# The Lack of Consensus among the European Union Member States on the Issue of Relocation of Refugees in 2015
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# on the Issue of Relocation of Refugees in 2015

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## 1. Abstract

This thesis focuses on the EU's response to the migration crisis in 2015, with a particular emphasis on migration as a policy area, specifically with regard to the relocation of refugees across the EU in 2015. The thesis question aims at investigating why there was a lack of consensus by member states, particularly the opposition from the Visegrad countries, on the European Union's proposal of 2015 to transfer refugees from Italy and Greece to other EU countries based on a quota system. To do so, qualitative research will be conducted into the reasons behind the opposition from the Visegrad countries that resulted in the lack of consensus among the EU member states.

## 2. Introduction

Why do some European Union countries reject refugees? The Arab Spring and the subsequent instability which began in 2011 in the Middle East and North Africa, compelled the EU to recognize the need for a fundamental rethink of its migration policy. In 2011, the EU saw a significant increase in the number of border crossings that were deemed to be illegal (Park, 2015). However, the so-called European migration crisis began in March 2015 when the number of migrants arriving from Turkey to Greece more than doubled (Parkes, 2017). In addition to cyber criminality and counter-terrorism, migration poses another contemporary global security challenge to the EU (Wolff, 2017).

The EU's response to the migration crisis of 2014-2015 is, like the other human and security challenges it faces, affected by several factors. More specifically, focusing on migration as a policy area, the EU's response to the migration crisis in 2014-2015 was influenced by various factors. One of the factors was, for example, the lack of consensus among the member states because they have different interests in receiving migrants (Wolff, 2017; Weiner, 2011) or they have different views on the risk of migration to their national security (Estevens, 2018). Based on the academic literature, these factors can be defined as internal. The factors that affect the EU migration policy can also be external. The crucial role and impact of the states not belonging to the EU- the so-called third states - in managing the migration flows, can be defined as an external

factor. An example of such a state is Turkey (Laube, 2019; Reslow, 2012; Reslow, 2017; Reslow & Vink, 2015; Wolff, 2017).

All these aforementioned factors can erode the effectiveness or expedience of the EU migration policy or impede the ability to have a comprehensive policy to cope with the migration crisis. Focusing on the migration as a policy area, this thesis attempts to answer the following research question: what are the reasons behind the lack of consensus among the EU member states, particularly the reasons behind the opposition from the Visegrad countries, on the relocation of the refugees via mandatory quota across the EU countries in 2015?

In this thesis, I will only focus on the migration crisis in 2015 because the unprecedented influx of refugees and migrants into Europe posed the biggest challenge to the European leaders and policymakers since the debt crisis (Park, 2015). Therefore, the EU's response to the migration crisis in 2015 examines the EU's unity in the face of the crisis and its ability to respond cooperatively and effectively to one of the largest contemporary crises it has faced.

With regard to the factors which influence the EU's response, I will only focus on the lack of consensus among the Member States. More specifically the lack of consensus among the EU member states on the issue of relocation of refugees in 2015 via a mandatory quota across the whole continent.

There are many reasons why I will focus on this factor. First, previously published studies on the reasons behind the lack of consensus among EU member states on the distribution of refugees in 2015 are not comprehensive in terms of investigating the reasons behind this lack of consensus.

The second reason has to do with a recent current development. Since the start of the Russia-Ukraine war in February 2022, it can be seen that the EU's response to the Ukrainian refugees contrasts sharply with its response to the refugees in 2015, particularly when it comes to the consensus among the member states on the reception and distribution of refugees among them. Indeed, the great consensus among the EU member states on the hosting and receiving more refugees from Ukraine was remarkable. However, the situation in 2015 was different respect to developing consensus. Elaborating the dissimilarities in consensus in these different periods would expand this thesis too greatly. In this thesis, I will therefore not compare these two periods. I will focus on the lack of consensus among the EU member states on the distribution of

refugees in 2015 via a mandatory quota, with a purpose to investigate what reasons were behind the lack of consensus on that issue.

The third reason is a personal reason. I am someone with a refugee background. At the end of 2015 I fled Syria to the Netherlands. During my trip I pondered why some countries do not accept or even allow refugees to cross. However, I could not reach any conclusion because I was not able to follow the situation closely and I was not able to conduct scientific research to investigate the underlying reasons behind this rejection of refugees.

This thesis is societally relevant because, due to globalization, migration has become an important issue that has fundamentally changed societies. A good illustration is the village of Ter Apel, which holds the biggest refugee camp in the Netherlands. This entire village has felt socially disrupted by the arrival of refugees. In addition to its societal relevance, this thesis is scientifically relevant. The scientific relevance of this thesis is as I already mentioned: the migration crisis in its two facets (security and human) poses the greatest challenge to the EU. Therefore, Europe's reaction to the migrant crisis in 2015 represents a critical test of the EU unity and cooperation in dealing with a crisis of this magnitude. Another scientific relevance is that the response of the four Visegrad countries to the distribution and acceptance of Ukrainian refugees was very different compared to their response to the acceptance of refugees from other countries in 2015. Also, this thesis is scientifically relevant  because the preliminarily researches on the reasons for the lack of consensus among EU member states, particularly the opposition from the Visegrad countries on the distribution of refugees in 2015 was not comprehensive in terms of investigating the reasons behind their opposition.

My thesis is composed of four themed sections. The first section provides a brief historical overview of the EU recent policy and response to the migration inflows since 2011. The second section provides a review of the relevant literature related to my topic. In the third section, the data selection and the methods of analysis used in the study are then described. Then, the results are presented and discussed in section four. Finally, section five outlines the main conclusions and identifies both limitations to the study and recommendations for further research.

### 3. Historical Overview

This section will provide a brief historical overview of the recent development of the EU policies and strategies as a reaction to the migration inflows since 2011. This historical overview is required to broaden the frame of reference and because knowledge of the past is necessary to be able to place the problems in the present in a better perspective and thus come up with better solutions for those problems.

In order to address all the aspects of migration and mobility issues in a comprehensive and effective manner, the European Commission adopted in 2011 the Global Migration and Mobility Approach (GAMM) which serves as a framework for determining how the EU should cooperate with third countries with regard to migration (European Commission, 2011). It is built on four pillars: 1) organizing and facilitating legal migration and mobility; 2) preventing and reducing irregular migration and trafficking in human beings;3) promoting international protection and enhancing the external dimension of asylum policy; and 4) maximizing the development impact of migration and mobility (European Commission, 2011). The GAMM approach was the EU's main response to the migration crisis from 2011 to 2015. However, due to the constraints that weaken the GAMM approach to effectively addressing migratory flows and the need for decisive action in response to the human tragedy throughout the Mediterranean, the European Commission proposed the European Agenda on Migration in May 2015 (European Commission, 2015, pp. 1-2). This Agenda proposed immediate actions to address the crisis in the Mediterranean and measures to be implemented over the following years to improve the management of all elements of immigration (European Commission, 2015a). Among these immediate actions was a plan for relocation to all the EU member states of migrants in Italy and Greece who were in need of international protection (European Commission, 2015a, p. 4). On 27 May 2015, the European Commission proposed to relocate 40,000 asylum seekers to ease the burden on Italy and Greece (European Commission, 2015b). The relocation of 40,000 asylum seekers from Italy and Greece was agreed within Council by consensus, but neither Denmark nor the United Kingdom were involved in this decision (European Council, 2015).The European Commission established a distribution based on "objective, quantifiable and verifiable criteria that reflect the capacity of the Member States to absorb and integrate refugees". Four factors were considered: 1) the size of the population (40%); 2) total GDP (40%); 3) the number of

asylum applications and the number of resettled refugees per 1 million inhabitants over the period 2010-2014 (10%), and 4) the unemployment rate (10%) (European Commission, 2015a, p. 19). Once again, the Commission adopted a second implementation package on 9 September 2015, proposing tangible actions to address the then increasing refugee crisis. This time the Commission proposed an emergency relocation of 120,000 persons in clear need of international protection from Greece, Hungary and Italy (European Commission, 2015c). On 22 September 2015, European Home Affairs Ministers adopted the decision to relocate 120,000 refugees from Greece, Italy, and other Member States impacted by the refugee crisis. (European Commission, 2015d). This decision was taken by a 'large majority' (Šabić, 2017, p. 4). Thus, the decision was not adopted by 'consensus'. Indeed there was agreement among a majority group of EU countries on the relocation across the member states of 120,000 of refugees via mandatory quota. as proposed by the European Commission. However, this consensus did not extend to all countries. Four countries voted against this proposal; Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Romania. Finland abstained from the vote. Denmark and the UK opted out but promised to provide financial aid assistance (Šabić, 2017, p. 5). Poland did not actually vote against the proposal but rather supported the majority in the Council. Yet, later it refused to implement the decision or to accept any refugees and joined its allies from the Visegrad countries.

## 4. Literature review

A literature review is not only necessary in each research for both researcher and reader, but it is also important in order to comprehend the 'status quaestionis'. Without determining this, the researcher does not know whether the question he or she is asking has not already been asked or answered before. A literature review therefore forms the basis for further research. The following literature review familiarizes the reader with the topic and the relevant existing literature concerning the topic.

In recent literature, the EU migration policy is considered a part of the larger field of Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) (Nieman, 2012). Wolff (2017) pointed out that there are numerous normative, national, institutional, and legal challenges that had an impact on the clear and consistent strategy of JHA's external policy, including the migration policy and its external dimension (p. 368). The challenges related to the sovereignty of the EU member states are those

national and legal challenges. Regarding the national challenge, EU Member states' governments hold the monopoly on violence or the authorized use of force according to Weberian understanding (Wolff, 2017, p. 368). In his essay "*Politics as Vocation*" (1919), Weber described a polity as a government and the only entity that is legitimized to use force. Hence the independence of governments is a significant impediment to the formation of European homeland security (Wolff, 2017, p. 368). Concerning the legal challenge to the evolution of JHA's external dimension it must be said that when it comes to acting externally, the EU's ability is limited by its internal competencies. Due to the fact that JHA is a shared competence, EU member states have a significant role. The Lisbon Treaty makes no specific provision for an EU competence concerning the external dimension of JHA. No mention is made of the external dimension of JHA except in TFEU (Treaty on the Function of the EU) (Wolff, 2017, pp. 370-371).

Since the late 1990s, the EU has endeavored to expand what it refers to as the 'external dimension ' of immigration and asylum cooperation: efforts to regulate migration through collaboration with migratory sending or transit countries. However, two separate conceptions of 'external dimension' can be discerned. The first entails efforts to externalize traditional methods of domestic or EU migration control. The second entails efforts to curb migration and refugee flows using development assistance and foreign policy measures (Boswell, 2003, p. 619). Likewise, Wolff (2017) added that when it comes to the EU external migration policy, we should distinguish between two competing logics in the policy: 1) remote control via the externalization of JHA policies to third countries; 2) addressing core reasons of migration through development assistance and promotion of EU standards such as international protection. The first strategy is preferred by the European interior ministers. This strategy seeks to coordinate with third countries for managing the EU's internal security. The second strategy is preferred by diplomats. This strategy has a normative sense aiming to address the factors which lead and motivate migrants to leave their countries (Wolff, 2017, p. 379). This second strategy has been criticized for its failure to tackle the core root of migration in Syria (Collet, 2014). Moraga and Rapoport (2014) also add that EU's initiatives only treat symptoms of the wider refugee reception problem, focusing on border controls and money transfers instead of addressing the core causes in third countries (p. 10). These two different logics have been at the core of the EU's Global Migration and Mobility Approach (Wolff, 2017) already explained in the historical overview.

The GAMM policies were the main EU response to the migration crisis since 2011. Reslow and Vink (2015) developed a three-level game model to explain why the Member States and third countries participate in EU initiatives on external migration policy (p. 857). According to Wolff (2017), the EU's Global Migration and Mobility Approach (GAMM) has the ambition to let the Member States of the EU speak with one voice. Yet, it is hampered and weakened by the dynamic of the Three-Level Game: 1) EU member states, 2) EU institutions, 3) Third countries. The first constraint is that EU member states are first and foremost responsible for EU migration policy. They have diverse agendas and interests, based on their labor requirements and domestic politics such as between Libya and Italy or Spain and Morocco (Wolff, 2017, p. 380). In addition to that, Wolff (2017) pointed out that the EU migration agenda toward the EU's Southern Mediterranean neighbors has been shaped by national interests and historical legacies. The second constraint is due on the one hand to the internal bureaucratic conflicts between different entities of the European Commission, such as DG Home and DG DEVCO, and on the other hand to intra-institutional conflicts between the EP, the Council and the Commission. These can also contribute to internal disagreements about which common goal must be pursued externally. Third, EU external migration policy is constrained by the policy, politics, and policies of third countries, which might oppose or reinterpret a policy instrument. This can have an impact on the EU's external migration policy (Wolff, 2017, p. 380-381).

In the line with the three previous constraints that Wolff mentioned above, likewise, Weinar (2011) already pointed out that the EU external cooperation on migration is hampered by four challenges:1) the EU's limited ability to define its migration policy in consultation with its 27 sovereign states: 2) frictions between national and supranational levels in the EU concerning international cooperation on migration: 3) divergent interests and priorities of sending regions and partner countries: 4) the EU and its Member States, as well as partner countries, have limited implementation capacity (Weinar, 2011, p. 1).

The difference in the level of securitization of migration among MS is another challenge to come up with a comprehensive and effective policy to deal with migration. Estevens (2018) examines the relationship between migration and security in the EU by studying the national security and defense strategies of the MS as well as the EU Global Strategy to gain a better understanding of the disparities among MS and EU in regards to migrant securitization policies (pp. 1-2).

Estevens (2018) states that there is a diverse existence of the migration issues among the MS's national security and defense strategies because the EU members states have different security strategic cultures and approaches on the relation between migration and security. This makes it hard to come up with a common and effective strategy to cope with the migration crisis. Despite the fact that the 2016 EU Global Strategy sheds light on this migration crisis and attempts to find common agreement among MS, several issues are still unsolved or even unaddressed. So, the European political action is still in its infancy. This has to do with a lack of consensus among the MS and the EU's strong intergovernmental when it comes to security issues, which is one of the primary areas in which MS collaborate in some areas while maintaining sovereignty in others (Estevens, 2018, pp. 2-3).

If there is no consensus among the EU member states, it is hard to have a uniform response in line with EU legislation on migration. For example, Reslow (2015) evaluates the EU's actorness in international migration governance in terms of authority, the existence of policy instruments, the determinacy of policy, coordination mechanisms, participation rules in international institutions, recognition by third countries, EU institutions autonomy, and cohesion. She concludes that the EU's ability to play a role in international migration governance is contingent on its legal competence (Reslow, 2015, p. 471). In other words, the EU legal competence is crucial for playing a role or actorness in international migration governance.

After we have investigated how the level of securitization of migration differs per country, it is necessary to clarify the relationship between migration and security. Security, in the broadest sense of the word, refers to the absence of threats. The traditional way to consider international security is almost exclusively related to military issues. However, Copenhagen school studies of security argues that it should not only be limited to military issues but should expand to include societal, political environmental, and economic aspects of security as well (Buzan et al., 1997). Because of the widening scope of the notion of security, a wide range of concerns including the poverty, environment, and international migration have been branded as security dangers or risks (Krause and Williams, 1996, p. 230; Lohrmann, 2000, p. 5)

Weiner (1992) examines the issue of how international migration poses a threat to both states and citizens. He identifies numerous relationships between migration and security. According to Weiner there are many categories of situations and contexts wherein migrants or refugees may be

viewed as a threat to the receiving countries. The first situation occurs when refugees or migrants are opposed to the regimes of their home country. The second situation is when migrants or refugees are viewed as a political or security danger to the host country's regime. Thirdly, when immigrants are viewed as a cultural threat to the host culture. The fourth situation develops when immigrants as considered to become as a social and economic burden on the host society (Weiner, 1993, pp. 105-106).

Weiner (1992) refers mainly to the political, cultural and socioeconomic dimensions of the relation between security and migration. With regards to the political dimension, when the refugees or migrants are opposed to their home country's regime, these political migrants or refugees might pose a threat to the security of the receiving countries in many cases. Governments are frequently afraid that refugees they provide sanctuary to would turn against them if they are hesitant to assist the refugees in opposing the government in their place of origin (Weiner, 1992, p. 109).

Similarly, Fauser (2006) adds that refugees or migrants might use their exile as a platform to push for regime change in their homeland which in turn might motivate other refugees and migrants in the same receiving country to become more politically active through their activities. Moreover migrants might also attempt to change the policies of the host countries in their favor or even carry out terrorist operations in order to do this (Fauser, 2006, p. 3). In this sense, Islamic terrorists in different countries such as Spain, Germany, the United Kingdom, and other European countries have taken advantage of the opportunities provided by their host countries to organize and plan attacks on USA, Spain, the United Kingdom, and other parts of the world, while also communicating with one another globally (Fauser, 2006, p. 3).

According to Weiner (1993), the issue of why and how certain migrant's groups are viewed as cultural threats is a complex subject that begins with the host community's definition of itself. Cultures differ in their definitions of who belongs to or is admitted to their community. These standards dictate who is admitted, what rights and privileges are accorded to those admitted, and whether the host culture views the migrant group as potential citizens. A violation of these standards by unwelcome immigrants, for instance, is frequently viewed as a danger to fundamental principles, and thus as a threat to national security (Weiner, 1993, p. 109). Regarding the cultural dimension, migrants could be viewed as a danger to the cultural identity

of the receiving country. Based on many factors, a receiving community or a segment thereof may regard particular types of newcomers as difficult to integrate (Fauser, 2006, pp. 4-3). After September 11, 2001, Faist (2002) argues that meta-politics in general and securitizing migration in specific, help in making culture even more essential as a marker between natives and newcomers. They also help to create clear "us" versus "them" divisions (Faist, 2002, p. 12).

Societies may react to immigrants in response to the economic expenses they impose or in response to their alleged social behaviours such as criminality, welfare dependency, or delinquency. Societies may be concerned if the influx is so large or so impoverished that it places a significant economic pressure on housing, schooling, and transportation infrastructure (Weiner, 1993, p. 114). In the line with that, immigrants and asylum seekers may provide problems to economic and social institutions. Migrant workers may jeopardize domestic wages because they need to work for less money than domestic rules typically allow, so allowing companies to reduce wages in specific sectors (Fauser, 2006, p. 4).
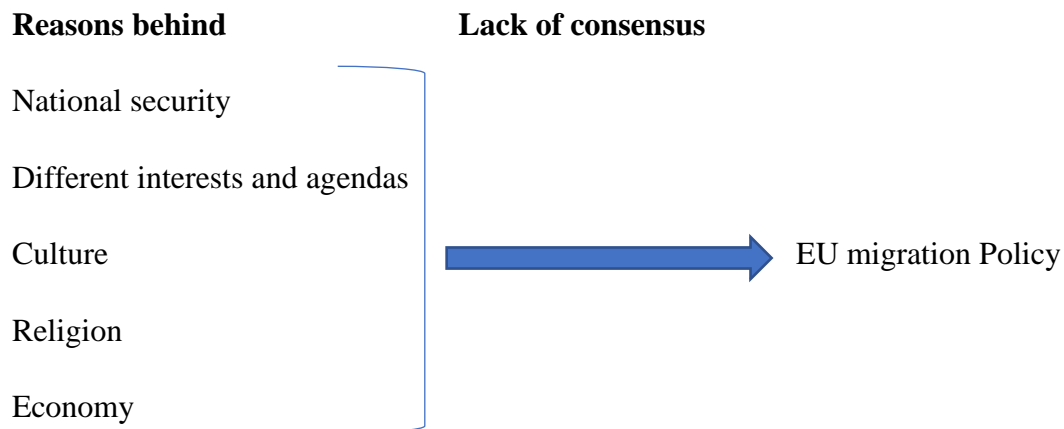
After reviewing the existing and relevant literature pertaining to my topic, the literature leads us to conclude that there can be different reasons that explain the lack of consensus among the EU member states when it comes to migration policy. Now I will move on to the analytical and conceptual framework part.


## 5. Analytical and conceptual framework

After discussing different models and literature concerning my topic, there is not a single concrete model that contains all the reasons that explains the lack of consensus among the EU member states. Therefore, it necessary to combine different models from different authors to order to build my own unique framework to investigate what is behind the lack of consensus among the member states on the relocation of the refugees in 2015, and why some EU countries refused to accept refugees.

In general, it can be said that there are different issues such as conflicting interests and agendas Wolff, 2017; Weinar, 2011) or different national security strategies among the MS (Estevens, 2018) that make it difficult to reach a consensus on migration policy in the EU.

Moreover, depending on (Weiner, 1993) major contribution to the security-migration nexus in all its three dimensions: political, cultural and socioeconomic, we can conclude that there are various reasons why some countries do not tend or want to accept refugees or migrants. These reasons may be related to the security, economy, culture, or the religion of a country. Based on the literature, below are the most important reasons which can behind the lack of consensus

**Reasons behind**        **Lack of consensus**

National security

Different interests and agendas

Culture                                                  EU migration Policy

Religion

Economy

In this research, I will apply this model to the case of relocation of refugees in 2015 using data to test if this model and this explanation holds to this case, which is the lack of consensus among the member states on the relocation of refugees in 2015 and why the Visegrad countries did not accept refugees. Furthermore, I will apply the model to test which reasons seem to play the greater role in each country or which reason informs the priority in a country

**5.1 Operationalization**

After the most relevant models have been discussed and analyzed, it may be useful to define the variables of my research question.

The independent variable in this research is composed of the reasons behind the lack of consensus by member states, particularly the opposition from the Visegrad countries, on the relocation of refugees in 2015. What are the reasons for this that resulted in the lack of consensus. These reasons can explain why some EU countries, especially the Visegrad countries,

did not support the European Commission proposal on the relocation of refugees in 2015 and they voted against it. In other words, they did not support the majority in the council.

The dependent variable in this study is 'the lack of consensus'. Several indicators can be used to assess the lack of consensus. Lack or no consensus among the member states can be defined in the extent to which EU actors do not support any agreed-upon common policy. The Treaty of the European Union addresses the issue of consensus explicitly stating the Member States shall actively and unconditionally support the EU external and security policies in an atmosphere of loyalty and mutual solidarity and shall adhere to the Union's activities or actions in this field (Thomas, 2012, 459). This implies that once an EU position is established, it must be supported. However, when we refer to a lack of consensus in this research, we are referring to the period preceding agreement on a position. Thus, in principle, there is no acting against the treaty as the position is still being formed.

In a broader sense, the EU migration policy and its external dimension can be operationally defined in the initiatives and rules, and measures are taken by the EU to manage the migration flows or to tackle and address the migration crisis that the EU faced. However, in this thesis, the EU migration policy will be operationally defined as the European Agenda on migration which was proposed by the European Commission in 2015. Primarily it will be defined in the relocation of refugees, one of the measures the European Agenda on migration determined should be taken as a response to the migration crisis in 2015.

## 6. Methodology

### 6.1 Research Design and Data Selection

In order to answer my research question, I will conduct qualitative research. Qualitative research can provide deeper insight into the reasons that explain the lack of consensus among the member states on the relocation of refugees in 2015. Specifically, the reasons that explain the opposition from the Visegrad countries to the European Commission proposal on the relocation of refugees in 2015 via mandatory quotas. These reasons influence the formation of consensus which in turn affects the EU migration policy and the EU's response.

This research will analyze two kinds of sources that are pertinent to the research. These are: a) the official discourses by the highest political officials of the Visegrad countries; and b) media expressions about the development of EU migration policy, particularly on the issue of relocation of refugees among the member states in response to the migration crisis in 2015. The official discourses by the highest political officials are a relevant source of study because they often give formal justification for choices or decisions. Hence, it is important to look at the highest political level of official discourses. However, sometimes official discourses do not disclose all the reasons behind the decisions of Member States when it comes to following a policy or another. Therefore, I will also analyze the media discourse in order to determine other potential reasons. Primary data will be used for this research. This will include newspaper articles, different media sources such as older and recent news, official's speeches and press releases related to the topic. I will look for official discourses by the highest political officials and media sources that explain the emergence and existence of a lack of consensus among the member states on the relocation of refugees in 2015 and why some EU countries voted against the proposal and were against accepting refugees.

I have looked for these sources via the internet by using different terms such as ' Lack of consensus among the MS on the relocation of refugees in 2015', and 'the opposition from the Visegrad countries to accept refugees via mandatory quotas'. As there are many sources available on this topic of this research, the following sampling strategy has been utilized for objectivity. A sample of different sources has been selected. This selection is made based on the titles of the sources which seems the most relevant to my research. Also, in order to ensure objectivity, the selected sources were from different countries to avoid bias. In addition to that, to gain a better understanding, this selection was a composed of newspaper articles, official speeches, and interviews with political actors.

Given the limits to the time and thus the data available, there is a limitation to the methodology of this thesis. In the context of bachelor's thesis, it was not possible to conduct structured interviews with political officials from the EU to get a deeper knowledge about the reasons for the lack of consensus on the relocation of refugees in 2015.

The method of analysis chosen in this thesis is content analysis. This means that a systematic analysis of textual information will take place. This involves looking for patterns, for example,

the similarities and differences, and frequencies of certain concepts. But also interpreting texts, speeches etc.

After selecting the sources, they have been analyzed in order to reach an answer to the research question. When reading the sources, I have looked for certain underlying patterns in the sources. An important pattern can be identified was for example the similarities and differences between the sources. The texts have been pasted one after the other in a word file to facilitate analysis. All texts would then read through from start to finish, with sentences and phrases colored according to the coding scheme and the researcher's interpretation. The texts would then proofed several times. Highlighted parts of the text were also re-evaluated to see if they really apply to the categories under investigation. All this is done using the coding scheme below.

The table below shows the coding scheme of the important concepts of my research question. However, the 'Examples to recognize categories in the texts' are not set in stone. This is because there may be more than one unique word or phrase in the sources referring to these concepts and there may be more reasons that explain the lack of consensus.

| Concepts | Description | Examples to recognize categories in the texts/ Expected words to find in the text |
|---|---|---|
| Reasons behind the lack of consensus. | By this is meant the different reasons that explain the no consensus among the member states, particularly the opposition from the Visegrad countries to the European Commission proposal to relocate refugees in 2015 | Different interests, different views, migration is perceived as a security threat, the national security of the member states, different security strategies, and defense among the member states, migration as threat to the cultural, religion and economy of a country independence of the member states, |

| Lack or no consensus | By this is meant, the EU member states, particularly the four Visegrad countries,  do not support the majority or not support proposals | Disagreement, divergent views, no political cohesion among the member states, difficult to reach a consensus, no accord, no support for the majority, inconsistency, incoherence, low consensus |
|---|---|---|

The recording units that will be used to investigate the variable 'reasons' behind the lack of consensus are a few words or sentences, in which a pattern is visible, which is relevant for answering my research question.

## 7.  Analysis

The analysis of this thesis is divided into two sections. The first section will provide an analysis of the similarities between the Visegrad countries in terms of the reasons used to justify their rejection of the European Commission's proposal on the relocation of refugees in 2015. The second section will provide a discussion and will highlight the differences between these countries in terms of emphasizing one reason rather than the other. In addition to this, it attempts to give an potential explanation for these differences.

Regarding the media sources, I have compiled a list of all the documents of media sources I have looked at. Each document has a number. This can be found in table 1 in the appendix.

### 7.1 Similarities
Due to the outspoken anti-migrant attitudes of the political actors in the four Visegrad countries, their speeches have been thrust into the limelight since the beginning of the discussion on the issue of relocation of refugees among the EU Member states. Moreover, it was impossible to read a newspaper article without mentioning the name of the four Visegrad countries; the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia. These countries have always been in the news because

they have been very outspoken against refugees and migrants from the beginning of the migration crisis of 2015.

Slovakia was one of the Visegrad countries known for its hostile attitude to refugees. During the meeting of Slovak, Czech, and Austrian political leaders in Bratislava, the Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico emphasized his opposition to accepting migrants via mandatory quotas claiming the proposal to relocate refugees was irrational. He also emphasized that the uncontrolled migration flows pose significant security risks arguing: *"Representatives of the Islamic State are demonstrably coming to Europe"* (Vilček, 2015). At the same meeting and with a shared view the Czech Prime Minister Sobotka said the quotas were irrational stating: *"I have rejected quotas, they are not an authentic solution to the migration crisis"* (Vilček, 2015). He also emphasized implicitly the danger of migrants to security. This was clear in his statement regarding the need to protect the border saying: "*We agreed on the need to strengthen the protection of the external Schengen border and that reception centers for refugees at the external Schengen border must be set up as soon as possible, in the operation of which the United Nations should also be involved"* (Vilček, 2015). Similarly, Victor Orbán, the country's prime minister, emphasized his opposition to accepting migrants during a joint press conference with the Austrian Chancellor in Budapest: *"For us migration is not a solution but a problem... not medicine but a poison, we don't need it and won't swallow it"* said Orbán. He also added clearly and explicitly: *"Every single migrant poses a public security and terror risk,"* Agency France Presse, 2016). In Poland, the outgoing center-right government has supported the majority in the council on the relocation of 120,000 refugees via mandatory quota across the EU countries. However, the new government did not agree with this decision and did not want to implement it presenting a similar argument revolving around the issue of security. The leader of Poland's ruling Law and Justice party Konrad Szymanski declared: *"We'll accept (refugees only) if we have security guarantees. This is a key condition, and today a question mark has been put next to it all around Europe"* (Reuters, 2015). The similarities between the statements by the highest political leaders of the Visegrad are clear in terms of emphasizing same arguments or reasons. They mainly revolve around fears for the security of their citizens and the danger of refugees to national security. This was also the case in the media. The threat of the refugees to national security was the most mentioned reason in many different media sources. This was the most frequent argument when it comes to why the Visegrad countries did not want to accept refugees

or why they rejected the European Commission proposal to relocate refugees among the EU member states via mandatory quotes (Confirmed in documents 1,2,8, 9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,19,22,24). The stress on the threat of refugees to national security was something common in all these countries.

Religion also played a role in their justification. The reasons related to religion are not explicitly mentioned in the speeches and statements of the highest political officials in the Visegrad countries, except in Slovakia where such statements were explicit. For example, in an interview with BBC, the Slovak Interior ministry spokesman Ivan Netik explicitly said: *"We could take 800 Muslims but we don't have any mosques in Slovakia so how can Muslims be integrated if they are not going to like it here?"* (BBC News, 2015). Likewise, concerning the implementation of relocating 40,000 refugees, the Slovak Prime minister Fico declared: *"Slovakia will receive only 100 refugees – Syrian Christian families that it will itself select"* (Gotev, 2015). The case in the media was different. Religion is often explicitly mentioned in many newspaper articles and it was also indicated as an important reason for not accepting refugees in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia (Confirmed in documents 3,5,6,7,18,21,23,25). This argument was given more emphasis, especially after the Paris attacks in November 2015.

The reasons related to the threat of refugees to the Visegrad countries' own culture and society were also part of the main reasons stressed and given by politicians as a justification for not accepting refugees. For example, the Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico said: *"Slovakia can only accept such refugees who would be willing fully to integrate in society"* (Vilček, 2015). Similarly, in interview with the Gazeta Polska Codziennie newspaper, Kaczyski repeated his hostility toward refugees by emphasizing the existence of a threat to their culture: *"accepting a large group of foreigners from culturally different regions would lead to a social catastrophe. We would have to completely change our culture, radically lower the level of security in our country, it is by no means only about terrorism, because there are of course more of these threats, which means some kind of social catastrophe - explained the head of law"* (Gazeta Polska Codziennie, 2017). The reasons related to the concern about their own culture and society were also frequently mentioned in the media as one of the main reasons in all the four Visegrad countries for their rejection to accept refugees (Confirmed in documents 1,3,7,18,19). It was a common argument between the Visegrad countries.

Later on, based on the sources there was a change in terms of the argument used by politicians for justifying their rejection of the European Commission's proposal on accepting refugees. This time, the reasons for rejection have to do with the sovereignty of the Visegrad countries. For example, during the presentation of the "Schengen 2.0" plan to protect Europe's borders, the Hungarian prime minister Orbán stressed that the EU must be made aware that is unacceptable for *"someone in Brussels to decide that EU member states have to solve demographic and economic problems through immigration"* (Gotev, 2016). He also added the proposal was rejected because it has to do with denying Hungarian sovereignty in deciding how to deal with these issues (Gotev, 2016). In Poland, the leader of the ruling party Law and Justice, Kaczynski presented a similar argument saying: *"Such a decision would abolish the sovereignty of EU member states – of course, the weaker ones".* He also stated: *"We don't agree to that, we have to oppose that because we are and we will be in charge in our own country"* (Broomfield, 2016). Similar arguments are also mentioned in the media. In many different media sources, it was mentioned many times that the distribution of refugees via the quota must be voluntary and not mandatory according to all four countries, especially the Czech republic (Confirmed in documents 2,4,19,20,21,25). This was one of the common reasons mentioned in the media why the Visegrad countries rejected the mandatory quotas.


### 7.2 Discussion and Differences

After reviewing and analyzing many politicians' statements and many different media sources, we have seen the similarities among the Visegrad countries in terms of the reasons or arguments used for justifying their rejection of the European Commission proposal on the distribution of refugees. The most frequently mentioned reasons for voting against that proposal are national security, culture, religion, and sovereignty. These reasons seem to be the most important justifications in these countries. The similarities between the four Visegrad countries are very pronounced in terms of using the same reasons as a justification for their rejection of accepting refugees in 2015. Though there are some differences in the arguments employed, the similarities outweigh the differences.

The most common thing between the four Visegrad countries is that they all stressed the importance of maintaining national security against refugees and migrants. The threat of refugees

to national security was the one main common used reason in these countries for justifying their refusal to accept refugees. However, the security problem they stress is part concern and part excuse because the refugees are also seen as a threat to the own religion, culture and society of these countries. Based on the analysis, the reasons related to the concern about religion are also common arguments between the four countries but it is not explicitly mentioned by the politicians except in Slovakia. However, the reasons related to religion are mentioned more and even more explicitly in the media than in the speeches and statements of politicians. In the analyzed sources, it was not demonstrated or explained why religion played a role in such a decision. However, a possible explanation is that migration is seen as a threat to the religion of the countries because most refugees are Muslim while all the four countries have a very homogeneous makeup in terms of religion. For example, Poland is the most homogeneous as regards religion (World Population Review, 2022). Thus, accepting Muslim migrants can pose a threat to their religion or their way of living.

The concern about their own culture and society was another commonly used argument by the three countries Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia. Politicians in these three countries use the fear about their culture and society as justification for not wanting to accept refugees or for voting against the European Commission proposal. Yet, this differs from the Czech Republic where the reasons related to the danger of migration to culture and society are not mentioned or used as justification in the sources contrast to the other three countries who did use this argument as a justification. The other three countries have generally very homogeneous populations and cultures while Czech Republic has the least ethnically homogeneous population composition compared with the other countries (World Population Review, 2022). That may also be an explanation for why culture is less emphasized as a justification in the Czech Republic.

Another potential explanation why the other Visegrad countries have emphasized the cultural and religious differences as a justification, is that in case of very homogeneous populations the populace is fearful of immigration. Politicians play on this and use this to their advantage electorally. The governments in Hungary and Poland (and perhaps Slovakia and Czech Republic to a lesser extent) are right wing regimes and this anti-immigration stance works well for them, particularly if the immigration is from non-European cultures with a different religion. They are

nationalists basing their appeal on Hungary for the Hungarians etc. Fear of "the other" is a tool the politicians use to maintain their position as many others still do and have done in the past.

With regard to arguments related to the sovereignty of the states, this became later a common theme of the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary. However, as opposed to the other countries, this argument was not used by Slovakia as justification. In general, such kind of argument was not a major argument for the justification of their rejection compared to other arguments

To summarize, the national security can be mentioned as the main reason for the resistance of the Visegrad countries to migration but there are other underlying reasons for their rejection to accepting refugees such as the concern about their own religion, culture and society. In this case, we can call security a "fig leaf" or excuse for other darker reasons.


## 8. Conclusion

This thesis sought an answer to the question: what are the reasons behind the lack of consensus among the EU member states, particularly the reasons behind the opposition from the Visegrad countries, on the relocation of the refugees via mandatory quota across the EU countries in 2015? To answer this question, qualitative research was conducted into the reasons that explain the opposition from the Visegrad countries to the European Commission proposal on the distribution of the refugees via mandatory quota across the EU countries in 2015.

Based on the results of the analyzed official discourses by the highest political officials and the different media sources, the following answer can be given to the research question. The importance of maintaining their own national security, religion, and culture were the most important reasons used by the four Visegrad countries as justification for their opposition to the relocation of refugees based on a compulsory quota. Because the majority of the arguments used by these countries as justification were related to emphasizing the danger of refugees and migrants to national security, religion, and culture. Through using these kind of arguments as a justification, it can be also concluded that the securitization of migration is very high in these countries because it is clear that the refugees or migrants are seen as a threat to security, culture, and religion in these countries.

Nevertheless, this thesis has a limitation. The scope of this study was limited in terms of examining which reason plays the biggest role in each country or which discourse has the priority in each country. In addition to that, this thesis was limited in terms of explaining these similar views on accepting refugees. Notwithstanding these limitations, this thesis has a scientific implication because it has highlighted the great similarities between the Visegrad countries in terms of emphasizing or using the same reasons as a justification for their rejection of the European Commission proposals on the relocation of refugees.

This study has an important societal implication. As the drivers of migration are numerous, it is expected that the EU would face more migration crises in the future. This may result in lack of consensus among the member states because they have different view on receiving refugees. It is therefore important that the EU gains knowledge in advance on how to face any potential crisis and how to respond effectively to it by overcoming the obstacles and challenges that affect its response. For example, by achieving greater consensus among member states to act coherently and speak as one voice.

This research has also fleshed out many questions in need of further investigation. Recently, we have noticed that the Visegrad countries' response to receiving refugees from Ukraine contrasts sharply with their response to receiving refugees in 2015. There is, therefore, a significant change in the position or views of the Visegrad countries regarding the reception of refugees. Moreover, we have not heard recently any comments or declarations from the politicians in these countries which has to do with the danger of refugees to their own national security, religion or culture. The main question that should be addressed in further research is what explains this divergence in their views when compared to those in 2015.

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**Appendix**

**Table 1**

| Document number | Source | Country | Reasons | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Security | Economy | Culture | Integration | Religion | Monopoly / sovereignty |
| 1 | Britskelisty | Slovakia | X | | | X | | |
| 2 | EURACTIVE | Hungary | X | | | | | XX |
| 3 | The Conversation | Slovakia | | | | X | | |
| | | Czech | | | | | X | |
| | | Hungary | | | | | X | |
| 4 | The Guardian | States of central Europe | | | | | | X |
| 5 | EURACTIVE | Slovakia | | | | | X | |
| | | Poland | | | | | X | |
| | | Bulgaria | | | | | X | |
| 6 | BBC | Slovakia | | | | | X | |
| 7 | BBC | Slovakia | | | | X | X | |
| 8 | POLITICO | Hungary | X | | | | | |
| 9 | | Hungary | X | | | | | |
| 10 | | Hungary | X | | | | | |
| 11 | Reuters | Poland | X | | | | | |
| 12 | Reuters | Poland | XX | | | | | |
| 13 | DW | Poland | X | | | | | |
| 14 | The Conversation | Poland | X | | | | | |
| 15 | DW | Poland | X | | | | | |
| 16 | DW | Poland | X | | | | | |
| | | Poland | | | | | | |
| 17 | News Week | Poland | X | | | | | |
| | News Week | Poland, Hungary and Slovakia | X | | | | | |
| 18 | POLITICO | Poland | | X | X | X | X | |
| | | Hungary | | | X | X | X | |
| 19 | Independent | Poland | X | X | | | | X |
| 20 | | Czech | | | | | | X |
| 21 | BBC | Czech | | | | | X | X |
| 22 | DW | Czech | X | | | | | |
| 23 | The Guardian | Czech | | | | | X | |
| 24 | Trouw | Hungary | X | | | | | |
| 25 | Trouw | Czech, Poland, Slovakia | | | | | X | X |