and Prime Ministers Ewa Kopacz for the term 2014-2015 and Beata Szydło from 2015-2017 term as leaders. The trust or satisfaction level is considered high when the politicians receive a 50%+ score. Presidencies of the Visegrad group are designed in such a way that whichever country holds the Presidency is responsible for coordination of collective action and usually such coordination takes place before each meeting on the EU level. The political trust survey-wise, for some leaders there is no survey that specifically measures the trust level, but there are surveys on the level of satisfaction with the Prime Ministers. The timeline of data will include the years preceding the crisis, precisely it will depend on the period, when leaders were in the office up until the migration crisis and when the country held the Presidency, including the years 2015-2016. The following is the leaders, which will be under scrutiny because they were leaders when their countries held V4 Presidencies:

Czech Republic	Bohuslav Sobotka	Prime Minister	2014 - 2017
Slovakia	Robert Fico	Prime Minister	2006 - 2010 2012 - 2018
Hungary	Viktor Orbán	Prime Minister	1998 - 2002 2010-present
Poland	Ewa Kopacz	Prime Minister	2014 - 2015
	Beata Szydło	Prime Minister	2015-2017
	Jarosław Kaczyński	Leader of Law and Justice	2015-present

Bohuslav Sobotka

The Czech Republic held the Presidency of the Visegrad group in the 2015-2016 period, when the Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka coordinated a collective action of the Visegrad group on the migration crisis in the EU. According to the Czech Presidency report, 'Czech Presidency provided the standard coordination for V4 positions prior to the meetings of the European Council and Council of the European Union contributing to the strong and visible role of the V4 in EU agendas (Visegrad group, 2015-2016). Prime Minister Sobotka coordinated a meeting with the other Prime Ministers of the V4 and presented a joint Visegrad proposal with solutions to the migration crisis at the informal meeting with the European Council (Government Information Center, September 2015). According to the CVVM institute (October 2016), Sobotka had varying degrees of trust among Czech population. Since he served as Prime Minister of the Czech Republic since January 2014, we can read the following table starting from March 2014.

He enjoyed the peak of the popular trust in January 2015 and May 2015, with the gradual decrease in the rest of the months leading to October 2016 (CVVM institute, October 2016).

| | 2013 | 2014 | | | | 2015 | | | | | 2016 | | | |
	12	03	05	09	10	01	04	05	09	10	01	03	06	09	**10**
Zeman	x	47	x	49	x	40	x	41	x	46	56	x	54	x	**51**
Babiš	45	53	59	55	58	59	54	55	53	50	51	47	42	46	**49**
Stropnický Martin	45	50	x	45	x	46	x	44	x	42	45	x	40	x	**42**
Rychetský	x	46	x	43	x	48	x	45	x	44	43	x	38	x	**36**
Sobotka Bohuslav	42	46	47	43	46	53	46	53	49	46	43	41	40	34	**34**

Table 6. Trust in top politicians (CVVM institute, October 2016)

Viktor Orbán

Viktor Orbán's political career dates back to 1989 when Fidesz was transformed from the youth organization into a political party and Orbán became its leader in 2001. Orban was the third most popular politician already in 1991 and by 1998 when Fidesz won 148 seats in the Parliament, he became one of the youngest Prime Ministers (Kenes, p.7). The economic situation was satisfying during the first years of his leadership and furthermore Hungary was accepted to NATO and in 2000, EU set a date for Hungary's accession (Kenes, p.7). After losing 2002 and 2006 elections, Fidesz came back to power in 2010 and had to deal with the repercussions of the 2008 global financial crisis. Therefore, Orbán has the most political experience of being the Prime Minister. Hungary held the Presidency of V4 in the 2013-2014 period, when Prime Minister Orbán coordinated a number of meetings on the 'developments in the volatile international environment' including a joint statement about the crisis in Ukraine (Visegrad group, 2013-2014). The satisfaction level of Hungarians with their Prime Minister Viktor Orbán from 2013 till 2016 varied, with the lowest level being in 2014, only 39% and highest level recorded in 2015 - 53%, while 2013 it was 49% and in 2016, 50% (Nézőpont Institute, 2020).
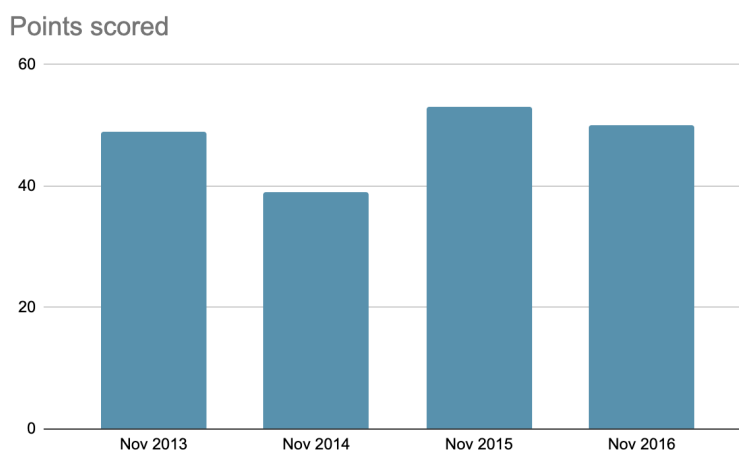

Figure 5. *Public satisfaction graph on PM Orbán's performance,* composed by the author based on the data derived from Nézőpont Institute, 2020

Poland

A number of Prime Ministerial meetings to discuss the future of the EU which included crises such as migration and Brexit were coordinated by the Polish Presidency in the 2016-2017 period in V4+ format with Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel, the French President Macron, the Heads of Benelux governments (Visegrad group, Polish Presidency 2016-2017). This was the contribution to the collective action by Beata Szydło, the Prime Minister at the time. However, in the domestic politics, the level of popularity and trust in Beata Szydło is more nuanced as the surveys from November 16, 2015, showed that 63% of respondents believed that she cannot make decisions autonomously, while 48% believe that she does not have influence over other government officials (CBOS, May 2016). She is believed to be too attached to her party Law and Justice which makes 50% of respondents think that she is concerned less about the nation than her party (CBOS, May 2016). At the same time, she is perceived well on the individual and professional sphere as 45% of respondents believed that she was good at her job (CBOS, May 2016). Her party, Law and Justice, is led by Jaroslaw Kaczyński, who was not much trusted by Polish people throughout 2012 and 2014, receiving only 5% and 3% of the people's favor, respectively (CBOS, 2012; CBOS, 204). Instead the most trusted politician was the then President of Poland Bronisław Komorowski, who was rated a top politician both in 2012 and 2014 receiving 11% and 16% in respective years. However, given that the survey was based on open-ended questions and **Kaczyński was the third most trusted** after Komorowski and then the Prime Minister and later in 2014 the President of the European Council Donald Tusk, it is logical to assume that even his trust rate was not as high as the two aforementioned officials, he was still an important political figure. 2015 parliamentary elections, however, changed the dynamic with Kaczyński's party winning majority of seats in the parliament, which happens very rare and in the history of Poland, it was the first time that since 1989 one single party won the majority of seats both in the Sejm and Senate (CBOS, November 2015, p. 2).

In 2014-2015, Ewa Kopacz from the Civic Platform was the Prime Minister. In 2014, Ewa Kopacz received the same 3% of public trust which she shared with Kaczyński. As Ewa Kopacz succeeded Donald Tusk in the Prime Minister position in 2014, surveys suggested that 36% of people believed that she is going to bring positive impact to Poland, while 15% believed the situation in Poland will worsen (CBOS, October 2014). The satisfaction level, however, shows a significant support for **Ewa Kopacz as 44% of respondents were satisfied** with her as Prime Minister, while 29% were not satisfied (CBOS, October 2014). In comparison with the similar surveys regarding Donald Tusk from August and September of the same year, the satisfaction level shows 26% and 40% respectively, with 60% and 49% of dissatisfaction (CBOS, October 2014).

Robert Fico
Under the Prime Ministerial position of Robert Fico, Slovakia held two Presidencies in 2006-2007 and 2014-2015 periods. The 2006-2007 Slovak Presidency does not mark any important joint coordination of efforts, but rather serves as the initial setting up processes of the V4 such as creation of an official website and overall defining processing of Visegrad

cooperation (Visegrad group, Slovak Presidency, 2006-2007). The 2014-2015 Slovak Presidency arranged a regular coordinate of common positions on a number of issues including the migration before the European Council meetings (Visegrad Group, 2014-2015). Besides such regular coordination, Slovak Presidency also coordinated a joint response in regards to the mandatory migration quota system developed by Commission, which resulted in the V4 calling for flexible responsibility sharing, namely instead of making migration quotas voluntary leaving up to member states to decide if they want to receive migrants (Visegrad group, Slovak Presidency, 2014-2015). However, in terms of political trust, there is no available survey data for the Slovak politicians.

4.   Discussion of the findings and conclusion

4.2. Discussion of findings

After having established the expected patterns and having presented the empirical findings, this section focuses on the discussion and interpretation of the findings, followed by the implementation of the pattern matching technique by comparing the theoretical expectations with observed patterns.

As was presented in the previous chapter, politicization of the migration crisis took place in all Visegrad states, albeit in different forms. In Slovakia, there was a strong politicization in the pre-election campaigns of majority parties with strong anti-Islamic sentiments, while in Poland the party manifestos did not show any politicization sign, but the issue of migration crisis was included in the political rally of one of the biggest opposition party, Law and Justice in 2015. The Hungarian government was the biggest anti-immigration activist with its massive anti-immigration posters and the referendum and surveys against the relocation of the asylum seekers. In the Czech Republic, the parliamentary debates shows that the topic of migration crisis was under parliamentary scrutiny in at least six plenary sessions, where the Senators debated whether to let economic migrants use the social system of the Czech Republic, how relocation of migrants into the Czech Republic is going to influence the safety of society and its culture etc. The number meets the threshold requirement for the politicization in the parliamentary debates and therefore, is considered to be a case of crisis politicization in Czech Republic. Thus, the observation provides evidence that the migration crisis was a highly salient issue in the political agenda of each Visgerad country. **This finding about politicization does not match the expected theoretical pattern** because the existence of politicization did not halt the cooperation among Visegrad states as was predicted by crisis management literature and post-functionalism.

The observed pattern shows that there is no interdependence among the Visegrad states because their level of institutionalization is very low, almost non-existent with only Visegrad Fund serving as the institution aimed at furthering the Visegrad's soft power such as raising awareness about the region and investing in educational, scientific projects in the region. However, it does not have any binding agreement except for the annual financial contribution

from each member state for the implementation of educational, cultural and scientific projects and programs. If the states in the Visegrad group decided not to cooperate with each other, there would not be any high costs or legal issues of exiting the cooperation because of the very low or non-existent integration level. Thus, **the theoretical expectation that interdependence facilitates cooperation fails to be true** in the case of V4's joint cooperation on the migration crisis.

Politicization and interdependence are drawn from the post-functionalist and neo functionalist theories, which are specifically designed to explain the EU cooperation. One cannot except the countries to have interdependence based on neofunctionalist assumption of the spillover effect and difficulties to leave the regime due to its high level of integration because there is only one organization in the world which has such a high level of integration and it is EU, which is why the neofunctionalism is considered an *EU integration theory*. Even though the EU integration theories have been used to explain a myriad of other cases where regional cooperation takes place, it cannot be set as a theoretical umbrella or pre-condition for cases where countries are willing to cooperate. The renowned post-functionalism made a bold assumption that where the issue is politicized it halts the cooperation, but in the case of the V4 politicization has not been an issue for cooperation, in fact there should be more studies about the role of politicization in V4 cooperation to see if politicization actually led to closer cooperation within V4.

Repeated interaction took place on numerous governmental levels such as Prime Ministerial meetings taking place in defense/security and foreign policy spheres, Foreign Ministerial meetings in foreign policy and defense and other specific ministerial meetings in agriculture, culture and environment took place annually. Therefore, **the repeated interaction paving a way towards joint handling of the crisis holds true** in the case of V4r, thus confirming predictions derived from collective action, international cooperation and crisis management literature.

The crisis exposure variable only partially holds because Hungary was heavily affected with the unprecedented number of asylum seekers in 2015, which is not the same in other Visegrad countries as they do not share an external border with non-EU countries and are therefore not affected as much as Hungary which is located near the Western Balkan route of the migration flow. Therefore, in this sense, the exposure was asymmetric, which means that the Visegrad were less likely to cooperate given that Hungary and the rest of the Visegrad group had different situations. However, there is another type of exposure, on the EU-level, where each of the Visegrad state, as members of the EU, were obliged to receive a certain number of asylum-seekers into their countries. Even though the numbers were different for each state, **the exposure is still considered to be equal or symmetric** because the distribution took into account individual capacity of each states, thus making it fair and equal. I

The prediction of collective action and crisis management that the **smaller number of groups is more viable in tackling the transboundary crisis collectively holds true** because the Visegrad is in the small group category, according to Olson's definition. Therefore, it is fair to assume that crisis coordination of the Visegrad group was successful because there were just four members in the group.

Despite frequent interaction, organizational capacity of Visegrad states is very low and almost non-existent given that it only has Visegrad Fund and the organization only facilitates coordination in the sphere of education, culture and science and therefore it is fair to conclude that t**he Visegrad states' cooperation is not facilitated by its organizational capacity**.

There are feasible solutions presented by the Visgerad group as a possible and viable methods to tackle the migration which include tackling root causes of the crisis outside the EU by financial means such as financially motivating already displaced people in Turkey, Lebanon and other neighboring countries including the displaced people inside Syria itself. Strengthening border security through means of rigorous registration and effectively returning migrants who are not recognized as refugees. These are the feasible and shared solutions proposed by the V4 countries which constitute a backbone of their cooperation. Therefore, the prediction of collective action theory and crisis management about the **necessity of the feasible solution for joint crisis response is confirmed**.

Every Prime Minister of the V4 had an experience of mobilizing collective action during the Presidencies of their countries, but not all of them were popular or trusted at home. In Poland, Beata Szydło is trusted by Polish people, but the bigger 63% of people think she is not independent in her decision-making. On the other hand, there is evidence that Jaroslaw Kaczyński was not trusted in 2012-2014 and Ewa Kopacz enjoyed the same low level of trust as Jaroslaw Kaczyński. Bohuslav Sobotka, had a relatively stable and high level of trust throughout 2014 and 2015, with a little slidedown towards the end of 2016, which indicates that for most parts of his leadership he enjoyed a significant amount of trust from the population. Viktor Orbán enjoyed popular trust in all 2013, 2015 and 2016 years, except around a 10% decline in 2014. Based on this data, **one can refer to Bohuslav Sobotka and Viktor Orbán as experienced and trusted leaders of the V4.**

Independent variables	Theories	Expected patterns	Observed patterns	Confirmed (con)/Disconfirmed (discon)
Domestic politicization	Crisis management and postfunctionalism	Politicization of crisis at home inhibits cooperation among members and makes collaboration between them impossible	Politicization of migration crisis took place in all Visegrad countries	discon
Interdependence	crisis management and neofunctionalism	The states collaborate because they are interdependent on each other	There is no interdependence between the Visegrad states	discon
Repeated interaction	Collective action, international cooperation and crisis management	States collaborate because they have repeatedly interacted and have an experience of working together	Repeated interaction took place among Visegrad states	con

Crisis exposure and expected benefits (threat perception)	Collective action, international cooperation	Symmetric crisis exposure leads to cooperation	The crisis exposure partially was symmetric because Hungary was more exposed than others, but legally all Visegrad countries were obliged to take in the asylum-seekers	Only partiqally holds
Number of actors	Collective action, crisis management	States jointly collaborate on the crisis when the number of states involved are small	Four members of Visegrad group make it a small group	con
Coordination mechanism	Collective action and crisis management	Coordination mechanisms such as organizational capacity are necessary for joint crisis response	There is no organizational capacity in Visegrad groups except for the educational purposes	discon
Feasible solutions	Crisis management and collective action theory	The joint crisis response is possible when the states agree on the origins of the crisis and the possible solutions	There are feasible solutions proposed by the Visegrad group	con
Leadership	Crisis management literature	If the leaders are trusted and experienced, the joint crisis response is more likely to happen	Bohuslav Sobotka and Viktor Orbán were experienced leaders, who enjoyed significant amount of popular trust	con

4.2. Conclusion

Thus, this research has reviewed the theoretical framework by Blondin and Boin (2020) on the international cooperation using the case of the V4 cooperation during the migration crisis. The results of the pattern-matching technique revealed that not all the predications from this theoretical model hold true. Taking the dependent variable of Visegrad cooperation during the migration crisis as constant, the reserach tested eight independent variables derived from the theoratical model. Out of eight these eight independent variables, four such as the role of repeated interaction, small group number, feasible solutions and trusted and experienced leadership were present in the case of V4 cooperation on the migration crisis, while crisis exposure is partially confirmed and remaining variables such as politicization, interdependence, and coordination mechanism were disconfirmed. Therefore, in conclusion one can say that Visegrad cooperation took place because the conditions for such cooperation were benevolent as the Visegrad states have already interacted with each other very intensively and cooperated in numerous policy areas estaiblishing certain partner relations. Furthermore, they were exposed to the crisis equally in terms of their legal obligation to receive migrants and therefore it was equally beneficial for each Visegrad state to cooperate, rather than act unilaterally. As the second phase of the collective action and crisis management commenced, the Visegard countries had the advantage of its small number and therefore there were not obstacles on the way of their cooperation. Pre-existing solutions such as the better border protection and partnering with

transit countries facilitied quick coordinated response on the part of the V4 as they had to agree on alternative solutions in order to be able to produce joint response. And finally, the charismatic leaders chimed in and played their part of taking initiative into their hands and mobilizing the joint efforts. Even though, not all variables of the theoretical model were confirmed, the model still provides a very interesting perspective to the long-debated topic of the puzzling Visegrad cooperation and such unexpectedly quick joint response. This research could be extended and taken further by providing an alternative or certain amendments to the model of Blondin & Boin.

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